

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Peggy Cooper Davis

PERSON

**Davis, Peggy Cooper, 1943-**

**Alternative Names:** Peggy Cooper Davis;

**Life Dates:** February 19, 1943-

**Place of Birth:** Hamilton, Ohio, USA

**Residence:** New York, New York

**Work:** New York, New York

**Occupations:** Law Professor

## Biographical Note

Professor and lawyer Peggy Cooper Davis was born on February 19, 1943 in Hamilton, Ohio to librarian and genealogist Margaret Gillespie Cooper and George Clinton Cooper, a member of the "Golden Thirteen," the first African American officers in the U.S. Navy. After graduating from Roosevelt High School in 1960, Davis went on to receive her B.A. degree in philosophy from Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio in 1964. She then earned her J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 1968.

Davis began her legal career as a staff attorney for the Community Action for Legal Services in New York. She went on to become an associate at Poletti Freidin Prashker Feldman & Gartner, before working as a clerk at the Federal District Court under Judge Robert L. Carter. During her time there, Davis attended the New York Society of Freudian Psychologists, graduating from there in 1973. She then became associate counsel for the Capital Punishment Project, an initiative begun by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. After working with the NAACP for four years, Davis became the first African American female professor at Rutgers University School of Law in 1977, where she taught criminal procedure and civil rights law. Davis worked as the deputy criminal justice coordinator for the City of New York in 1978, before serving as judge of the Family Court of the State of New York from 1980 to 1983. In September of 1983, Davis joined the New York University School of Law faculty, where she taught lawyering, evidence, and family law. In 1986, she obtained a full time professorship, and was named the John S. R. Shad Professor of Lawyering and Ethics at New York University School of Law in 1992. Davis also served as director of The Lawyering Program at New York University School of Law from 1998 to 2010, when she became director of the Experiential Learning Lab.

Davis served on the board of directors for several organizations, including the Equal Justice Initiative, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Balm Foundation, the Vera Institute of Justice, the Northside Center for Child Development, and the Russell Sage Foundation. In 2008, she received the Distinguished Teaching Award from New York University. Davis published *Neglected Stories: The Constitution and Family Values* in 1997, and, along with her daughter Elizabeth Cooper Davis, published *Enacting Pleasure: Artists and Scholars Respond to Carol Gilligan's Map of Love* in 2011.

Davis and her husband, Gordon J. Davis, have one daughter.

Peggy Cooper Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 12, 2016.

## Related Entries

**Hampton University Laboratory School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Weaver Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Jackson School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Roosevelt High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Diploma**

**Western College for Women** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A. cum laude**

**Harvard Law School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**J.D.**

**Barnard College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Williamsburg Legal Services** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1968 to 1969]

**Staff Attorney**

**Community Action for Legal Services** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1969 to 1970]

**Fellow/Staff Attorney**

**Poletti Freidin Prashker Feldman & Gartner** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1970 to 1972]

**Associate**

**Southern District Court of New York** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1972 to 1973]

**Clerk**

**NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1973 to 1977]

**Associate Counsel**

**Rutgers University School of Law-Newark** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1977 to 1978]

**Associate Professor**

**City of New York** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1978 to 1980]

**Deputy Criminal Justice Coordinator**

**Family Court of the State of New York** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1980 to 1983]

**Judge**

**New York University Law School** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1983 to 1986]

**Associate Professor of Law**

**New York University Law School** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1986 to 1992]

**Professor of Law**

**Dreyfus Corporation** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1990 to ?]

**Director**

**New York University Law School** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1992 to ?]

**John S. R. Shad Professor of Lawyering and Ethics**

**The Lawyering Program, New York University School of Law** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1998 to 2010]

**Director**

**Dreyfus Corporation** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2007 to ?]

**Director**

**New York University Experiential Learning Lab** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 2010 to ?]

**Director**

**Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University**

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Fellow Designate**

**Northside Center for Child Development** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1971 to 1983]

**Director**

**New York City Board of Corrections** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1977 to 1980]

**Member**

**Vera Institute of Justice** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1985 to 1990]

**Director**

**Russell Sage Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1989 to 1999]

**Trustee**

**Hanschu Commission** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1989 to 1993]

**Member**

**The Hirschhorn Museum** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1993 to 1995]

**Trustee**

**The Balm Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to ?]

**Director**

**Russell Sage Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1996 to 1999]

**Board Chair**

**Brennan Center for Justice** [MEMBEROF]

[from 2000 to 2003]

**Director**

**Mayor's Committee on the Judiciary** [MEMBEROF]

[from 2002 to 2004]

**Member**

**Equal Justice Initiative** [MEMBEROF]

[from 2005 to ?]

**Director**

