

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ada Anderson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Anderson, Ada
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson,
Dates:	May 13, 2010 and May 14, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:09:48).
Abstract:	Civic leader Ada Anderson (1921 - 2021) was the first African American elected to the board of the Austin Community College District. For her work with civil rights, she received several awards, including 'Woman of the Year.' Anderson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 13, 2010 and May 14, 2010, in Austin, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_011
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civic leader and philanthropist Ada Anderson has been highly acclaimed for her civil rights work. She was born October 2, 1921 in Austin, Texas to Cecilia and Walter Collins – the fourth of nine children. In 1937, Anderson graduated from L.C. Anderson High School which remained segregated until 1971. She went on to Tillotson College, graduating with her B.S. degree in home economics in 1941.

After college, Anderson worked for the Texas Employment Commission as an employment counselor creating workshops and seminars on dealing with finances, aimed particularly at women. She went on to teach for the Austin Independent School District and worked as a psychometrist. In 1951, she finished the coursework for a M.S. degree in library science. However, she could not complete the degree as the school would not allow her to attend the program's required fieldwork at the state library. This experience enforced Anderson's commitment to civil rights. In 1951, she gained co-ownership of the real estate and insurance firm *Anderson-Wormley* with her husband, Andy Anderson. Two years later she helped found the Austin chapter of *Jack and Jill of America* and worked as both a National corresponding secretary and its South Central regional director. In 1965, Anderson earned her M.S. degree in educational psychology at the University of Texas at Austin and completed graduate courses in business and finance at Northwestern University. A landmark election occurred in 1982 when Anderson was the first African American to win a countywide election in Travis County to serve on the Austin Community College Board.

Anderson is the recipient of many accolades including her entrance in the Texas Black Women's Hall of Fame and the African American Women's Hall of Fame both in 1986. In 1992 she was named Woman of the Year by the Women's Symphony League of Austin and in 1999 she co-chaired the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force for the Austin Independent School District. Her ties to the school board remained strong and in 2006 she was celebrated by the Austin School District Board of Trustees as an Outstanding Alumna in their Alumni Hall of Fame.

Ada Anderson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 13 and 14, 2010.

Anderson passed away on June 3, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ada Anderson was conducted by Denise Gines on May 13, 2010 and May 14, 2010, in Austin, Texas, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civic leader Ada Anderson (1921 - 2021) was the first African American elected to the board of the Austin Community College District. For her work with civil rights, she received several awards, including 'Woman of the Year.'

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:

Anderson, Ada

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Anderson, Ada--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Jack & Jill of America, Inc.

Occupations:

Civic Leader

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Ada Anderson, May 13, 2010 and May 14, 2010.
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 Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_001_001, TRT: 0:30:35 ?

Ada Anderson was born on October 2, 1921 in Pilot Knob, Texas to Cecilia Rucker Collins and Walter Collins. Her paternal great-grandmother, Elizabeth Collins, was fathered by Reverend William Harrington, who was a friend of her slaveholder. Anderson's paternal great-grandfather, Newton Isaac Collins, was the enslaved son of an Irishman, and learned reading, writing and carpentry before he was freed. After migrating to Austin, Texas in 1863, he was re-enslaved. He also met Anderson's great-grandmother in Austin, and established a construction company after emancipation. In 1872, he purchased a large tract of land from Henry Warnell, who escaped the Battle of the Alamo in 1836. In 1891, Anderson's great-grandfather traded the land in Austin for a property in Pilot Knob, where he built a Methodist church, cemetery and school, which he furnished and staffed. Generations later, Anderson began her education there; and, during the third grade, participated in box supper fundraisers to help build a new school.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_001_002, TRT: 0:31:19 ?

Ada Anderson's paternal great-grandfather, Newton Isaac Collins, bequeathed five hundred acres of land to his eight children, including Anderson's paternal grandfather, Dee Gabriel Collins. He built a two-story house on the property, which was located in Pilot Knob, Texas. There, Anderson's paternal grandparents raised sixteen children, and cultivated an orchard and large garden. Their sons worked the land, while their daughters tended to the home. A windmill and generator supplied electricity, and the home had running water. As Anderson's paternal aunts and uncles reached adulthood, her grandfather built each of them a house in Pilot Knob and provided materials to start their own farms. Anderson's parents, Cecilia Rucker Collins and Walter Collins, married and moved into a home that faced the extinct volcano for which the community was named. Anderson grew up there, and often spent time with her paternal grandparents, picking flowers with her grandmother or helping her grandfather feed the livestock.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_001_003, TRT: 0:31:45 ?

Ada Anderson's maternal grandmother, Ida Perry Rucker, was raised by her adoptive parents in Blanco County, Texas. Anderson's maternal grandfather, David Rucker, was born into slavery in Tennessee, and learned to read and write before emancipation. He valued education, and sent Anderson's mother, Cecilia Rucker Collins, to be educated in Oklahoma, where she lived briefly before returning to Texas. There, she married Walter Collins, and raised nine children, of whom Anderson was the fourth born. Her mother was involved in her education as the Sunday school superintendent and an active member of the Parent Teacher Association. Like her father, Anderson began her education at Pilot Knob Elementary School, which was built in 1891 by her paternal great-grandfather, Newton Isaac Collins. When Anderson reached the third grade, the Julius Rosenwald Fund built a new school, which was furnished with the original desks used by Anderson's paternal family for generations at Pilot Knob Elementary School.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_001_004, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Ada Anderson's father was educated through the seventh grade in Pilot Knob, Texas. Her mother graduated from the eighth grade in Oklahoma, where Anderson's maternal grandmother taught school. Despite the strains of the Great Depression, Anderson's father made a good living as a farmer. He also bred greyhounds and bloodhounds, tended to sick animals in the community and sold homemade sausage. He often provided meals for the hired laborers on his farm, and raised their salaries whenever possible. Anderson's mother kept her own

