

Legislative Testimony: Dr. Fenella Cooper

Presented by

Dr. Sharon Charles

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Senator Carla J. Joseph, Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, Senator Javan E. James, Sr., Vice Chair, Committee Members: Senator Samuel Carrion, Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Alma Francis Heyliger, Senator Kenneth L. Gittens and Senator Milton E. Potter, Non-Committee Members, viewing and listening audience, good day. I am Dr. Sharon Charles, Assistant Principal at the St. Croix Career and Technical Education Center and part time faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at the University of the Virgin Islands, Albert A. Sheen Campus, St. Croix.

I am honored to be invited to share this testimony on behalf of Dr. Fenella Cooper, a tennis aficionado and an amazing educator, whose lifelong work with students and adults span more than 30 years of dedicated service. I first met Dr. Cooper in the 1990s when we shared similar space in the Sports and Fitness Center at Orville E. Kean Campus, St. Thomas. We were ardent supporters of the UVI BUCS! Her ready smile, vivacious nature, and quiet confidence captured my attention.

Dr. Cooper was a passionate tennis player who not only taught the game to children and adults, but participated in many tournaments locally and nationally. Her enthusiasm and commitment to the sport influenced my decision to view many of the tennis games she played on St. Croix. I was impressed with her level of confidence and competence. She shared her expertise with students in the community as well as those at the University of the Virgin Islands where she was employed part time. Her commitment to excellence, collaborative spirit, perseverance, and positive mindset were factors that contributed to her success as a tennis player.

Dr. Cooper gave unselfishly of her time, talent and resources. Over the years, she became a great friend and a professional colleague. In our roles as educators, we engaged in frequent conversations, oftentimes discussing successes and challenges in the classroom, as well as our

remarkable journey to achieving our doctoral degrees. She had a passion for writing. Her hard work and dedication in this area yielded many positive results. A teacher at Charlotte Amalie High School for several years, she effectively modeled the implementation of writing within the content areas.

In 2002, Dr. Cooper participated in the Virgin Islands Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute held on the Orville E. Kean Campus, St. Thomas. Later, in her capacity as co-director, she spearheaded many of the project's initiatives to include: presenting workshops to teachers on both campuses and organizing writing marathons. She created the project's theme song which is sung at all of the Writing Project's activities. Dr. Cooper also organized a Young Writers' Camp and worked with the students on the weekends. She considered this as one of her most gratifying experiences. Students compiled booklets of their work which they proudly showcased. She shared her passion with a wider audience when she made guest presentations on WSTX radio show hosted by Abdul Ali and The VYBE radio show hosted by former radio personality Alvin G. Southwell.

Throughout the years, Dr. Cooper has made an indelible mark in the lives of all she interacted with locally and nationally. It is indeed, an honor for this Legislative body to consider the noteworthy contribution of one who was so humble, yet impactful in her interactions with adults and students in diverse settings. Naming the tennis court at the Orville E. Kean Campus, UVI, in her honor, will ensure that her name is remembered for generations to come. I extend my profound gratitude to the bill's sponsor Senator Marvin A. Blyden. Special thanks to this committee for giving me the opportunity to provide you with this testimony, prayerful that it will result in a favorable outcome.