

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Anna Langford

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Langford, Anna, 1917-2008  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Anna Langford,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | November 4, 2002   |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2002   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:50:56).  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Civil rights lawyer and city alderman The Honorable Anna Langford (1917 - 2008 ) was the first woman elected to Chicago City Council. Langford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 4, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2002_190  |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.  |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chicago alderman and lawyer Anna Langford was born on October 27, 1917 in Springfield, Ohio. Her father, Arthur J. Riggs, died when she was only nine months old and her mother, Alice, died when Langford was eight years old. She lived with her grandmother until 1933, when she moved to Chicago to live with her aunt and uncle. There, she graduated from Hyde Park High School in 1935. Langford attended a trade school to learn office skills and from 1938 to 1956 worked as a typist in the Social Security office, the Election Commissioners Office and in the Office of the Secretary of State.

In February of 1956, after studying for eleven years, she received her J.D. degree from John Marshall Law School at Roosevelt University in Chicago and began an extensive career as a civil rights and criminal lawyer. Langford practiced law throughout the State of Illinois, defended civil rights workers in the 1960s and joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Chicago civil rights marches. In 1963 and 1964, she provided free legal services in many areas, including the State of Mississippi.

In 1971, Langford became the first woman elected to the Chicago City Council. Although she was defeated for reelection in 1975, she returned later to serve two additional terms from 1983, the year she retired from practicing law, until 1991, when she retired from the City Council. She has received numerous humanitarian and civic awards and honors, including being inducted into the Book of Legends by the Black Women Lawyers Association for her immeasurable contributions to the City of Chicago as a lawyer and a public servant.

Anna Langford passed away on September 17, 2008 at the age of 90.

Anna Langford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 4, 2002.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Anna Langford was conducted by Adele Hodge on November 4, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights lawyer and city alderman The Honorable Anna Langford (1917 - 2008 ) was the first woman elected to Chicago City Council.

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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

## 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:

Langford, Anna, 1917-2008

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Langford, Anna, 1917-2008--Interviews

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African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews

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City Council members--Illinois--Interviews.

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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Chicago (Ill.)

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## **Occupations:**

Civil Rights Lawyer

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City Alderman

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

LawMakers|PoliticalMakers

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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 The Honorable Anna Langford, November 4, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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 The Honorable Anna Langford,  
Section A2002\_190\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:26 2002/11/04

Anna Langford narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Anna Langford,  
Section A2002\_190\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:50 2002/11/04

Anna Langford describes her family background.

Langford was born on October 27, 1917 in Springfield, Ohio to Alice Riggs and Arthur J. Riggs, Jr. Her father died when she was nine months old. His father, Arthur J. Riggs, Sr. was the founder and first Grand Exalted Ruler of the IBPOE of W in Springfield, Ohio. Langford's mother passed for a white woman, but turned away from a white clinic when she was in labor with her fourth child, and died while on route to a hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio. Langford was raised by her white grandmother, Minnie Reed. In 1933, Langford moved to Chicago, Illinois and graduated from Hyde Park High School in 1936. While in college at Roosevelt University in Chicago, she worked in the social security office, the election commission, and the Illinois Secretary of State's office. In 1956, Langford graduated from John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Illinois. Langford was married to Tony Fambro and Lawrence Langford, and has a son named Lawrence Langford, Jr.

African American Families--Ohio--Springfield.

Race Relations—Ohio—1920-1930.

Segregation in Education—Ohio—Springfield.

Improved, Benevolent, Protective Order of Elks of the

World.

Ku Klux Klan—Ohio—1920-1930.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Anna Langford,  
Section A2002\_190\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:08 2002/11/04

Anna Langford talks about her legal career and Civil Rights work. After receiving her J.D. degree from John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Illinois, Langford began her law practice in an office above a Chinese restaurant at 71st Street and South Park Avenue. In 1963 and 1964, Langford investigated Civil Rights issues such as the case of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman, in Mississippi. Langford also worked with the Mississippi Challenge and interviewed African Americans who were denied the right to vote. In 1967, Langford ran against Paul Sheridan, Jr. for 16th ward alderman in Chicago, Illinois and lost due to voting fraud in the 27th district. In 1971, Langford campaigned again for alderman and won, becoming one of the first two female aldermen in Chicago, Illinois along with Marilou Hedlund. Langford was reelected in 1983 and 1987.

Divorce—United States.

African American lawyers—Chicago (Ill.).

Civil rights workers—Mississippi—1960-1970

Chaney, James Earl—1943-1964.

Schwerner, Michael Henry—1939-1964.

Goodman, Andrew—1943-1964.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Anna Langford,  
Section A2002\_190\_001\_004, TRT: 0:18:32 2002/11/04

Anna Langford describes her political career in the Chicago, Illinois City Council. In 1983, Langford was re-elected to the City Council and Harold Washington was elected Mayor of Chicago. Langford describes the tensions that took place in the Chicago City Council during Washington's first term as Mayor when he faced opposition from white aldermen Ed Vrdolyak and Edward Burke. In 1987, after Washington's sudden death in office, Langford nominated HistoryMaker Eugene Sawyer to succeed Washington. Sawyer ran against Timothy Evans and won, but lost the election in 1989 to Richard M.

Daley. Langford recalls the political tensions following both the 1987 and 1989 elections, and reflects on their significance for African American mayoral candidates in Chicago, Illinois. Langford reflects on her continuing legal work providing support for victims of harassment. She ends the interview by reflecting on her legacy.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Discrimination in employment—Chicago (Ill.)

Sex discrimination in employment—Chicago (Ill.)

Criminal records—Expungement—Illinois.