

## KAREN S. KALISH

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Karen Kalish is a serial social entrepreneur focused on literacy, closing the academic, opportunity, and achievement gaps, and ending racial discrimination. She is the founder of Cultural Leadership and founder and CEO of HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program and Books and Badges.

Karen lived in Washington, D.C. for 27 years, Chicago for five years, and Cambridge, Massachusetts for two years. She taught school for six years in Washington, D.C. before becoming the consumer and investigative TV reporter for CBS-TV there. In 1978 she had the same beat for ABC-TV in Chicago, and then was 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 feet in their mouths 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 and has won several awards for her community service including a 2015 Purpose Prize Fellowship and the NCCJ Brotherhood and Sisterhood Award for 2017.

In Washington in 1993 she started:

- *Operation Understanding DC* – a year-long leadership program for Black and Jewish high school students that teaches them about their own and each other's race, religion, culture, and history. It is in its 25<sup>th</sup> year.

In 2001 Karen returned to St. Louis (after being gone for 34 years), where she works on education transformation and establishing a level playing field for the minority community, especially African Americans. The programs she has started are:

- *HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program* raises academic achievement of students performing below grade level by training, supporting, and paying teachers to go to the homes of their students to get families engaged in their children's education. HOME WORKS! teachers build trust and relationships to partner with parents to increase school readiness, academic achievement, attendance, and classroom behavior at school. It's working!
- *Books and Badges* partners St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department police recruits and other reading partners with St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) elementary school students to improve reading and language skills.
- *Cultural Leadership* is a year-long educational leadership program for high school students to teach them about civil rights, social justice and democracy, and how to be activists, advocates, and change agents to rid America of racism and all forms of discrimination to make ours a country with justice and opportunity for all.
- *Millipore Sigma (formerly Sigma Aldrich) Reading Partners* puts employees into under-performing elementary schools weekly reading and writing with students.

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

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.