

# A Tribute to Merlin G. Pope Jr.



Merlin G. Pope Jr., one of the first pioneers of the diversity movement, attended Kent State University (KSU) for three years before being drafted into the U.S. Army. His two years of honorable military service included a combat tour in Vietnam.

## A Posthumous Dedication

Upon returning to the United States, Pope completed his undergraduate degree and a year of graduate studies at the University of Akron. In 1970, he was accepted into the doctoral program at Yale University, where he earned two master's degrees and his Ph.D. A.B.D. in comparative sociology and social psychology.

Merlin's career as a diversity consultant began in 1973 when Procter & Gamble Co. in Cincinnati hired him to provide racial awareness training. Merlin used the term, "diversity," to refer to the changing demographics of the U.S. work force. He was very clear, however, that the term included white males. By making every organization more receptive to differences, Merlin believed that the culture of the organization became healthier for everyone.

He was one of the first consultants to link increasing personnel diversity to organizational productivity. As a result, numerous corporations began to appreciate that diversity and inclusion could strengthen an organization.

On February 10, 1998, at 55, Merlin lost his yearlong battle with cancer. Despite his untimely death, he left behind an incredible legacy—an organization that had worked with more than 250 of the Fortune 500 and had trained more than 500,000 participants at all organizational levels.

Merlin devoted his great talents as a social scientist to a highly successful career in applied social science, helping organizations turn ethnic and gender diversity from an obstacle into an asset, thus helping women and minorities to realize their potential and advance their careers. Merlin was also a very generous and warm-hearted person who shared his success with friends and the wider community. He was beloved by all whom he touched. He left the world a better place.

His important contributions were honored by two of his former classmates at Yale University, Dr. Evelyne Huber and Dr. John Stephens, who dedicated their book, *Development and Crisis of the Welfare State*, published in 2000, to his memory.

His accomplishments have been recognized by the Merlin G. Pope Jr. Founders Medallion Scholarship at KSU, an annual scholarship for minority students majoring in sociology; the Merlin G. Pope Jr. Outstanding U.S. Army Reserve Equal Opportunity Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award; and the annual Merlin G. Pope Jr. Outstanding Diversity Leadership Award of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission, first awarded in 2003 to John Pepper, former CEO of Procter & Gamble.