

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

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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>	Zopp, Andrea, 1957-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Zopp,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 18, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:59:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Trial lawyer and nonprofit administrator Andrea Zopp (1957 - ) is president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League and has served as vice president and general counsel of Sears Roebuck and Company. Zopp was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 18, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_006
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer and Nonprofit Executive Andrea Zopp was born in Rochester, New York on January 25, 1957 to Reuben K. Davis, a prominent lawyer and judge, and Pearl Greta Davis, a human resources professional. As a child, Zopp was taught the values of education, service and hard work. Zopp completed her B.S. degree in the history and science at Harvard University in 1978 and received a J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 1981. After being licensed to practice law, Zopp worked as a law clerk for U.S. District Judge George N. Leighton.

In 1982, Zopp joined the law firm of Sonnenschien Nath & Rosenthal as a trial

lawyer and litigator. In 1992, Zopp became the first woman and first African American appointed as a Cook County First Assistant State's Attorney where she prosecuted several high profile cases. From 2000 to 2003, Zopp served as executive vice president and general counsel at the Sara Lee Corporation and as president and from 2003 to 2004, general counsel of Sears Roebuck and Company. Zopp then worked as adjunct professor at several law schools including Northwestern University and Harvard Law School. In 2006, Zopp was made head of Exelon Energy Corporation's human resources division. She was promoted to executive vice president and general counsel of Exelon in 2009. Zopp left Exelon in 2010 to become president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League. In 2011, Zopp was appointed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel to the Chicago Board of Education's Board of Trustees.

Zopp has served on many boards of directors for many organizations including Chicago Area Project, Leadership Greater Chicago, Harvard Alumni Association, National Urban League, Black Ensemble Theater and the Cook County Health and Hospitals Systems. She is a member of the Black Women Lawyer's Association, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., The Chicago Network, and The Economic Club. Zopp has served on commissions for the Review the Illinois Death Penalty Process and chair of the blue ribbon commission for Magnet and Selective Enrollment School Admissions for the Chicago Public Schools. Zopp is married to William Zopp and they have three adult children Alyssa, Kelsey, and Will.

Andrea Zopp was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 19, 2012

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Andrea Zopp was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 18, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Trial lawyer and nonprofit administrator Andrea Zopp (1957 - ) is president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League and has served as vice president and general counsel of Sears Roebuck and Company.

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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:

Zopp, Andrea, 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Zopp, Andrea, 1957---Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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## Occupations:

Trial Lawyer

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Nonprofit Administrator

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers|CivicMakers

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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 Zopp, January 18, 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 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 Andrea Zopp, Section  
A2012\_006\_001\_001, TRT: 1:31:16 2012/01/18

Andrea Zopp was born on January 25, 1957 in Rochester, New York to Pearl Hurst Davis and Reuben K. Davis. Zopp's maternal great-grandfather, William Henry Hurst, Jr., owned a general store in Suffolk, Virginia, which served the local African American community. He and his wife, Annie Amons Hurst, raised Zopp's mother after the death of her father, Lemuel Hurst. Zopp's paternal great-grandfather was born a slave, and became emancipated at nine years old. Her father was born in Columbia, Mississippi, and moved as a teenager to Chicago, Illinois, where he enrolled at Englewood High School. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and went on to attend Virginia State College for Negroes and Boston University School of Law. After graduating, he moved to New York City, where he met Zopp's mother, who was a graduate of Hampton Institute. Later, the couple reconnected and married in Rochester, New York. There, they raised Zopp and her brother, Mark Davis, in a predominantly white neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Zopp, Section  
A2012\_006\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:35 2012/01/18

Andrea Zopp began her education at Academy of the Sacred Heart, an all girl Catholic school in Rochester, New York. When her family moved to the Cobbs Hill neighborhood, Zopp transferred to Martin B. Anderson School No. 1. Zopp was then granted admission to Our Lady of Mercy High School for Young Girls, where her mother, Pearl Hurst Davis, worked. Zopp's father, Reuben K. Davis, was a prominent civil rights lawyer, who worked in private practice with Zopp's maternal great-

uncle, Lloyd Hurst. He became the first African American Rochester city court judge, and was appointed to the Appellate Division 4th Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. Zopp was a National Merit Scholar, and her extracurricular activities included community service work with Jack and Jill of America. Upon graduating in 1974, she attended Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Massachusetts Governor Deval L. Patrick was her classmate.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Zopp, Section A2012\_006\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:34 2012/01/18

Andrea Zopp initially struggled socially at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During her freshman year, Zopp was the only African American student assigned all white roommates. In an effort to connect with her African American classmates, Zopp joined the Kuumba Singers of Harvard College and a black theatre group on campus. Zopp studied history and science, and took courses in Afro-American Studies with Professor Ewart Guinier. In the summer of 1973, Zopp worked in the Washington, D.C. offices of Congressman Frank Horton, which inspired her to become a lawyer. Upon graduating in 1978, Zopp matriculated at Harvard Law School, where she was taught by Archibald Cox, Criminal Law Professor Charles Nesson and Derrick A. Bell, Jr., who was the school's first African American professor to receive tenure. She recalls the violent protests against the desegregation of schools in Boston, Massachusetts, and the subsequent attempts to bus African American children to white schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrea Zopp, Section A2012\_006\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:19 2012/01/18

Andrea Zopp met film producer Debra Martin Chase and Circuit Court Judge Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr., while studying at the Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After graduation, she was encouraged to apply for judicial clerkships, and was hired by Illinois Judge George N. Leighton. She moved to Chicago, Illinois, where she met her father's cousin, Judge Earl Strayhorn. As a clerk in Judge George N. Leighton's

court, she witnessed the proceedings of the Bee Gees' copyright infringement case. After two years there, Zopp decided to become a prosecutor, and sought employment at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, where she worked for seven years under Judge Ann Claire Williams. She remembers Chicago politicians like Harold Washington, Edward Vrdolyak and Edward M. Burke. Zopp also talks several corruption investigations in Chicago, which resulted in the indictment of prominent lawyers, judges and African American aldermen.