

Benjamin Mays and Leland Ware Scholars

A Concept Paper

Benjamin Elijah Mays was an American Baptist Minister and civil rights leader who is credited with laying the intellectual foundations of the American civil rights movement.

During his 30-year tenure as president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, his commitment to social justice through nonviolence and civil resistance cultivated a following of influential activists among them were the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Julian Bond, and Maynard Jackson. By the 1960's Mays established the college as a feeder school for a generation of leaders who were first to rise to influential leadership roles, given opportunities created by the Civil Rights revolution of the 1960's.

Professor Leland Ware's final book contains a collection of essays that address many of the major race and equality controversies that were involved in Supreme Court cases, during that era, which marked America's period of reckoning with historic challenges to its Constitutional declarations established in its founding documents and fundamental legal amendments. His introduction establishes his aim to examine the centuries-old *elusive quest* of people of color for racial justice.

Professor Ware was a "son" of Atlanta who grew up there during the era of Dr. May's greatest influence on developing the cadre of American leaders whose accomplishments significantly mark the social and economic progress of people of color, specifically African Americans. Professor Ware was among that cadre as the first African American tenured law professor at St. Louis University School of Law and at the University of Delaware he was the first African American endowed chair, holding the Louis Redding Chair in Law and Public Policy for more than two decades. In his final book, Professor Ware effectively calls us to acknowledge that civil rights gains for some have been extensive, while opportunities for those left behind in poverty and residential segregation are "more daunting today than they were a generation ago," given on-going efforts to abandon the policy infrastructure responsible for the progress achieved during the 1960's and 70's.

The book's title, **Policies That Perpetuate Inequality**, foreshadows the "ahah thinking" presented in the essays. Professor Ware, following Dr. May's example, provides a platform for pursuing change based on an understanding of historical milestones--policies that led to practices--that eroded America's apartheid. Heeding this knowledge leads to action. What should we UNITE with all people of good conscience to achieve?

We owe this wisdom to successive generations of young people. We can begin the process by institutionalizing a conversation with incoming freshmen at the range of colleges and universities.

