

The Reverend Karla J. Cooper, EdD Biographical Sketch



The Reverend Karla J. Cooper, EdD, the seventh child of eight children of Joel and Kay Cooper, ordained an Itinerant Elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, has been active in pastoral ministry for more than 20 years. She served with distinction as Chaplain/Coordinator of Service Programs at Doane University for 10 years. She is currently associate professor of practice in the College of Education at Doane University. She is also adjunct faculty with Nebraska Wesleyan University in the Department of Sociology. She has taught courses in service-learning and cultural immersion in India for Doane University since 2011 and has led various delegations almost annually to India since her first trip in 2003. From this experience, her students have achieved various pursuits including, a Fulbright Scholar to India, Peace Corps volunteer to Liberia, Stanford University Program Advisor for the Bing Overseas Studies Program, just to name a few.

More importantly, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has a presence on the continent of Asia with more than 160 churches, two Presiding Elder Districts, because of a literal dream that Dr. Cooper had one night and shared in 2004 with Bishop John Bryant and Rev Dr. Cecelia Williams Bryant, former Bishop and Supervisor of the 5th Episcopal District. Dr. Cooper often shares that her first trip to India in 2003 was so overwhelming that she was unable to talk about it for an entire year. Equally, the trip was transformative not only in her life, but expanded the global witness and ministry of the AME church nearly 100 years after the church expanded on the continent of Africa.

During her time as pastor in a sanctuary city of Lincoln and within the state of Nebraska, which has the second largest population of Sudanese outside of the Sudan, Dr. Cooper has informed the minds of many students from South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Liberia, Nigeria as well as Guatemala. Dr. Cooper partnered with Jesus LaRoca, where Pastor Martha Rodriguez, serves as founder and senior pastor, to offer space for worship and bible study for the Spanish speaking community. She is visiting lecturer at Kenya Methodist University and pastoral trainer for Bishop Catherine Mutua, presiding Bishop from the Kaaga Synod in Meru, Kenya. She has also lectured at Madras Christian College in Chennai, India.

She is a graduate of Eden Theological Seminary where she received a Master's of Divinity and studied abroad as part of a 2003 travel seminar to India studying in three seminaries, Gurukul Lutheran Theological Seminary in Chennai; Tamilnadu Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary in Bangalore. She is a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communication. She holds a Doctorate in Education (EdD) from Doane University and has credentialed herself with studies in Sociology from the University of Nebraska as a former PhD, student. Dr. Cooper's research is on the intersectionality of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation with a particular focus on the transgender community.

Cooper currently serves on the Board of Trustees at Eden Theological Seminary. Cooper

has served in various capacities throughout the State of Missouri. She has been a gubernatorial appointee under both Governors Carnahan and Holden working on issues such as National and Community Services, Senior Prescription Drug Policy Task Force and Systems Reform Initiative called "Caring Communities." Cooper has also worked with former Secretary of State Colin Powell with the America's Promise Initiative. Cooper has also gained national recognition from the Ford Foundation and Harvard University for her work with welfare reform. Cooper also created the alternativeschool entitled DREAMERS and PASSAGES youth diversion initiative.

Reverend Cooper is a former Connectional Officer with Women In Ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church serving as its Financial Secretary for 2008-2009 and is Dean of the Board of Examiners Midwest Annual Conference, serves on the Conference Trustees of the Midwest Annual Conference. Cooper has served on many boards and commissions including Girl Scouts—Cotton Boll Council, Girl Scouts—Homestead Council, Bootheel Heart Health Coalition, Minority Health Initiative, Fresh Start Board, Delta Sigma Theta National Executive Board/Central Regional Director. Cooper is a much sought after speaker on issues of child advocacy, public policy, systems reform and cultural diversity. She has served on the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights and the Interfaith Worker Justice Commission. Dr. Cooper served on the Foundation Lincoln Public Schools, one of the top ten public schools in the U.S.A with a large number of refugees and first time U.S. citizens from Arabic and Spanish speaking countries. Dr. Cooper is the immediate past president of the Mary Riempa Ross Theater Board that managed an endowment of more than \$10 million. She has served on the Family Violence Council Board, Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG) Board where she was editor of the monthly PFLAG newsletter. In 2009, the Women's Global Initiative Awarded Karla with an ecological justice award during a convocation in Toronto, Canada for being the first black woman to write a book on ecology. She was also featured along with 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, the late Dr. Wangari Maathai, who is known for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace, as founder of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya.

Dr. Cooper is the author of **"When Blacks Were Green"** and is the co-author of a chapter entitled **"Where Race, Gender and Orientation Meet"** with Dr. Joretta Marshall in the pastoral care manual entitled: **"Volume IV: Women out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World."** Fortress

