

**Leah Ward Sears** was the first woman and the youngest person ever to serve on the Georgia Supreme Court when she was appointed by Gov. Zell Miller in 1992. In 2005 she became the first African-American female chief justice of any state supreme court in the nation. Justice Sears earned her B.A. from Cornell, her law degree from Emory, and an LLM from the University of Virginia. She serves on many boards and is the founder of the Battered Women's project in Columbus. After retiring from the Georgia Supreme Court in 2009 after 27 years on the bench, Justice Sears became a partner with the law firm of Schiff Hardin LLP and lead the firm's Appellate Practice Group. In 2016 she joined Smith, Gambrell & Russell LLP as a partner in the firm's Business Litigation and Appellate practices. She is also a Distinguished Fellow in Family Law at the Institute for American Values. In 2009 she donated her papers to the Georgia Historical Society, making them available for scholarly research by future generations.