

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Kathryn Harris

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Historians Speak* Oral History project

Interview # HSC-V-L-2013-001

Kathryn Harris, who appears in this video interview as Harriet Tubman, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Historians Speak* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jan 10, 2013    Location: Governor's Reception Room of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): Mike Suszko, Greg Lipe, Tony Bateman and Thomas Craven, Illinois Information Service

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview being  
processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_    Total Time: 0:54 +

Session 1: Harriet Tubman's career as a 'conductor' on the Underground Railroad

Session 2: Tubman's experiences during Civil War, & Kathryn's experiences reenacting Tubman

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 12, 2013.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

Kathryn Harris, *Historians Speak*, HSC-V-L-2013-001

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Kathryn Harris serves as the Director of Library Services at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois. She was born in Carbondale, Illinois on December 5, 1947 to William and Eurma Hayes. In this interview, Kathryn reenacts Harriet Tubman talking about her experiences as a ‘conductor’ for the anti-bellum Underground Railroad. Over a period of roughly ten years, Tubman made nearly a score of trips to the slave states to lead slaves to freedom in the north, risking her life and her freedom each time she went south. Because of that, she became one of the best known abolition leaders of her era, and remains deeply admired to this day.

Kathryn began reenacting Harriet Tubman in the late 1990s after she was requested to do so for a school group. She has portrayed Tubman countless times since then, both to adult and children’s groups. This interview consists of Mark DePue’s interviewing Ms. Tubman as if the interview was taking place in 1869, plus a segment where Kathryn is out of character, discussing her many experiences playing Harriet over the years. In 2012 Kathryn even had the unique opportunity to reenact Harriet Tubman in Washington D.C. for an event sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus. In 2006 Kathryn was also interviewed for the ALPL *Family Memories Oral History Project* about her years growing up in Carbondale, Illinois, and her journey which led to her becoming the senior librarian at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Harriet Tubman; Underground Railroad; leading slaves to freedom in the 1850s; slave conditions in the ante-bellum South; William Still, black abolitionist; Thomas Garrett, abolitionist; John Brown and Harpers Ferry planning; Frederick Douglas; reenacting Harriet Tubman; Congressional Black Caucus

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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