

## Dr. Mays' Views of a Changing World

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While most people will remember Dr. Benjamin E. Mays as the President of Morehouse College for 27 years and as a former President of the Atlanta Board of Education, he was also an internationalist with strong views of how Christian values might govern the relations between man and nations. Many of his international insights were gained while he was serving as the Dean of Howard University's School of Religion from 1934 to 1940. As Dean, he began to travel abroad to attend world conferences in Europe and India. These travels broadened his perspective of the issues of racism abroad, ethnic and religious conflict, intercultural problems and international politics.

In an article he wrote in 1937 for the *Journal of Negro Education* about his traveling experiences in India, he stated that the problems which confront the youth of the world are:

International relations, race relations, the relations between those of different religious faiths, youth and the claims of the state and nation, the need to build a new social order, youth and the church, personal decisions and actions (Mays, 1937).

These problems that Dr. Mays identified remain valid in the 1990s even though some may be stated in different terms today. Dr. Mays' travels to India also afforded him an opportunity to meet with the leader of India's non-violent movement for independence, Mahatma Gandhi. With Gandhi, he discussed India's caste system, especially the condition of the untouch-

ables. He urged Gandhi to oppose not only the untouchable situation but the caste system as a whole. While Dr. Mays was already a strong believer in the techniques of non-violent protest to achieve social justice, it was Gandhi who inspired him to look at this technique in a broader perspective and the impact it could have beyond social injustice movements. Gandhi taught Dr. Mays the importance of the use of non-violent protest for mass campaigns of passive resistance in order to bring about meaningful political, economic and social change.

In this same article, Dr. Mays made the following observations on Gandhi:

The world is too close to him to appraise him adequately... But the fact that Gandhi and his non-violent campaign have given the Indian masses a new conception of courage, no man can honestly deny. To discipline people to face death, to die, to go to jail for the cause without fear and without resorting to violence is an achievement of the first magnitude, and when an oppressed voice ceases to be afraid, it is free.. The cardinal principles of non-violence are love and fearlessness (Mays, 1937).

Dr. Mays was also very strongly opposed to isolationism in the world. In another article that he wrote for *Missions* in 1949, he argued:

For good or for ill, we can no longer live in isolation, whether we like it or not, what happens in one corner of the earth resounds around the world. In attitudes and ideas, we may be thousands of miles apart; but in time and space we are very near. The press, the radio, the airplane, and sheer economic necessity now make isolation impossible (Mays, 1949).

In the later part of his career as President of Morehouse College, Dr. Mays received a number of honors during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In 1961, he was appointed to be a member of the United States Commission for UNESCO. In 1963, he traveled with then Vice-President Johnson to the State Funeral of Pope John XXIII in Rome. On this trip, the two men developed a close personal relationship, but their friendship did not keep Dr. Mays from opposing the Vietnam War. He summarized his views on a changing world order in *Disturbed About Man* in the chapter on "Light for the World's Agony":

Christian light asserts that the human family began in

unity.... Whether we like it or not Christian light reveals that we cannot build the world as we please. War has created the ethical and moral laws that will bring peace between nations—between the United States and Vietnam.... God, not war, has created the ethical and moral laws that will generate the stability of a political order. God, not war, has created the kind of justice that will enable one race to live in peace, love and harmony with another race. Our task is to discover these laws and live by them (Mays, 1969).

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been much discussion on what the new world order should be and the role that the U.S. should play in this changing world. Professor Samuel P. Huntington, in his classic article, "The Clash of Civilizations" in *Foreign Affairs*, states:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflict of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington, 1993).

In order to be responsive to the new type of world conflicts predicted by Professor Huntington, it would appear that the United States should seek to recruit officers for the foreign service composed of people who are representative of the vast cultural diversity available in the United States. This has not been the case historically, and even today still appears to be a major problem as we face the problems and challenges confronting in the 21st century.

### **The Status of African-Americans and Other Minorities in the Foreign Affairs Community**

In the first one hundred years or so of our country's existence, African-Americans did not serve in the Foreign Service nor did they participate in any major way in the foreign policy decision process of the United States. During these early days, foreign policy decisions in the



United States government were considered to be within the purview of the President and his closest advisors who were often from very rich and well educated Anglo-Saxon elite families on the eastern seaboard. It was only in the 1860s when the United States recognized Haiti and Liberia that the President and the Department of State began to explore the appointment of African-Americans in important positions in the foreign affairs establishment. The first African-American to be given a significant Foreign Service appointment was Ebenezer D. Basset. President Ulysses S. Grant appointed this Connecticut-born educator in April 1869 to be Minister Resident and Consul General to Port au Prince Haiti (Skinner, 1994). Another African-American, James M. Turner was appointed in 1871 by Grant to be Minister Resident and Consul General to Monrovia, Liberia. After these initial appointments other African-Americans were appointed to various Foreign Service positions, but most of their assignments were restricted to the black nation states such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Liberia. This racist practice of restricting the assignment of African Americans continued to the Second World War, but there were occasional assignments of African-American Foreign Service Officers to Latin America and Europe, especially in the Consular Corps where most African-Americans spent most of their Foreign Service careers.

