



A Century and Some Change: My Life Before the President Called My Name

Ann Nixon Cooper

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President-elect Barack Obama reflected on the life of Ann Nixon Cooper on Tuesday, November 4, 2008, singling her out of millions of voters, he said, because she was “born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the road or planes in the sky, when someone like her couldn’t vote for two reasons—because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.”

Energized by this history-making presidential campaign, Mrs. Cooper now shares her story, her life before the president called her name, in her own voice, with the assistance of bestselling author Karen Grigsby Bates.

Mrs. Cooper is the beloved matriarch of a large and accomplished family who live throughout the country, and a long-celebrated elder in the city of Atlanta, Georgia, where she raised her children and has lived most of her long and extraordinary life. She was born and raised in Bedford County, Tennessee, near Nashville, on January 9, 1902. Her father was a tenant farmer, and her mother worked at home, taking care of the children.

She met her husband, Dr. Albert Berry Cooper II, while he attended Meharry Medical College in Nashville. They settled in his hometown of Atlanta, where he established a successful practice in dentistry.

When president-elect Obama referred to her in his speech, she became a celebrity, sought after by media from all over the world. In Mrs. Cooper’s words, “All of a sudden, everyone wanted to talk to me. . . . It was nice they were interested, I guess, but I wasn’t so thrilled that media and ordinary folk were acting as if the only exciting thing I’d ever done was vote for a black man for president. . . . I’d had a life before CNN and the rest ‘discovered’ me.” And she is going to tell you about it.

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