

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lisa E. Davis

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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>	Davis, Lisa E.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lisa E. Davis,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 8, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:56:47).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Entertainment lawyer Lisa E. Davis (1960 - ) is a partner at Frankfurt Kurnit, Klein & Selz, where her clients include Spike Lee and Terry McMillan. Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 8, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_004
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entertainment lawyer Lisa Ellen Davis was born on February 6, 1960 in Queens, New York. Her parents are Gwen Webb, a retired educator and Nat Davis, a jazz musician. She graduated from New Rochelle High School in 1977. In 1981, Davis received her B.A. degree from Harvard University and her J.D. degree from New York University School of Law in 1985.

Davis worked as a law clerk for the Honorable Constance Baker Motley in the United States Federal Court from 1985 to 1986. In 1986, she began working as an associate with the law firm of Kramer Levin. She joined Frankfurt Kurnit, Klein & Selz where she became a partner in 1995. Davis' duties include negotiating financing, production and distribution agreements. Davis' special expertise is in advising clients on exploiting potential markets. She has helped entertainment clients expand into complimentary business, including book and magazine publishing, concert promotion, music, celebrity endorsements and merchandising. Her clients include Spike Lee and Terry McMillan.

Davis often speaks on entertainment and legal ethics. She has presented at the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, the Corporate Counsel Women of Color Conference, the Copyright Society, the Internet Conference; and the National Bar Association Convention.

Davis has been quoted in 'Elle' magazine, 'The New York Times' and 'Black Enterprise' magazine. She has been noted as one of America's top black lawyers and one of the top 50 Power Brokers in entertainment by 'Black Enterprise'magazine.

Davis is a member of the New York City Bar, the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association and the National Bar Association.

Davis was interviewed by 'The HistoryMakers' on January 8, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lisa E. Davis was conducted by Denise Gines on January 8, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Entertainment lawyer Lisa E. Davis (1960 - ) is a partner at Frankfurt Kurnit, Klein & Selz, where her clients include Spike Lee and Terry McMillan.

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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:

Davis, Lisa E.

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Davis, Lisa E.--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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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 Lisa E. Davis, January 8, 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 1/21/2013 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, January 8, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Lisa E. Davis, Section A2007\_004\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:11  
2007/01/08

Lisa E. Davis begins her interview by discussing her family history. Her paternal great grandfather lived with some of her great aunts in a big rambling apartment in Harlem, New York. His name was Arthur Reid Davis Sr. and his family was originally from the Charleston, South Carolina area. Davis' paternal grandfather was Nathaniel Davis Sr. She describes him as a self-made man, who was able to parlay his reputation as one of the best dry cleaning pressers in Harlem into owning his own dry cleaning businesses. In 1946 when he and his wife, Earner (née Reid) Davis, moved to St. Albans, Queens in New York, they were the first black family to break the restrictive covenant act. Davis' father Nathaniel Davis Jr. was a jazz musician. She notes that living right around the

corner from jazz musicians like Lionel Hampton and Brook Benton in St. Albans during the late 1940s and early 1950s had a profound influence on her father's decision to become a musician. Davis' mother was Gwen (née Webb) Davis and her parents also lived in Harlem, but moved to Brooklyn during the early part of Davis' childhood. Davis' maternal grandparents were both from the West Indies. Her maternal grandmother, Iris Martin came over from Trinidad in the early part of the 20th century and landed on Ellis Island. Her grandmother's father was white and her mother was from Trinidad but was Venezuelan. Davis' maternal grandfather was also from Trinidad and came to the United States at the age of fourteen; his father was Portuguese and his mother was Trinidadian. When Davis' parents got divorced, her maternal grandmother purchased a Brownstone in Brooklyn for Davis, her mother and her brother to live in together. Davis recalls that her grandmother always looked out for her and her family. She describes her grandmother as a hardworking person, who was a seamstress and a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU).

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

African American businesspeople--New York (State)--New York.

Saint Albans (New York, N.Y.)

African American musicians.

African American grandmothers.

Video Oral History Interview with Lisa E. Davis, Section A2007\_004\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:58  
2007/01/08

Davis and her family moved to New Rochelle, New York in 1971. She discusses growing up in the new town, her school experiences and her education and career goals. Davis decided she wanted to be an attorney when she was eight years old. She wanted to become president and noticed that many of the politicians she had seen went to law school first. She recalls learning about Thurgood Marshall and other significant figures in African American history when she was in the second grade. She attended Albert Leonard Junior High School and New Rochelle High School. She counts herself as very fortunate to have gone to school following the Civil Rights Movement and to have had white teachers who believed that black children were smart and wanted them to succeed. Davis reminisces about her prom and prom date, future Lieutenant Governor of New York, David A. Paterson. She attended Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts—which was her number one choice.

Moving, Household--New York Region.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Career development.

African American high school students--New York (State)--New York.

Paterson, David A.

Video Oral History Interview with Lisa E. Davis, Section A2007\_004\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:11  
2007/01/08

Lisa E. Davis graduated from Harvard University in 1981 and from New York University in 1985, where she received her J. D. degree. She talks about clerking for Constance Baker Motley, who was a former Manhattan Borough President and the first woman appointed to the federal bench. Davis also speaks about deciding which law firm to work for, following her clerkship with Judge Motley. She had been a summer associate at Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP but did not want to continue working for the firm. Her first real job was at

Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP. Davis was at the law firm for two years before coming to Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz and eventually becoming a partner. She recalls her training at Frankfurt Kurnit and discusses her production work on many of director, Spike Lee's movies. According to Davis, the experience provided her with an opportunity to immerse herself in the business of entertainment law.

Motley, Constance Baker, 1921-2005.

Hairdressing of African Americans.

Sexism in language--United States.

Lee, Spike.

Professional training for lawyers.

Video Oral History Interview with Lisa E. Davis, Section A2007\_004\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:27  
2007/01/08

Lisa E. Davis talks about her speaking engagements and about a conference where she spoke on branding entertainment and intellectual property. She also explains what branded entertainment is. As an entertainment lawyer who works with African American clients, Davis plays a role in protecting the cultural legacy of blacks— and that makes her feel good about what she does. She asserts that she is passionate about education, politics, and literature and consequently has served on the board at East Harlem School at Exodus House and the Hurston-Wright Foundation. She points out that when she is not busy working or participating in organizations, she spends the rest of her time raising her two children, Marcus and Noel Davis— with husband, Anthony Jameson. Davis also mentions what she likes to do in her spare time. She is a distance runner and has run the New York Marathon twice. In addition, she talks about two attorneys that she admires professionally, Ted Wells and Thurgood Marshall.

Branded entertainment.

Celebrities as artists.

Hurston/Wright Foundation.

Celebrities--United States.