

NYSCEA KEYNOTE SPEAKER OCTOBER 15, 2010

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""When we are able to break the glass ceiling for inner city children and see achievement gains go way beyond system expectations; that is when I am the proudest. To seize the opportunity to create hope out of despair -- commitment out of frustration ... change rather than inaction ... hard work leading to huge gains (not easy simplistic answers, but focused commitment) -- to see children and teachers' eyes light up with expectation and awareness that they can teach and learn complex concepts ... Wow!"

Dr. Cooper is the President of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA). He served in a similar position as Executive Director for the NUA at Columbia University's Teachers College and as Adjunct Associate Professor for 7 years. Prior to this position, he was the Vice President for Inservice Training & Telecommunications for the Simon & Schuster Education Group. He has worked in the capacities of Associate Director of Program Development for the College Board, Administrative Assistant in the Office of Curriculum for the Boston Public Schools, and Director of a treatment center for emotionally disturbed students, in addition to working as a teacher, researcher, counselor, and Washington Fellow.

Additional professional activities include: producer of educational documentaries and talk shows; producer for the Public Broadcasting Service; congressional testimony for House committees; presentations for federal and state educational agencies; advisor to the International Reading Association, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Editorial Advisory Board, and the Journal of Reading. Eric has also been a member of the Select Committee in Educating Black Children; fund-raiser for the National Conference on Educating Black Children; chief advisor for the Thinking Skills Project, Macmillan Publishing Company; director of restructuring team for the Mt. Vernon Public Schools (NY); and has served on the advisory board of WGBH/PBS, Boston, MA. He was humbled and honored to present several times at the prestigious Aspen Institute's Ideas Festival along with participants such as: Colin & Alma Powell, Bill & Hillary Clinton, Supreme Court Justice Breyer, Brian Greene, Alan Greenspan, Katie Couric and many more.

Eric received a \$400,000 award from the MacArthur Foundation and produced a television series of prime-time documentaries and training programs on improving the literacy skills of students with NAK Productions of D.C. With NAK, Eric works as producer for projects that have included numerous talk shows, teleconferences, and documentaries. These projects have been produced for PBS, AED, ASCD, James Comer, Peter Senge, W. Edwards Deming, The College Board, and the Carnegie Foundation.

Publications include: "From 'Just a Teacher' to Justice in Teaching -- Working in the Service of Education, the New Civil Right," "Realities & Responsibilities in the Education Village," Teaching All the Children: Strategies for Developing Literacy in an Urban Setting; Reading, Thinking & Concept Development, Educating Black Children: America's Challenge; "It Begins with Belief: Social Demography is Not Destiny;" "The Importance of Professional Development to Unlock the Potential of Students in Urban Settings," "Toward a New Mainstream of Instruction of American Schools," "Reading, Thinking and School Effectiveness," "An Effective School Network with a Legislative Emphasis," "Managing the Change Process for Teaching Thinking," "Addressing Urban School Reform: Issues and Alliances," "School Improvement Through Instructional Design," and "The Change Process and Its Implications in Teaching Thinking."

Dr. Cooper is also a frequent op-ed and letter contributor to "The Stamford Advocate," "Greenwich Times," "Education Week," "USA Today," "Newsday," "Birmingham News," "Times-Union," "Los Angeles Times,"

"New York Times," and "The Chronicle of Higher Education," Stories and positive editorials about the work of his organization have appeared in: "Fort Wayne Journal Gazette," "The News - Sentinel," "Indianapolis Star," "Education Week," "Times-Union," "Hamden Journal," "Poughkeepsie Journal," "Providence Journal," "Reading Today," "Birmingham News," and "Chicago Sun Times." He has been interviewed for NBC, CBS and ABC affiliates, as well as featured on CNN, NPR, the BBC and local radio stations, and has met with editorial boards of the "Stamford Advocate," "Connecticut Post," "Times-Union," and "Birmingham News."

Eric has been nominated for the 2003 Eleanor Roosevelt Freedom Medal and the 2004 Gleistman Foundation Education Leadership Award. He has received the Connecticut Voices for Children, First for Kids 2002 - 2003 Community Advocacy Award. He has received the 2008 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. award from the Israeli Consulate of New York City, the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Federation of Stamford, New Canaan and Darien. Primarily given to American faith-based leaders, Eric was the first educator to have been named by Israel for the MLK Jr. award and the first person in Connecticut to have received it as well. He has been honored by the Committee on Educator & Labor in the House of Representatives, as well as: The Big Picture Company, and the National Council on Educating Black Children.

Dr. Cooper received a B.A. from City University (NYC) with a major in Psychology, an MA in Special Education, an Ed. M. in Educational Administration, and a doctorate in Interdisciplinary Studies, all from Teachers College, Columbia University.

His educational mission is to support the improvement of education for urban and minority students. In line with this mission, he has worked on a restructuring project with Ted Sizer and the Education Commission of the States, has been the president of the National Council on Educating Black Children, and writes, lectures and produces television shows to provide advocacy for children who live in disadvantaged circumstances. Eric is currently working with the school of education of the University of Alabama/Birmingham to improve education for the City of Birmingham students and has led a project with Senator Mary Landrieu, The Eleanor Roosevelt Center, The College Board and partner school districts called "Eleanor & Brown," which commemorated the Brown v the Board of Education decision; viewing education not just as a civil right but as a human justice right. Under Eric's leadership the NUA's "Financial Literacy Education Project" has been launched.

He is co-founder of the Urban Partnership for Literacy with the International Reading Association, is working with the National Council of Teachers of English to support improvements in urban education, and collaborates with the Council of Great City Schools. He serves on the boards of the National Council on Educating Black Children, SoundWaters (an environmental education agency dedicated to preserving L.I. Sound), and Stamford Achieves (whose mission is to eliminate the achievement gaps in Stamford, Connecticut). He maintains an irrefutable belief in the capacity of all school children and youth to succeed at the highest academic levels.