

KAREN KALISH
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Karen Kalish is a serial social entrepreneur focused on literacy, closing the academic and opportunity and achievement gaps, and ending racial discrimination. She is Founder of Cultural Leadership, Founder and Executive Director of Home Works! The Teacher Home Visit Program and Books and Badges, and is President of the Estelle W. and Karen S. Kalish Foundation.

Karen lived in Washington, D.C. for 27 years, Chicago for five years and Cambridge, Massachusetts for two years. In Washington she started:

- ***Operation Understanding DC*** – a year-long program for Black and Jewish high school students that teaches them about their own and each other's race, religion, culture and history.

She returned to St. Louis in 2001 (after being gone for 34 years) where she is working on education reform and establishing a level playing field for the minority community, especially African Americans. Her programs are:

- ***Home Works! The Teacher Home Visit Program*** raises academic achievement of students, especially those in low income, underperforming schools, by training and paying teachers to go to the homes of their students to get parents involved in their children's education. Home Works! provides educators with the tools and support that strengthen relationships between a student's home and school to increase academic achievement, attendance and parental involvement, and decrease discipline referrals. And it's working!
- ***Books and Badges*** partners St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department police recruits and other reading partners with St. Louis Public School (SLPS) elementary school students to improve reading and language skills.
- ***Cultural Leadership*** - a year-long educational leadership program for high school students to teach them to be activists, advocates, and change agents to rid America of racism and all forms of discrimination to make America a country with justice and opportunity for all.
- ***Sigma Aldrich Reading Partners*** put Sigma employees into SLPS elementary schools on a weekly basis.

Karen received an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School in 2000 (at the age of 54!) and spent a second year there non-degree taking a full load of classes. She took everything in the African American, Leadership, and Nonprofit departments. (She was so proud of her degree from Harvard that she took her diploma to Kinko's and enlarged it to make wallpaper which papers her office bathroom wall!)

Karen taught elementary school for six years in Washington, D.C. (1967-73) before becoming the consumer and investigative TV reporter in 1974 for CBS-TV there. In 1978 she became the consumer and investigative reporter for ABC-TV in Chicago, and then the Washington, D.C. reporter/producer for Entertainment Tonight. In 1987, she started Kalish Communications to teach clients how to talk to the media without putting their foot in their mouth and how to write and give dynamic, interesting speeches and presentations. She has served on the Boards of Directors of many nonprofits from the NAACP to the District of Columbia Jewish Community Center. She has won several awards for her community involvement and is the founder in 1994 of *Operation Understanding DC*, an educational, leadership program for Black and Jewish high school students in Washington, D.C.

Karen is the author of [How to Give a Terrific Presentation](#), [Dealing Effectively with the Media](#), and [I'll See You On The Radio](#). She has traveled widely nationally and internationally including hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon in 2005, and visiting Antarctica in 2010.