finances, and raised turkeys and chickens to sell during the holidays. Nonetheless, Anderson's family sometimes lacked the funds for her education, and she often paid her teachers with butter and eggs. She began attending school in Pilot Knob at an early age, and enrolled at L.C. Anderson High School in Austin, Texas at eleven years old. Outside of school, Anderson enjoyed bird watching with her brother, and helped her mother with tasks like cooking and sewing.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_005, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Ada Anderson began her schooling as a toddler, and graduated from the eighth grade at eleven years old. She lived with her maternal aunts in Austin, Texas while attending L.C. Anderson High School, where many of the faculty held master's degrees. Anderson earned a high school diploma in 1937, at fifteen years old; and immediately matriculated at Austin's Tillotson College, where she joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and studied home economics. She also met her husband, Marcellus J. "Andy" Anderson, who taught at the nearby Samuel Huston College. Anderson graduated in 1941, and was hired to teach home economics at Lockhart Vocational High School in Lockhart, Texas. She left after eight months to become a home demonstration agent in Terrell, Texas, where she taught homemaking as well as agricultural education, a traditionally male discipline. In 1943, Anderson took a leave of absence to marry her husband in New Jersey, where he was stationed with the U.S. Army Medical Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_006, TRT: 0:30:12 ?

Ada Anderson opened a line of credit during her teenage years, at a time when many women were precluded from controlling their finances. Her husband, Marcellus J. "Andy" Anderson, supported her independence, and encouraged her to maintain credit in her name. While her husband served overseas with the U.S. Army, Anderson lived with his brother in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and gave birth to her first child in 1943. She and her husband then returned to Austin, Texas; where, following the desegregation of the University of Texas at Austin in 1950, Anderson became the school's first African American candidate for a master's degree in library science. She left the program to care for her children, but eventually returned to earn a master's degree in educational psychology. Then, Anderson was hired at the Texas Employment Commission, where she worked to raise wages for domestic workers of color. She also administered aptitude tests, and witnessed local employers' discriminatory hiring practices.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_007, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Ada Anderson exercised her voting rights from an early age, in spite of the poll taxes that disenfranchised many African Americans in the segregated South. Anderson continued her civic involvement as an adult in Austin, Texas. There, she partnered with a white friend to investigate hiring discrimination at local businesses by each inquiring about the same position. She also organized the Austin Human Relations Commission, which successfully introduced a resolution to the Austin City Council that prohibited segregation in the city's hotels, motels and restaurants. At University of Texas at Austin, Anderson wrote a master's thesis on discriminatory hiring practices and employers' attitudes about race. During the final term of her degree program, Anderson was recruited to the guidance department of the Austin Independent School District. There, she was quickly promoted to the role of associate psychologist, in which she was responsible for conducting aptitude tests of students throughout the district.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_008, TRT: 0:29:43 ?

Ada Anderson worked in the Austin Independent School District for six years. She left in 1953 to help her husband, Marcellus J. "Andy" Anderson, establish

the Anderson Wormley Real Estate and Insurance Company, which initially focused on fire and casualty insurance. Anderson was also active in local politics, and befriended President Lyndon Baines Johnson. He introduced her to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, who encouraged Anderson to support John Connally in the Texas gubernatorial election. In response, Anderson and her husband founded the United Political Organization of Texas, which supported Connally's campaign, and urged him to provide employment and state appointments to black Texans. Upon his election in 1963, Anderson and her husband became the first African Americans to attend a Texas gubernatorial inaugural ball. In the following years, Anderson attended the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, where she was one of three women in her graduating class.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_009, TRT: 0:30:41 ?

Ada Anderson sent her children to formerly all-white schools after the desegregation of the Austin Independent School District. She remained involved in Austin's public education system throughout her life; and, in 1982, was elected to the board of the Austin Community College District, thus becoming Austin's first African American woman to win a county-wide election. Anderson was also a board member of the Laguna Gloria Art Museum and the Austin Lyric Opera. When the opera sought to expand its audience, Anderson recognized the potential in the city's African American community, many of whom lacked access to the fine arts. In 1989, she founded the Leadership Enrichment Arts Program (LEAP), which offered artistic and educational opportunities to African Americans. During her ten-year tenure as the organization's executive director, Anderson helped Austin's African American children attend summer programs at institutions like Wellesley College, Georgetown University and Emory University.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_010, TRT: 0:32:00 ?

Ada Anderson organized an exhibit at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum that featured African American artists, who were largely unrepresented in Texas art museums. The event was lauded by Lady Bird Johnson, and Anderson organized another exhibit at the library called 'Our New Day Began,' which featured contemporary African American artists. Anderson was also instrumental in raising funds for the construction of the Long Center for the Performing Arts, which served as a venue for the Austin Lyric Opera, Austin Symphony Orchestra and Ballet Austin. The center was built on the former site of the Lester E. Palmer Auditorium, and reused materials from the original structure. Anderson served on several boards at the University of Texas at Austin, where she was honored as a distinguished alumnus. She was also recognized in the book 'Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph.' Anderson concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Ada Anderson, Section A2010_011_002_011, TRT: 0:03:53 ?

Ada Anderson narrates her photographs.