

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Ada Cooper

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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>	Cooper, Ada, 1960-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Ada Cooper,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 23, 2016
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2016
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:22:27).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Dentist and lawyer Dr. Ada Cooper (1960 - ) began her career as a litigator for Jenner & Block, before returning to school to become a dentist. She then represented the American Dental Association as a national spokesperson and consumer advisor. Cooper was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 23, 2016, in Brooklyn, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2016_028
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dentist and lawyer Dr. Ada Cooper was born on October 19, 1960 in New York City to Dr. H.H. Cooper, Jr. and Edith Blue Cooper. Cooper graduated from Stuyvesant High School in 1978, and earned her B.A. degree cum laude in political science at Amherst College in 1982. She was awarded the John Woodruff Simpson Fellowship in Law to attend Harvard Law School, graduating with her J.D. degree in 1985. Cooper completed her D.D.S. degree at New York University College of Dentistry in 2002.

Cooper began her legal career as a litigator at the law firm of Jenner & Block in 1985, and then worked as an associate in the litigation section of Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue in New York from 1986 to 1989. Cooper returned to Jenner & Block in 1989, and was later named a partner in 1992. After thirteen years in the legal profession, Cooper returned to school to study dentistry. Not long after graduating from the New York University College of Dentistry in 2002, Cooper was selected to be a national spokesperson and consumer advisor for the American Dental Association (ADA). Cooper appeared on the *Dr. Oz Show*, *CNN*, *NBC Today Show*, and *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams*. She was also quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *Women's Health* magazine.

Cooper served as a member of the American Bar Association's Litigation Section and Corporate Counsel Committee, as well as the United States District court, Northern District of Illinois, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. She also served as a member of the NIDCR "PEARL" Protocol Review Committee, the Greater New York Dental Meeting Seminar Committee, the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the New York State Dental Association. In addition, she served as a member of the New York County Dental Society Legislative Committee and the New York State Dental Society Benefits Committee. She is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Boys Club of New York, and serves on the board of directors of the New York County Dental Society. Cooper also received many awards and honors, including the American College of Dentists' Outstanding Achievement Award, the New York University Key Pin Award for

Outstanding Achievement, and induction into the Omicron Kappa Upsilon Honor Dental Society.

Dr. Ada Cooper was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 23, 2016.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Ada Cooper was conducted by Harriette Cole on September 23, 2016, in Brooklyn, New York, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Dentist and lawyer Dr. Ada Cooper (1960 - ) began her career as a litigator for Jenner & Block, before returning to school to become a dentist. She then represented the American Dental Association as a national spokesperson and consumer advisor.

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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:

Cooper, Ada, 1960-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Cooper, Ada, 1960- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Dentist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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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 Dr. Ada Cooper, September 23, 2016. 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).

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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 Dr. Ada Cooper, Section A2016\_028\_001\_001, TRT: 1:25:49 ?

Dr. Ada Cooper was born on October 19, 1960 in New York City to Edith Blue Cooper and Henry Cooper, Jr. Her maternal great-great-grandparents, Clara Kelly Blue and William Blue, were born into slavery in North Carolina. Her

grandfather, Henry Blue, worked as a teacher, and then became the principal of Reid High School in Belmont, North Carolina. Cooper's mother began her career there, and later taught at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Cooper's paternal great-grandparents were born into slavery in Florida, and sold to a family in North Carolina. Her great-grandfather, Edward Sawyer, Jr., graduated from Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina. He settled in Bennettsville, South Carolina, where he held several jobs. Cooper's grandmother, Ada Sawyer Cooper, attended Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina and Pratt Institute in New York City. Cooper's grandfather, Henry Cooper, Sr., attended the University of Pennsylvania, and then started a dental practice in Columbia.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Ada Cooper, Section A2016\_028\_001\_002, TRT: 2:25:12 ?

Dr. Ada Cooper's mother, Edith Blue Cooper, was a student at Howard University when she met Cooper's father, Henry Cooper, Jr., who attended the Howard University College of Dentistry. When Cooper was an infant, her father moved to Nigeria, where he worked in the coffee and textile industries. During this period, Cooper's mother raised her and her siblings with family members in the South. Her father returned to the United States following the Nigerian coup d'etat in 1966, and they moved to Brooklyn, New York. There, Cooper began her education at P.S. 20, Clinton Hall School. In her free time, she enjoyed playing street games like stick ball and Ringolevio with children from the neighborhood. Cooper also frequently spoke with her mother about the Civil Rights Movement, including the impact of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death. After moving with her family to Manhattan's Upper East Side, Cooper attended J.H.S. 104, Simon Baruch School.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Ada Cooper, Section A2016\_028\_001\_003, TRT: 3:32:35 ?

Dr. Ada Cooper moved with her family to the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where she attended J.H.S. 104, Simon Baruch School. Because there were few African American families in the area, her father, Henry Cooper, Jr., forbade Cooper and her siblings from playing outside. When Cooper was in her senior year at Stuyvesant High School, her mother, Edith Blue Cooper, died from colon cancer. Cooper went on to study political science at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, and then attended Harvard Law School. After her second year, she was a summer associate at the law firm of Jenner and Block in Chicago, Illinois, where she was hired as a trial and litigation associate upon earning her law degree. During her career at Jenner and Block, Cooper was mentored by attorney and chairman Jerold Solovy. She remembers defending a homeless client who was pressured by the prosecutor to commit perjury.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Ada Cooper, Section A2016\_028\_001\_004, TRT: 4:31:13 ?

Dr. Ada Cooper became a partner at the law firm of Jenner and Block in Chicago, Illinois in 1991. At this point in the interview, she describes the advantages of workplace diversity. In the mid-1990s, Cooper began taking science courses at Loyola University Chicago. Motivated to pursue a career in dentistry, she left Jenner and Block and moved to New York City. There, she completed her premedical coursework at Hunter College, and then received a merit scholarship to attend the New York University College of Dentistry. As a result of her career change, her father, Henry Cooper, Jr., decided to maintain his dental practice in Manhattan, and Cooper joined his staff upon graduating in 2002. Two years later, she became the national spokesperson for the American Dental Association, based on the recommendation of her former dental school dean, Michael Alfano. Cooper had a daughter and a son with her first husband, whom she divorced in 2013.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Ada Cooper, Section A2016\_028\_001\_005, TRT: 5:27:38 ?

Dr. Ada Cooper practiced dentistry with her father, Henry Cooper, Jr., in New York City. During his career, her father developed improvements for several dental technologies, including a more cosmetic dental ceramic material. Cooper eventually inherited her father's practice, where she served patients from diverse backgrounds. During this time, she also raised her daughter and son. At this point in the interview, Cooper describes her plans for the future, and her advice to aspiring African American dentists and lawyers. She also reflects upon her life and legacy.