The first African-American to become a regular Foreign Service Officer was Clifton Wharton, Sr., the father of Clifton Wharton, Jr., who until recently was the Deputy Secretary of State in the Clinton Administration and the former Chancellor of the State University of New York. Wharton, Sr. entered the Foreign Service in the early 1920s, but it was not until 1925 that he passed the Foreign Service written examination. Initially, assigned to Liberia, he spent some 40 years as a career Foreign Service Officer. He retired in 1964 after serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Norway with the rank of Career Minister, the highest career rank in the US Foreign Service.

The population of African-Americans is currently estimated to be some 30 million people, about 12% of the U.S. population. It is estimated by the year 2000 persons of color will constitute nearly one-third of the U.S. population and by the year 2020 persons of color will comprise 40% of the U.S. population (Goodman, 1994). Even with this large diversity of people of color in the U.S. population, the ranks of our nation's civil and foreign services will still remain very largely under-representative of the overall diversity in the general population. Nevertheless, African-Americans now

constitute a higher proportion of the federal work force than the civilian labor force (16.8 percent versus 10.5 percent). The same is true of Asian-Americans (3.6 percent versus 2.9 percent), and Native Americans (1.1 percent versus 0.7 percent) (Goodman, 1994). These statistics show that generally people of color have done much better in the civil service than in the private sector. The only exception is the Hispanic community, who account for 5.6 percent of the federal work force compared to 9 percent in the civilian labor force. Most people of color still work primarily in clerical and other low level jobs where they are not likely to have any policy or programmatic impact on the decisions made by the federal government. If this picture of overall employment opportunities and the status of the results of affirmative action for people of color appear to be bleak in the federal government, the situation is even worse in this country's Foreign Service.

Even though the Foreign Service Act, the law that governs the establishment and operations of this country's Foreign Service, states in its very opening paragraph a special obligation for the Foreign Service to "be representative of the American people," little has been accomplished to make this statement a reality. In 1974, it was documented in Jake Miller's book entitled *The Black Presence in American Foreign Policy* that African-Americans only represented 2.5% of the officers of the Department of State (Miller, 1978). Since this book was published, the number of African-Americans serving in the various foreign affairs agencies has only increased marginally in the past fifteen years.

In 1993, US State Department publications indicated that for all classes of Foreign Service Officers, including Foreign Service Generalist and Specialist positions, minority males comprise 7% (549) and minority females 4% (320) compared to white males who comprise 56% (4,336) and white females 24% (1,854) of the total Officer Corps (Holmes, 1994). In the elite Senior Foreign Service, the numbers of minority professionals represented in this group are even worse; there are only 5% (38) minority males and 1% (40) minority females compared to 84% (677) white males versus 9% (72) for white females in these senior career grades (Holmes, 1994). These figures also vividly illustrate what many African-American writers have been saying with respect to the recent debate about affirmative action. White males dominate the ranks of this country's Foreign Service and other white-collar professional positions throughout the United States while African-Americans and other minority groups are vastly under-rep-



resented. This is especially true for the top Foreign Service Career Officers in the senior positions of Principal and Deputy Principal Officers. In 1993, there were only 9% (14) minorities in Chief of Mission positions versus 77% (125) non-minority, and the Deputy Chiefs of Mission positions involved only 12% (16) minorities versus 88% (118) for non-minorities (Holmes, 1994).

### **The Role of International Studies in Higher Education**

In this changing world, American higher education institutions have generally devoted too little attention as to how its academic programs should be structured to be enable them to respond to new foreign policy challenges. Most higher education institutions have continued to teach their traditional international studies and area studies programs with only minor changes in concentration requirements and course content. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in its study entitled "Changing our Ways America and the New World," states:

Education is indispensable to our efforts. The executive agencies and congressional staffs for foreign policy must recruit and nurture professionals with fresh eyes, new expertise and sharp appreciation for the melding of our internal and external interests... Our ranks are filled with experts better trained to deal with the past than the future. We must reorient university curricula and develop new cadres professionals—not only for government but for business and finance, science and technology, culture and communications. We must begin before college, importing to children in elementary and secondary schools the necessary language skills and understanding of other people that our international role demands (Goodman, King, Ruther, 1994)

This quote is a very strong statement of weaknesses in the various international studies programs found in American institutions of higher education, programs that were created to train the people needed to deal with the world's problems. Most international studies experts who have studied this situation believe that what is needed in these institutions is a balanced liberal arts education, a good working knowledge of the countries and cultures of the world, and a recognition of the issues that confront world citizens and their leaders (Goodman, King, Ruther, 1994).

