

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Stephanie Davis

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Davis, Stephanie, 1958- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, |
| Dates: | September 13, 2007 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2007 |
| Physical Description: | 8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:45:15). |
| Abstract: | County magistrate judge The Honorable Stephanie Davis (1958 -) served on the Magistrate Court of Fulton County in Atlanta, Georgia. Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 13, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2007_262 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Magistrate Judge Stephanie Cecile Davis was born on May 22, 1958 in Atlanta, Georgia to Myrtle Reid Davis and Albert Miles Davis. Davis graduated from Northside High School in 1976, before receiving her B.A. degree from Stanford University in 1980, and her J.D. degree from Emory University in 1985.

Just after receiving her degree from Stanford University, Davis was involved in a life changing car accident that left her a paraplegic. The trauma from the experience was not enough to stifle her career goals; just five years later, she received her law degree. One year later, in 1986, Davis began working for the Superior Court of Fulton County as a law clerk and staff attorney.

In 1990, Davis worked as a staff attorney for the Georgia Court of Appeals. During her tenure, she became involved in several civic organizations, including the Atlanta Women's Foundation, which is focused exclusively on the issues of women and girls in the metropolitan Atlanta community.

In 2000, Davis began serving as the Fulton County Magistrate Judge in Atlanta. In 2001, Davis filed the first lawsuit against Atlanta's public transportation system, MARTA, to improve access to public transportation for all Atlanta residents with disabilities. In 2005, she began serving on the advisory board of the Virginia C. Crawford Research Institute.

Davis was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 13, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis was conducted by Denise Gines on September

13, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. County magistrate judge The Honorable Stephanie Davis (1958 -) served on the Magistrate Court of Fulton County in Atlanta, Georgia.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

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

Persons:

Davis, Stephanie, 1958-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Reed, Michael (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Davis, Stephanie, 1958- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Fulton County (Ga.)

Occupations:

County Magistrate Judge

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 The Honorable Stephanie Davis, September 13, 2007. 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).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis was born on May 22, 1958 in Atlanta, Georgia to Myrtle Davis and Albert Miles Davis. Davis' maternal great-grandmother, a widow, worked as a domestic in New York and California, while Davis' maternal grandmother, Emmalee Williams Reid, helped raise her siblings in Rock Hill, South Carolina. A graduate of the South Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical Institute, Davis' grandmother taught, while her husband, Carl Reid, worked at the post office. Davis' mother was born in Rock Hill in 1931. Upon earning a pharmacy degree at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans,

