

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Andrea Lawrence

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Lawrence, Andrea, 1946-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 19, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:36:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Computer science professor and computer scientist Andrea Lawrence (1946 - ) was chair of the computer and information sciences department at Spelman College from 1994-2009 and is currently as associate professor at Spelman. In 1993, she became the first African American to earn her Ph.D. degree in computer science from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Lawrence was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 19, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_071
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Computer scientist and computer science professor Andrea Lawrence was born in Asheville, North Carolina on October 6, 1946 to Jeanne Hayes and Emory Williams. Her family supported education and both of her parents finished college after she was born. Lawrence graduated from Allen High School in Ashville in 1964 and enrolled at Spelman College. She finished her undergraduate education at Purdue University earning her B.S. degree in mathematics in 1970. From 1979 to 1983, Lawrence taught mathematics in Cincinnati Public Schools before beginning her long career at Spelman College. She earned her M.S. degree in computer science from Atlanta University in 1985.

Having begun her career at Spelman as a lecturer and computer literacy coordinator, Lawrence was promoted to director of the computer science program in 1986. She held that position for three years before going back to school to pursue her doctorate. In 1993, Lawrence became the first African American to obtain her Ph.D. degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology in computer science. She then returned to Spelman as an assistant professor in computer science, and in 1994, she became chair of the computer and information sciences department. Lawrence was promoted to associate professor of computer science in 1995. Throughout her career, she has been instrumental in programs to increase the number of minorities and woman involved in scientific disciplines, serving as president of the Association of Departments of Computer Science/Engineering at Minority Institutions (ADMI) and associate director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) Scholars at Spelman College. Lawrence teaches a range of computer science classes including programming languages, computer graphics, artificial intelligence, and human-computer interactions. She also supervises projects on remote sensing in Antarctica, which uses satellites or aircraft to gather information about Antarctic ice. In addition to her teaching, Lawrence has published numerous papers for her research on human-computer interaction, including using computer animations to teach algorithms.

Lawrence has received several awards to date including the National Technical Association's Technical Achiever of the Year Award in 2004. She was also named a Technology All-Star in 2005 by the National Women of Color (NWOC). Lawrence lives in Atlanta, Georgia and has three grown children, Deirdre, a scientific consultant, Allegra, an attorney and Valerie, a student.

Andrea Lawrence was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 17, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Andrea Lawrence was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 19, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Computer science professor and computer scientist Andrea Lawrence (1946 - ) was chair of the computer and information sciences department at Spelman College from 1994-2009 and is currently as associate professor at Spelman. In 1993, she became the first African American to earn her Ph.D. degree in computer science from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Lawrence, Andrea, 1946-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Lawrence, Andrea, 1946- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Computer Scientist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, March 19, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, Section A2012\_071\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:42  
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Andrea Lawrence describes her family history. She talks about her great grandfather, Chester Hayes, Sr.; who was a slave from North Carolina. Once emancipated, he walked from North Carolina to Virginia. Lawrence also talks about her grandmother, Ella Mae Coles, who was born in Albany Georgia. Lawrence was born to Jeanne Coles Hayes, a teacher, and Emory Wardell Williams, who worked on the riverboats and later became a counselor. Lawrence's mother, Jeanne went to the same school as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Lawrence's father also fought in World War II. Her parents met at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. When her parents went to Temple University to pursue Master's degrees, Lawrence was raised by her grandparents.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, Section A2012\_071\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:40  
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Andrea Lawrence talks about her early childhood memories in Asheville, North Carolina. Lawrence developed a love of reading at an early age and had her first library card at age four. Lawrence talks about the integration of Asheville, North Carolina, which was particularly exciting for Lawrence because the libraries and movie theaters were also integrated. Lawrence remembers that she was introduced to computers from watching the \$64,000 Question. After that, Lawrence's mother purchased a computer for the home. Lawrence also talks about her travels with her father, uncle, and cousins. They visited Denver, Colorado; Nashville, Tennessee; and St. Louis, Missouri. Lawrence describes the discrimination her family encountered during their travels.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, Section A2012\_071\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:03  
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Andrea Lawrence talks about her experiences at Allen High School. Because it was small, Lawrence was not exposed to trigonometry or calculus, although she was valedictorian of her high school graduating class and selected as a Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Scholar. She was also invited to the White House and received a medal for her achievement. Lawrence then went on to Spelman College, where she continued to study math and was active in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Lawrence talks about meeting her husband at a dance for Spelman College. When her husband graduated from Morehouse, they moved to West Lafayette, Indiana.

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Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, Section A2012\_071\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:23  
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Andrea Lawrence shares her early perceptions of computer scientists. Initially she thought computer scientists spent all their time alone in basements. Lawrence learned Fortran as an undergraduate. After graduating, Dr. Benjamin Martin informed her about the opportunities in computer science and she decided to pursue a Master's degree in computer science from Atlanta University Center Consortium. Later, Lawrence earned a Ph.D. from Georgia Institute of Technology. Lawrence discusses her doctoral work of determining the best way to teach computer science algorithms. Lawrence also talks about the difficulty she faced as an African American woman during her doctoral studies at Georgia Institute of Technology.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, Section A2012\_071\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:00  
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Andrea Lawrence discusses opportunities in computer science at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), where HBCUs offer only undergraduate studies in computer science. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and Howard University are both establishing Ph.D. programs. Lawrence discusses cultural and gender bias in the computer science field. Lawrence talks about her legacy and hopes that her students will remember her as the teacher that made a difference in their lives.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Lawrence, Section A2012\_071\_001\_006, TRT: 6:08:58  
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Andrea Lawrence reflects on her life and career. She also describes her photos.

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Affirmative action programs.