

Voices of the 250th Interview with Andrew Zwicker,

10-15-2026

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Senator Andrew Zwicker and Kim Dorman conducted on October 15, 2026. The interview took place at the Princeton Public Library as part of the Voices of Princeton Project's Voices of the 250th collection..

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Kim Dorman [00:00:00] All right. Could you please state your name?

Andrew Zwicker [00:00:03] My name is Andrew Zwicker. I am the state senator for the 16th Legislative District.

Kim Dorman [00:00:10] Thank you so much, Senator Zwicker. How did you come to Princeton, and how long have you been here? Even if it's just for the day.

Andrew Zwicker [00:00:16] So I came to Princeton the first time in 1993, right out of graduate school, to work at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, and I have never left.

Kim Dorman [00:00:33] [*Laughs*] Okay, thank you. Thinking back to 1976, what do you remember most about the observance of the U.S. bicentennial? Comparing that time to today, when we are approaching the 250th or in it, how do those two milestones feel alike or different to you?

Andrew Zwicker [00:00:50] So, in 1976, I was a kid. What I remember, and the only thing I remember, was the fact that I was at that point growing up in northern New Jersey, in Englewood, New Jersey, and my mom took me to see the big ships. And so I remember, and it's a vague memory now, but it's a distinct one, seeing these beautiful big ships coming into New York Harbor. They, to my young self, they just seemed like they were everywhere and they were gigantic. And I have no idea if it's connected or not, but I consider myself a bad sailor at

this point in my life, but love to go out sailing and never connected that to 1976. But maybe it is connected.

Kim Dorman [00:01:41] Oh, maybe!

Andrew Zwicker [00:01:41] That was only half the question

Kim Dorman [00:01:43] Oh sorry, okay, so the second half of the question is, how do these two milestones feel alike or different to you: the bicentennial and the semiquincentennial?

Andrew Zwicker [00:01:52] Well, my goodness. I mean, I'm an adult. I'm an elected official, and we are in the middle of, you know, a inflection point in not just Princeton or New Jersey, but our country. So, on one hand, I have a child's memory of 1976. 2026, I've spoken at No Kings rallies. I've been to more protests in the last, at this point, ten years than any other time that I could ever imagine. And so today, it feels very different because, while I may have a child's memory of it, when I read the newspapers and the history books, yes, we were coming out of a tumultuous time of the 1960s, but it didn't feel so divisive the way it does now. It didn't feel—it felt like 1976 brought the country together to celebrate, you know, the birth of our democracy, as messy as it may be, and 2026, it really did feel like so many emotions pulling people, including myself personally, in so many different directions, wanting to celebrate while feeling the anxiety and the exhaustion that we all feel, given what's happening in Washington and around the world.

Kim Dorman [00:03:27] Yes. Do you feel like the Revolution of 1776 is still relevant today, or is it a thing of the past? Are there ways in which it feels like an unfinished project?

Andrew Zwicker [00:03:41] I actually spoke about this at a Princeton No Kings rally maybe six months ago. There's no doubt that this is unfinished business. It's also clear that the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution were written in such a way to ideally stop kings from happening. But also, the founders, I believe, understood that this arc that is the United States, this struggle against tyranny, the fight for democracy and equality, was clear in 1776, I believe, that this would be a ongoing battle, and it's clear that it is the same in 2026. The—you know, I was born in the middle of the Civil Rights movement. I don't recall it because I'm too young, but my mother would talk a lot about that. This is a different time where it's a different struggle, but it is a struggle, not just for racial equality, or ethnic equality, or gender equality, and the fight for LGBTQ rights, but it is truly a fight for everyone's voices to be heard, and I, like many people, are concerned, worried, and anxious. But when you know your history, then you also know that that means that there is a place for optimism because people have always struggled against tyranny and will always continue to speak up against that.

Andrew Zwicker [00:05:34] When I was speaking at the No Kings rally, the last one, I remember it's an incredibly powerful moment to be surrounded by hundreds and thousands of people who are all there sharing that same level of concern and anxiety and a desire for things to get better. From my perspective as a speaker, I also get to look out onto a crowd and see people and feed off of that energy coming right back at me. And I can remember the, leaving the last one feeling an extra sense of optimism because I knew that what I had just experienced,

what we had just collectively experienced, was being experienced around the state and around the, the country, and so this is, you know, we're doing this interview a few weeks before an election, and next year there'll be a presidential election. So it's clear that we are at a moment in time in 2026 that is of deep, deep consequence. But you can feel the, how do I want to say this, the collective emotions of this country, I think, are changing, and there are stories that are in the paper now of people, let's say, in the Midwest in conservative communities, who are exhausted and understanding that promises that were made are being broken left and right, so I think that we are going to see, over the next ten, twenty-five, fifty years, hundred years, that yes, this was a consequential moment, but that in the end, we will do what we always have done as a country, which is to be able to come together and become stronger and better because of the challenges in front of us right now.

Kim Dorman [00:07:51] I hope so.

Andrew Zwicker [00:07:54] Keep that in the transcript.

Kim Dorman [00:07:56] Is there anything else we haven't talked about but you wish to include? Are there stories about Princeton's past, which you feel aren't well known enough?

Andrew Zwicker [00:08:06] Yes, you know, in this spring, there was a special joint session of the New Jersey Legislature in Nassau Hall. It is where the Constitutional College was, for a brief period of time. The “Ten Crucial Days” of the Revolutionary War happened, in part, in Princeton. The birth of this country happened right here. If those ten days had not gone well,

then who knows what we would be discussing or where this country would be? I think this is an opportunity for Princeton in particular, and I'm proud of the collaboration that I've been a part of with the folks at the Princeton Battlefield Society to really make its mark known, its historical mark known. As you know, when you ask kids, you ask me when I was a kid, I would have known about Gettysburg, but I wouldn't have talked about the Battles of Princeton or Trenton as being key moments here. I think that as we build towards creating a visitor center at the Battlefield, as we focus on our past history, that Princeton will come out now more and more as a key, key place, where it's not just about Washington crossing the Delaware to get here, but about the battles that happened just a few miles from where we're speaking right now.

Kim Dorman [00:09:49] Thank you very much, Senator.

Andrew Zwicker [00:09:51] You're very welcome.