

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Andrea Lawrence

PERSON

Lawrence, Andrea Williams,  
1946-

**Alternative Names:** Andrea Lawrence;

**Life Dates:** October 6, 1946-

**Place of Birth:** Asheville, North Carolina, USA

**Residence:** Atlanta, GA

**Work:** Atlanta, GA

**Occupations:** Computer Science Professor; Computer Scientist;

## Biographical Note

Computer scientist and computer science professor  
Andrea Lawrence was born in Asheville, North Carolina on October 6, 1946 to Jeanne Hayes and Emory Williams. Her family supported education and both of her parents finished college after she was born.

Lawrence graduated from Allen High School in Ashville in 1964 and enrolled at Spelman College. She finished her undergraduate education at Purdue University earning her B.S. degree in mathematics in 1970. From 1979 to 1983, Lawrence taught mathematics in Cincinnati Public Schools before beginning her long career at Spelman College. She earned her M.S. degree in computer science from Atlanta University in 1985.

Having begun her career at Spelman as a lecturer and computer literacy coordinator, Lawrence was promoted to director of the computer science program in 1986. She held that position for three years before going back to school to pursue her doctorate. In 1993, Lawrence became the first African American to obtain her Ph.D. degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology in computer science. She then returned to Spelman as an assistant professor in computer science, and in 1994, she became chair of the computer and information sciences department. Lawrence was promoted to associate professor of computer science in 1995. Throughout her career, she has been instrumental in programs to increase the number of minorities and woman involved in scientific disciplines, serving as president of the Association of Departments of Computer Science/Engineering at Minority Institutions (ADMI) and associate director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) Scholars at Spelman College. Lawrence teaches a range of computer science classes including programming languages, computer graphics, artificial intelligence, and human-computer interactions. She also supervises projects on remote sensing in Antarctica, which uses satellites or aircraft to gather information about Antarctic ice. In addition to her teaching, Lawrence has published numerous papers for her research on human-computer interaction, including using computer animations to teach algorithms.

Lawrence has received several awards to date

including the National Technical Association's Technical Achiever of the Year Award in 2004. She was also named a Technology All-Star in 2005 by the National Women of Color (NWOC). Lawrence lives in Atlanta, Georgia and has three grown children, Deirdre, a scientific consultant, Allegra, an attorney and Valerie, a student.

Andrea Lawrence was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 17, 2012.

## Related Entries

**Allen High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Spelman College** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Purdue University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**Clark Atlanta University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.S.**

**Georgia Institute of Technology** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Cincinnati Public Schools** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1979 to 1983]

**Mathematics Teacher**

**Spelman College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1983 to ?]

**Department Chair/Associate Professor**

**Spelman College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1993 to 1995]

**Assistant Professor**

**Spelman College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1994 to 2009]

**Department Chair**

**ADMI** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Past President/Board Member**

**Jackson State University Computer Science  
Department** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]