Linda Johnson Rice

Chairman and CEO of Johnson Publishing Company

Picking up the Pieces: Reimagining a Family Legacy (“Building on Black Legacy”). Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) was the largest African American owned publishing firm in the United States, founded by John H. Johnson and Eunice W. Johnson. Linda Johnson Rice, their daughter, grew up in the business and became CEO in 2002. By 2010, after both parents had passed away, the business was challenged by a changing media landscape and declining market share in the publishing and the cosmetics businesses, respectively. Hear how Ms. Rice made the painful decision to put the company into bankruptcy and is now executing on her and her daughter’s plan to reimagine portions of the business to carry on the rich legacy her parent’s created.

Accepting the Unimaginable: A Journey of Darkness and Light Linda Johnson Rice grew up with privilege. Her father founded Johnson Publishing Company in 1942 and became one of the wealthiest African Americans in the country. Having become CEO of the company at the age of 44, she learned the ins-and-outs of the media and cosmetics businesses that her father and mother built. After their passing, the businesses faltered and Ms. Rice had to make tough decisions, finally being forced to shed some of its most valuable assets. Adding to the pain, in 2020 she was diagnosed with a condition that has severely impaired her vision forcing her to learn new life skills while seeking to rebuild the business… this discussion inspired by a truly resilient woman, determined to increase organizations’ awareness of the need for accessibility and to uphold her family’s place in American history.

Shaping History: From Civil Rights to Social Justice (Racial Equity) When Ms. Rice’s father founded Johnson Publishing Company in 1942 thanks to a $500 loan, he sought to create a famed magazine for Black people in America. ***Ebony*** and ***Jet*** told the stories of the African American journey, from the Great Migration to the Present. For 75 years, in vivid prose and iconic photographs, the pages of Ebony and Jet captured the stories of African Americans, from the famous to the family next door. Ms. Rice will tell the story of how JPC helped shape the Civil Rights movement by informing and inspiring its readership. She will discuss how the business was forced to shed significant assets due to a changing media landscape and declining market share in the publishing and the cosmetics businesses, respectively. Ms. Rice’s discussion tells a comprehensive and compelling story of America, its past, its present and a look to the future.