While there are some liberal arts colleges in the United States which are able to provide adequate training, most of the institutions of higher education in this country are not producing the types of international studies graduates that will be needed to excel in a career in international affairs.

With the variety and complexity of problems being dealt with in today's international arena, institutions of higher learning in the United States must reorient their international studies programs. They need to be broad-based, cross-disciplinary programs that can provide a strong liberal arts curriculum which integrates the social sciences, natural sciences and the humanities. The programs offered should also provide a strong language studies program in at least one foreign language and should be geared toward providing strong oral communication skills in the language. International studies students should spend, if possible, a minimum of an academic semester abroad, preferably a minimum of one full year, studying in a foreign country.

International studies programs should also focus more on global problems that are multi-disciplinary in nature. Examples of the types of problems that should be studied include the topics of: environmental degradation, ethnic and religious conflicts, democratization, governance, economic growth, economic cooperation and competition, world trade among free trade zones and weapons proliferation. More emphasis has to be placed on improving the teaching methodologies by including more learning by doing exercises and more interactive approaches such as role playing, simulation exercises, case studies and team or group learning exercises. These innovative teaching technologies have proven to be highly successful, and need to be more fully developed in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) throughout the United States.

At Morehouse College, where this conference is being held, there have been several major innovations made to improve the quality of international studies and to internationalize the curriculum. Likewise, Clark Atlanta University has established a new School of International Affairs and Development that will help to enrich the international studies program of all the Atlanta University Center colleges. Howard University's Center for International Affairs has also started a process to internationalize the University's curriculum and has initiated the development of a program to award a certificate in international studies based on an interdisciplinary studies program.

The most important change that has been carried out at Morehouse

College is the establishment of the new Center for International Studies in October 1993. This Center has begun to implement several programs, including an annual lecture series, a roundtable and research forum, a global issues forum and the development of a comprehensive major in international studies. All of these international studies programs are to be applauded, but Morehouse still needs to further develop its curriculum and the content of its course offerings before it can be said that it has one of this country's better international studies programs.

We must remember that under the leadership of Hope, Mays, Gloster and Keith, Morehouse did produce some of this country's leading African American foreign affairs experts, men who have made an outstanding contribution to the solution of the world's political and economic problems. The best known of these sons of the "House" are Robert Kitchen, a former Career Minister and U.S. delegate to the United Nations Specialized Agencies; Griffen Davis, a Senior Communications Advisor in the Foreign Aid program; John Hicks, the Assistant Administrator for Africa in the Agency for International Development; and Howard Jeter, the current U.S. Ambassador to Botswana. There are others who have also achieved a great deal, but Morehouse needs to move ahead aggressively to train more of its sons to be able to meet the challenges of our changing world and to help make the foreign affairs community more representative of the diversity of the American population.

Dr. Mays stated in *Born to Rebel* on the Morehouse tradition:

The Morehouse tradition is a proud and honorable one, one to make the best from its students, one that provides a life-long goal. At Morehouse, the B.A. has never been considered a terminal degree. The Morehouse man learned well that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp" and never accepted the idea that the ceiling was the limit of his striving. Rather, the sky was his goal, even though all too often, his wings were clipped at the ceiling level (Mays, 1987).

This tradition and Morehouse's overall success in training some of the top African Americans in the professions of law, business, medicine, education and religion suggest that this college has the potential of making the curricula and course content changes that will be necessary to train the future African Americans who are needed to play a leadership role in meeting the new challenges of our changing world in the 21st Century.



Let us hope that the College's Board of Trustees will make the right choice of a "Man of Vision" to lead this great institution and to build upon the successes of the past to make Morehouse College one of the best institutions of higher learning in this country and the world.

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*If Morehouse has done "so much with so little and so few," it is because many factors converged to make it possible. Good students have been graduated and acquitted themselves like men after leaving college. The alumni have made noteworthy contributions to society. The faculty has been able and dedicated. Individual persons and foundations have given the money without which the college could not have survived. The trustees have been loyal. They always gave me to the freedom to do my work, with no restrictions, on the platform or in writing. I was never uneasy about my job, even when I was maliciously and falsely accused of being a Communist fellow-traveler. In my twenty-seven years as President, I never ceased to raise my voice and pen against the injustices of a society that segregated and discriminated against people because made them black. No trustee ever took me to task for what I said in public and wrote in books and articles. This may be hard for some people to believe, but it is a fact. Without this kind of confidence and freedom, I would not have remained at Morehouse all those years, particularly since I had seventeen opportunities to leave during that time. I pay high tribute to the men and women who served on the Morehouse Board of Trustees between 1940 and 1967.*

*from **Born to Rebel***