

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Cheryl Harlow

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-049

Cheryl Harlow, director of the Brimfield Public Library District, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: October 13, 2021      Location: Brimfield Public Library District, Brimfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager ALPLM

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

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

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 1:51 / 1.85 hrs.

Transcript being  
processed.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 1, 2021.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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## Abstract

### Cheryl Harlow, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-049

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** Cheryl Harlow was born in 1968 and raised in Elmwood, Illinois. She attended Elmwood High School and graduated in 1986. Appreciative of the close nature of the community, Harlow stayed in the area once she graduated from Eastern Illinois University in 1990 with a degree in English. That same year she married her husband, Joseph Harlow. She went on to work in the child welfare field in various positions before becoming a teacher's assistant and later teacher in a special education classroom. She stayed home with her children for a number of years until the last one was in school. She returned to work and was offered the position of library director for the Williamsfield Public Library. After a couple years there, she went on to become the assistant director at the library in Brimfield, where she trained for the role of director. After a year there, the director retired, and Harlow took on the role.

Given the scope of her previous work experiences, Harlow thrived as the director of the Brimfield Public Library District. A STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) centered library, the library serves and the surrounding district in ways beyond a library's traditional roles. Its scope was even further broadened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Harlow was able to lead her team through the uncertain times without any layoffs or cases of COVID. They created systems of quarantining books with the arrival of new studies of best practice and instituted a curbside delivery service. Harlow describes the way they were able to keep up with the constant changes and continue to provide outstanding service to library patrons despite the limitations. Harlow also explains the way the pandemic highlighted the importance of libraries, especially for rural communities.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** public libraries; Covid-19 pandemic's effect on libraries; STEAM; Brimfield Public Library District

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