

HISTORY'S SON: THE FACE OF A LEGEND AND A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

By Katrina Levithan

WASHINGTON, July 4, 2005 -- As an inevitable and, in my opinion, worthy subject of a fantastical biography, my preliminary research clearly indicates that left to his own devices, this man L. Napoleon Cooper, poised and self-confident, possessing genius not often come across, would have developed into your typical research scientist, theoretical mathematician, university professor, or according to his 82 year old mother, a preacher of one version or another of the gospel of Christ. That is, according to the record of his early, uneventful public school, prep school and private, boarding school experiences.

However, if one looks just a little further, there is evidence of a man with a dream, not unlike Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., dedicated to sending the message that this country is a place of inclusion, rather than exclusion.

To discover this, all one has to do is to delve a little into the former dynamic civic, social, political, civil-rights movement activist, born from and no stranger to the repressive racial environment that was the American south. The struggle for black equality, under the law, experienced in his adolescence strongly shaped his character, paving the way for the remarkable endeavors and accomplishments Cooper would go on to generate.

I was interested to learn that as a youth, Cooper won *Regional First Prize in State Competition* for geometry. He went on to win the *Regional First Prize in National Competition* in advanced Mathematics. From there, Cooper entered *Louisiana Polytechnic Institute (L.P.I.)* now *Louisiana Tech University* in Ruston, Louisiana with the full expectation of majoring in advanced element engineering, with an interest in the possible development of the atomic fusion process as a means for interstellar propulsion. However, facing limited academic cooperation and racial hostility, he withdrew from *L.P.I.*

The above unmistakably indicates that Cooper's original objective was actively pursuing a

research interest in the hard sciences, including advanced mathematics (or "theoretical geometric and algorithmic projection").

However, with *L.P.I.*, the hard sciences and the experiences there behind him, Cooper pursued (at *Miles College*, now *Miles University*, in Fairfield, Alabama, and *Clark College* in Atlanta, Georgia) three areas of focus—*Business Administration*, *Economics* and *History*, giving the impression that these two educational institutions were an afterthought or by-product of his enthusiastic non-violent activism as much as any other motivation.

L. Napoleon Cooper's focus was on the "American Experiment" in general, and his great interest in Founding Father Alexander Hamilton helped shape his professional career and sets the backdrop of his focus over the last three decades on the intricacies of public *and* private, non-profit-sector finance.

In touch with the spirit of the black masses, this man of extraordinary courage, dedicated to the idea of instilling a sense of duty within each of us to be responsible citizens and conscientious stewards of freedom and democracy, after leaving *L.P.I.* unreservedly returned to his roots as an organizer, impressively leading thousands of youth, professional wives, local and national church groups in selective buying campaigns, on behalf of the local African-American community, successfully holding that employers had every right to discriminate in private hiring, but so did the consumer in buying.

Consequently, Cooper was elected President of the local *N.A.A.C.P.* (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Youth Counsel. And ultimately, he became President of all Youth Counsels, College Chapters and Young Adult Branches for the entire State of Louisiana.

Courageously participating in many anti war, anti poverty, anti police brutality and anti racism efforts around the country did not come without its price, a fact brought home to Cooper by repeated harassment, incarceration, and brutalization throughout his activist career. These activist days were *concluded*, however, in 1974 with his co-founding of *Project 76 -- An American Affair, Inc.* which was set up to supply supplemental staff, finance and material support to operating non-profits worldwide via a "global

charitable-inventory supply-chain and business-integrated logistics resource”.

Noteworthy is the prestigious “Ann Brewster Memorial Award” Cooper received in the year of 2002, the inscription articulating, “In special recognition and appreciation for dedicated service and courageous actions during the Civil Rights era.”

Unmistakably clear is the fact that it was *this* activism (which concluded, in 1974, as abruptly as it began, in the early 60’s) that has shaped Cooper’s professional life and colored his outlook, as well as helped me understand his dogged persistence, dedication to and involvement with the non-profit sector of America’s economy which has dominated his entire adult life.

Primarily fascinating to me are those aspects of his professional life clearly rooted in and/or driven by Cooper’s interest, involvement, dedication to and preoccupation with making the historic, corporate-finance breakthroughs and the other innovations he has pioneered for America’s non-profit sector in particular, and for exponentially increasing supplemental, private-sector finance, administration and logistical support for “global public goods” in general.

Cooper’s facility for visualizing a context for and facilitating the authorization and issuance of new, one-of-a-kind, “valid and enforceable” non-profit-sector securities has given the non-profit sector a new capital-markets “currency” of its own. Additionally, this new “coin-of-exchange” has allowed for a more traditional, “for-profit” conceptualization and development of *safe, high-yield and tax-advantaged*, investment products which now afford America’s non-profit corporations the same opportunity to raise capital on a comparable scale (and on a “more-than-competitive” basis) as have “public” institutions and for-profit corporations.

Additionally, the objective record bears evidence that Cooper’s historic, corporate finance activities and innovations have included, but not been limited to, envisioning and structuring the following, first *ever*, large-scale and unique to the non-profit sector advances:

The “Debt for Equity Exchange Offer Vehicle”;

The “Debt for Impaired Financial Assets Exchange Offer Vehicle”; and

The “Debt for Cash-Equivalent Financial Assets Exchange Offer Vehicle”

— exchange offer vehicles unique not only in their financing structure, but in the fact that provision was made for the related subordinate capital notes to be collateralized by United States Treasury securities.

Having provided in related “trust indentures” for those securities to be collateralized by US Treasury bonds, these corporate-finance innovations allowed Cooper to develop and create a class of derivative investment instruments now commonly referred to as “Charitable Bonds” and “Charitable Bond Trusts” — a more-than-competitive safe, transparent, indexed, high-yield (including capital gains), and non-callable investment option for investors, taxable and tax-exempt alike.

Furthermore, these for-profit industry options are now available to facilitate initiatives such as Cooper’s current project to benefit the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial effort — which has managed to reunite the various interests and preoccupations of his life — numbers, activism, the non-profit sector, corporate finance, new investment instrument engineering and golf into his latest showcase initiative.

Finally, the magnitudes of his endeavors speak volumes in themselves. This is L. Napoleon Cooper the man, the legend and a glimpse into an assembly of living history.

About the Author: *Born in Belgrade, Serbia to humanitarian aid worker parents (father from New York, and Parisian mother), world traveler, linguist (English, Japanese, Russian, Serbian and Croatian), produced singer/songwriter, artist, author, writer and journalist Katrina Levithan, now relocated in the United States, spends her time catching up on time away from her roots, searching for and uncovering sides and faces of America that make her a great Nation.*