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[Home](#) [Local](#) [Docudrama Honors Anna Julia Cooper](#)

DOCUDRAMA HONORS ANNA JULIA COOPER

Written by [Elton Hayes](#) | [Wednesday, 19 December 2012 20:25](#) | [font size](#) | [Print](#) | [Email](#) | [Be the first to](#)

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Civil and Women's Rights Activist Celebrated

To describe Anna Julia Cooper as a pioneer would be inaccurate. The African-American feminist and civil rights activist ideas were far more visionary and well ahead of her time.

When Cooper died in 1964, the educator had dedicated more than seven decades of her life to the betterment of African Americans, but more specifically, African-American women. Despite her lasting legacy in the annals of history, Cooper's name remains virtually unknown to many.

"Two and a half years ago is when I first found out about her," said film director Cheryl Lewis Hawkins, who lives in Northwest. "I'm finding that a lot of people don't know who she is and she has done some phenomenal things."

Hawkins, 59, president and CEO of Prosperity Media, intends to make Cooper a household name.

More than 100 people gathered on the third floor of the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, located just few blocks from the Farragut North Metro Station in Northwest, to honor the woman affectionately known as "Sis Anna" during a screening of a movie that showcases her determination to ensure that District school students received a quality education.

Born into slavery in Raleigh, N.C., in 1858, Cooper forged a career as an educator and made it her life's mission to champion the cause of young African Americans to have an educational curriculum that prepared them for college. Cooper spent many years as a teacher and principal at M Street High School, now known as Dunbar High School in Northwest.

Prosperity Media and Koalaty Entertainment showcased Sis Anna on Dec. 7 before a diverse crowd that included Vivian M. May, an assistant professor of Women's Studies at Syracuse University in Syracuse, N.Y. The short, 15-minute clip received rave reviews from guests. The screening also doubled as a



Anna Julia Cooper

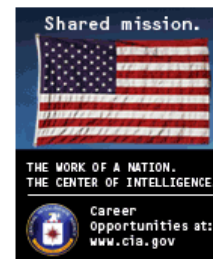
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fundraiser aimed to gather financial support for a full-length version of the film.

Cherri Styles is a longtime District resident and walked away impressed by what she'd seen.

"It was very informative. I had no idea that Dr. Cooper taught at what's now known as Dunbar High School, and I'm a native Washingtonian," said Styles, who lives in Southeast. "I was very impressed. If there were more teachers who were role models like her, I don't believe that there would be such a high dropout rate in D.C. public schools."

Hawkins and Sherelle R. Williams, both producers, first became familiar with Cooper's achievements two-and-a-half years ago when whittling down their list of subjects for their next docudrama. Hawkins said the two signed on immediately.

"She fascinated us during our research and we were really upset that we didn't know about her," said Hawkins, a 25-year film industry veteran. "We thought that she would make a great film. I hope people leave here feeling inspired to learn more about her."

The film, *Sis Anna*, features 12 actors and actresses and 30 extras. Scenes from the film were shot at the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives and the Akwaaba Bed & Breakfast in Northwest, owned by former *Essence* magazine editor-in-chief, Monique Greenwood.

Cooper received her bachelor's degree in 1884 and master's degree just three years later from Ohio's Oberlin College. Years later she earned her Ph.D. from the University of Paris (Sorbonne) at the age of 56.

The United States Postal Service released a commemorative stamp in Cooper's honor in 2009 and pages 26 and 27 of every United States passport features one of her quotes.

Sahaadat Hamed-Owens, 11, wants to become an actress. While she said she enjoyed playing the role of one of Cooper's five adopted children in *Sis Anna*, Sahaadat, now has a new role model.

"She was really involved in the educational system and she inspired a lot of people," Sahaadat said.

"That's why this film was made and it's very important for people to know about her."

Please contact Prosperity Media Enterprise at 202-841-1807 for information regarding donations.

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