

Building a Forum Where Theory Meets Practice

ROY AND LILA ASH *advance understanding of democracy through Ash Institute*

How does democracy work in a divided society? How do democratic governments achieve the goal of equal opportunity for all? These represent some of the questions that scholars and policy leaders at the Roy and Lila Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government tackle to better understand and practice democracy.

The Ash Institute was originally established in 2001 as the Institute for Government Innovation with a \$50 million endowment gift from the Ford Foundation. Roy MBA '47 and Lila Ash helped to broaden the work of the Institute in 2003 by emphasizing that innovation in government serves the overarching ideal of democracy.

“We have to consider the concept of democracy as fragile and in need of real, constant, hands-on care,” says Roy Ash, who, along with his wife, recently fulfilled their gift pledge of more than \$16 million. “The purpose of the Institute is to encourage thoughtful and focused attention on the nature, principles, functioning, and continued innovation and adaptations essential to a living and effective democracy.”

In 1953, Ash cofounded Litton Industries, a small electronics company turned multibillion-dollar defense company. He served as its director and president until 1972. Ash also served as director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Nixon and Ford administrations.

“Roy and Lila believe that one size does not fit all; that there is not one democratic model that will work for everyone in the world,” says Director of the Ash Institute Gowher Rizvi. “Roy often asks probing questions that help shape some of our research questions.”

In addition to inspiring the Institute’s research, Ash’s encouragement has led to the development of a Global Network—a worldwide community of leaders and scholars dedicated to effective government and public service management.

One of the Ash Institute’s best-known activities is the Innovations in American Government Awards Program, an annual competition that recognizes creative solutions to a host of social problems in the United States.

Winners of the \$100,000 award include the New York City Police Department’s CompStat software, an accountability tool used to develop strategies and measure results. Today, several police departments around the world use variations of the program. The One Church, One Child program also won the award. Founded in Chicago in 1980, One Church, One Child recruits families from African-American churches to adopt African-American children. One Church, One Child has become one of the most successful adoption efforts in the nation and currently operates in 30 states.

This year, the Ash Institute will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Innovations in American Government Awards Program by offering a special prize in conjunction with IBM—an award that recognizes agencies and organizations throughout the world. The IBM Innovations Award in Transforming Government will be given to initiatives that best improve the lives of citizens throughout the world.



Roy and Lila Ash