she worked at a drugstore in Atlanta, where she met Davis' father, an Atlanta native. His father, Edward Langston Reid, Sr., was a postman; and his mother, Lena Miles Davis, was the principal of Atlanta's Blandtown School. Davis' father majored in biology at Atlanta's Morehouse College, and then attended the Howard University College of Medicine. From 1942 to 1945, he served as a medic in a segregated U.S. Army unit.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_002, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis' paternal grandfather, Edward Langston Davis, Sr., was born in Sparta, Georgia to an African American mother, Suzie Davis, and white father, Judge Franklin Lightfoot Little; and worked as a postal carrier in Atlanta, Georgia until his retirement in the 1950s. Davis' father, Albert Miles Davis, was a physician; and, after his U.S. Army service, had two children with his first wife. After his divorce, he met Davis' mother, whom he married in 1957, one year before Davis' birth. When Davis was two years old, her parents built a home in Atlanta's Collier Heights, a newly developed community for African American middle class professionals. She attended the majority black St. Paul of the Cross Catholic School, where most of the faculty was white. In the 1960s, Davis' father served as the president of Atlanta's NAACP chapter, and fought to end hospital segregation with the Doctors' Committee for Implementation, while her family took part in the boycotts of segregated stores.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_003, TRT: 0:28:25 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis grew up in the Collier Heights community of Atlanta, Georgia, and attended preschool at the home of Annie Lou Hendricks, who had been her father's high school teacher. She continued her education at the majority black St. Paul of the Cross Catholic School; where, in the sixth grade, she learned about Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party. In 1971, Davis and other African American students from Collier Heights integrated Northside High School, a public school in Atlanta's Buckhead area. There, Davis participated in the student council, marching band and WIGO Radio's student broadcasting program. She also played the flute for the monthly folk mass at St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church. Davis occasionally traveled outside of Atlanta, including to Camp Highland, a YWCA camp in Cobb County; Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.; and on a tour of Europe. Although her mother encouraged her to apply to colleges in the Northeast, she matriculated at Stanford University in 1976.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_004, TRT: 0:28:27 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis majored in communications at Stanford University in Stanford, California. During her first two years there, she lived on campus with a roommate, Serene Charles, who was the only other African American on her hall. Davis developed an interest in theater, and acted in productions of 'Carmen Jones' and 'Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope.' She also advocated for the university to divest from South Africa, although the administration failed to do so while Davis was a student. Davis talks about Kofi Lomotey, a graduate student who led a study group for one of her black studies courses. Because the universities allowed only fraternities on campus, Davis pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's San Francisco chapter. Upon graduating in 1980, she moved to Oakland, California to work for Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company; and, around this time, decided to apply to law school. In September of that year, Davis was involved in a serious car accident.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_005,
TRT: 0:29:30 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis was severely injured in a car accident in 1980, when her friend fell asleep at the wheel on their way to Lake Tahoe. Davis suffered a spinal cord injury, which paralyzed her below the chest. After receiving preliminary care at a hospital in Reno, Nevada, she was transferred to Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose, California, where she began her rehabilitation with Dr. Conal Brian Wilmot. Her mother, Myrtle Davis, moved to San Jose to support Davis' healing, leaving Davis' sister, Stacey Stewart, and father, Albert Miles Davis, in Atlanta, Georgia. Davis continued to prepare for the LSAT, which she took one month after the accident. In March of 1981, after six months at the hospital, Davis returned to her parents' home in Atlanta. That fall, she matriculated at the Emory University School of Law, and learned to write with a brace. During this time, her mother ran for a seat on the Atlanta City Council against incumbent Q.V. Williamson, and was elected.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_006,
TRT: 0:29:53 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis attended the Emory University School of Law in Atlanta, Georgia from 1981 to 1985. During this time, Davis was in rehabilitation at Atlanta's Shepherd Center for her spinal cord injury; and, due to her paralysis, participated in few activities on campus. She passed the Georgia State bar examination in 1986, and began clerking for Judge Clarence Cooper in the Fulton County Superior Court. When Governor Joe Frank Harris appointed Cooper to the Georgia Court of Appeals, she continued to clerk for him there. As chair of the Fulton County Commission on Disability Affairs from 1986 to 1990, Davis helped establish the county's Office of Disability Affairs, and advocated for improvements to the Fulton County Courthouse, which was inaccessible to wheelchair users. In 1994, Judge John H. Ruffin, Jr. succeeded Cooper, who was promoted to a federal court position. One year later, Davis was diagnosed with bladder cancer, and stopped working to undergo treatment.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_007,
TRT: 0:28:35 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis left her clerkship at the Georgia Court of Appeals to undergo a cystectomy in 1996. During the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Atlanta that year, Davis met regularly with the Olympic committee to address accessibility concerns at the venues and the William B. Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport. In 1998, Davis' father, Albert Miles Davis, passed away from prostate cancer; and her mother, Myrtle Davis, transitioned from the Atlanta City Council to the city's water department. In 2000, Judge A.L. Thompson appointed Davis to a part time position at the Magistrate Court of Fulton County; and, two years later, she became a full time magistrate court judge. In 2001, Davis was a plaintiff in a federal disability discrimination lawsuit against the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, which had access problems like inoperable elevators at transit stations. During this time, she continued her rehabilitation at Atlanta's Shepherd Center, and learned to drive.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Stephanie Davis, Section A2007_262_001_008,
TRT: 0:22:45 ?

The Honorable Stephanie Davis joined the board of the Atlanta Women's Fund, a part of the Metropolitan Atlanta Community Foundation, Inc., in 1996. In the following years, the fund was developed into the Atlanta Women's Foundation, an organization committed to issues of domestic violence and economic justice.

Davis was involved for ten years, ending her board service in 2006. Davis also served on the board of the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Georgia, where she received rehabilitation treatment for her spinal cord injury. Davis reflects upon her plans for her career, her life and legacy and her concerns for Atlanta's African American community. She also shares a message to future generations, and concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.