

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Kristin Lems

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft – ERA Fight in Illinois Oral History project

Interview # ISE-A-L-2019-069

Kristin Lems, ERA supporter, performing songwriter, folksinger, keynote presenter and educator, was interviewed on the date below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - ERA Fight in Illinois* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: October 4, 2019

Location: Peoria, IL.

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Dr. Jan Droegkamp, ALPL Volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Interview being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:20 / 2.33 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 18, 2019.

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

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Abstract

Kristin Lems, *Illinois Statecraft* – ERA, ISE-A-L-2019-069

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Kristin Lems was born in Evanston, Illinois in 1950 to parents William (Willem) Lems and Carol (nee Silver) Lems-Dworkin. Her father was a businessman and musician and her mother was a piano teacher, educator and acclaimed concert pianist. Kristin graduated from high school in 1968 and earned her BA in English, creative writing and English teaching at the University of Michigan in 1972. She started performing folk songs in high school and continued in college. Her first English teaching job was in Iran at Jundishapour University. Upon her return to the U.S. she earned an MA in Asian Studies at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign in 1975.

In 1974, while a graduate student, she led a group of women to create the first ever women's music festival, the National Women's Music Festival. She released her first album in 1978 and was in constant demand at ERA rallies, women's conferences and meetings. She criss-crossed the state of Illinois prior to the crucial ERA vote in 1982. Gloria Steinem called her "a one-woman argument against the notion that the women's movement has no sense of humor." At the time of the interview Kristin continues to perform with many luminaries across the U.S. and released her 8th CD of original music in 2018. Her themes include women's equality, racial justice, peace and the environment. She has written a musical about her family and Jane Adams and Hull House.

Kristin held Fulbright Scholarships in Algeria and Mongolia after receiving her MA in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) from UIUC in 1983. She earned her Ed.D. from National Louis University in reading and language in 2003. She taught TESL and was a Professor at National Louis University teaching courses in English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education at the time of the interview. She has published widely in the areas of language, literacy and music related topics. The mother of two, she has won multiple awards for her lifetime contributions as a humanitarian singer and songwriter.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Equal Rights Amendment; ERA fight in Illinois; folk songs; University of Michigan; University of Illinois Urbana Champaign; National Louis University; Jundishapour University; teaching English as a Second Language; National Woman's Music Festival; Fulbright scholarships; Hull House; "Ballad of the ERA;" "Mammary Glands;" "We Will Never Give Up;" "Heritage of Farming;" Carolsdatter Productions;

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