



In Memorium



Mary Starke Harper
1920-2006

Mary Stark Harper, PhD, RN, FAAN was a registered nurse, sociologist, clinical psychologist, secondary school educator, and program administrator. Dr. Harper held degrees from St. Louis University, the University of Minnesota, and Tuskegee University. She provided consultations throughout the United States and Africa, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, North and South America. For years she was the coordinator of Long Term Care Programs, National Institute of Mental Health, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. She was a pioneer geropsychiatric nurse with great political acumen and extensive knowledge of the federal bureaucratic system. She served as a special adviser on mental health and aging to former presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton.

Dr. Harper was the first black nurse to get a degree in psychiatric nursing with a focus on the elderly. She was the recipient of many awards including the Joseph C. Valley Gerontological Professional of the Year in 1989. She was designated a Living Legend by the Fellows of the American Academy of Nurses and received the Appreciation Award from the Black Nurses' Association as a founder of the organization. Tuskegee University has established a Mary Harper Endowed Chair in Gerontological Nursing Research, the first of its kind, at Tuskegee University, and the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center.