



Len Cooper

Author · Award-Winning Journalist · Speaker · Public Educator

Jim Crow Birmingham · Israel & Jewish Life · Memory · Belonging · Human Dignity

Available for Keynotes · Talks · Conversations · Educational Programs · Book Talks

Speaker Profile

ABOUT LEN

Len Cooper is an award-winning journalist, author, speaker, and public educator whose life has crossed worlds few people experience in a single lifetime. Raised under Jim Crow in Birmingham, Alabama, he later experienced homelessness in Washington, D.C., found his way into journalism, and built a career supporting secure communications for U.S. Army military intelligence throughout Southern Europe.

An unexpected first journey to Israel in 1979 became the beginning of 57 visits, nearly a year of living there, enduring friendships, and a spiritual journey toward Judaism that has unfolded over more than four decades. Through deeply personal stories, Len explores what it means to survive oppression, be seen by another person, discover possibility beyond the circumstances of one's birth, and find belonging in unexpected places.

SIGNATURE SPEAKING PROGRAMS

A Life Beyond the Expected Script

From Jim Crow Birmingham to a Life Across Worlds

A deeply personal account of growing up under segregation, experiencing poverty and homelessness, becoming an award-winning journalist, supporting military intelligence operations across Europe, and building a life Len could not have imagined as a boy in Birmingham. At its heart is a story about dignity, unexpected opportunity, and the people who recognized possibility in him.

I Met Judaism Through People

A Forty-Year Journey Toward Faith, Memory, and Belonging

Len's relationship with Judaism began not through doctrine, but through encounters with people whose compassion changed his life - from a quiet connection in segregated Birmingham to families who welcomed him in Jerusalem and Washington, D.C. Those relationships led to 57 journeys to Israel, sustained study of Jewish history and memory, and a spiritual journey toward Judaism now in its final formal stage.

Growing Up Black in Birmingham

Memory, Survival, and the Human Reality of Jim Crow

A first-person account of childhood in segregated Birmingham and the complicated human realities of living through one of the defining places and periods of the Civil Rights era. Len brings history out of abstraction and into the daily fears, relationships, choices, and acts of dignity that shaped Black life under Jim Crow.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

The Watcher: Slavery After Slavery

America's hidden peonage system, forced labor, and family memory.

Writing as Resistance

Preserving buried history through journalism, memoir, and story.

From Colonial Namibia to Nazi Germany

A researched historical program on racial ideology, the Herero and Nama genocide, and the Holocaust.

PUBLICATIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

Len is the author of *The Watcher*, which explores slavery after slavery through America's hidden peonage system, and *The Children of My Knee*, a memoir of family trauma, faith, racism, resilience, and redemption.

His writing has appeared in *The Washington Post* and other national publications. In 1996, he received a first-place award from the National Association of Black Journalists for feature writing.

SELECTED SPEAKING EXPERIENCE

Museums & Cultural Institutions

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum · B'nai B'rith

Universities

Howard University · Dartmouth College · University of Maryland · Indiana University

International & Military Settings

NATO venues in Belgium and Italy · Academic and civic institutions throughout Europe, Israel, and the United States

Schools & Community Programs

International School of Naples · Anglican School of Jerusalem · Youth prison and homeless shelter programs in Naples

AVAILABLE FORMATS

Keynotes · Talks · Conversations · Educational Programs · Panels · Workshops · Book Talks

Programs customized by audience, setting, and event goals

IDEAL AUDIENCES

Universities · Museums · Historical Societies · Libraries · Civil Rights Organizations · Jewish & Interfaith Communities · Schools · Civic Organizations · Military & International Institutions · Leadership Programs

SPEAKING INQUIRIES

Cheryl Janis Agency, LLC

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“I first encountered Judaism through compassion, generosity, and human dignity.”
