

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Tamara Harris

---

## 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>	Robinson, Tamara Harris, 1967-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 17, 2016
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2016
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:09:05).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Financial advisor and civic leader Tamara Harris (1967 - ) worked at Prudential Financial, Deutsche Bank, and Salomon, Inc. She also founded the North Jersey Advocates for Education, the Robinson Harris Foundation, the Haramat Group, and Tamara Harris LLC. Harris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 17, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2016_142
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Financial advisor and civic leader Tamara Harris was born on August 13, 1967 in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands to Theresita Shelburn Harris and Earl Harris. Harris graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1984, and went on to earn her B.A. degree in economics, with a minor in Spanish, from the University of Pittsburgh in 1988. She then earned her M.B.A. degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1989, and her M.S.W. and E.M.P.A. degrees from New York University in 2012.

From 1990 to 1994, Harris worked as an associate at Prudential Financial in Newark, New Jersey and Scranton, Pennsylvania. Harris then became an equity research analyst at Deutsche Bank in 1996. In 1997, she began working at Salomon, Inc. in Hong Kong. Harris and her then-husband founded the North Jersey Advocates for Education and the Robinson Harris Foundation in 2004, working with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to provide scholarships for minority students. Harris served as president of the North Jersey Advocates for Education from 2003 to 2009. In 2011, Harris founded the Haramat Group, serving as chief executive officer. Then, in 2013, she founded Tamara Harris LLC, a divorce consultation firm. Harris became an adjunct professor at New York University's Silver School of Social Work in New York City in 2015.

Harris was active in various organizations throughout her career as well. From 2008 to 2013, she served as vice chair of the United Negro College Fund board of directors, and as chair of the UNCF's 2012 "A Mind Is..." Gala. Harris also served as an adjunct professor of public child welfare at Montclair State University and as an adjunct instructor of management and organization practice at New York University Silver School of Social Work. She was a member of the National Association of Professional Women, the Studio Museum in Harlem's Global Council, the Apollo Theater's Women's Committee, and the Davis Museum at Wellesley College's Director's Council. Harris served on the board of trustees at Second Stage Theatre as well.

Harris has two daughters, Paige Robinson and Simone Robinson.

Tamara Harris was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 17, 2016.

---

# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Tamara Harris was conducted by Harriette Cole on December 17, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Financial advisor and civic leader Tamara Harris (1967 - ) worked at Prudential Financial, Deutsche Bank, and Salomon, Inc. She also founded the North Jersey Advocates for Education, the Robinson Harris Foundation, the Haramat Group, and Tamara Harris LLC.

---

# 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®.

---

# 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.

---

# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## Persons:

Robinson, Tamara Harris, 1967-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Robinson, Tamara Harris, 1967- --Interviews

---

# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

# Occupations:

Foundation Executive

---

# HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

---

# 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 Tamara Harris, December 17, 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).

---

# 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.

---

# Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_001, TRT: 1:31:17 ?  
Tamara Harris Robinson was born on August 13, 1967 on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands to Theresita Shelburn Harris and Earl Harris. Robinson's paternal

great-great-grandmother, Martha, came to St. Croix on a slave ship by way of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. Robinson's paternal grandmother, Julia Rodwell, was the daughter of a native woman and Irishman who came to the island to escape the potato famine. Robinson's paternal grandparents never married, and her father was raised by his godmother on St. Croix until the age of fifteen years old. At that time, he joined his father, James Harris, in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Robinson's mother was born on St. Thomas to a woman of Hispanic descent, and moved to New York City as a young adult. There, she reconnected with Robinson's father, whom she knew from childhood. They married and returned to St. Croix, where Robinson was born. At this point, Robinson talks about the diverse culture and history of colonization in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_002, TRT: 2:27:58 ?

Tamara Harris Robinson grew up in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. There, her father, Earl Harris, owned several residential properties. He was also politically involved in the community, and served on the Public Utilities Commission. Her mother, Theresita Shelburn Harris, worked as an assistant to the regional vice president of a bank. Robinson attended the local parochial schools in Charlotte Amalie, although she was not a practicing Catholic. Because she did not have a strong accent, she was selected as a voiceover actor for the PBS children's show 'Undah de Taman Tree.' When Robinson was twelve years old, her parents separated. She moved with her mother to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, while her father and brother, Gamal Harris, remained on St. Thomas. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, Robinson was teased for her light skin, but after moving to Philadelphia, she realized that she was afforded privileges because of her complexion.

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:28 ?

Tamara Harris Robinson left the U.S. Virgin Islands with her mother at the age of twelve years old. She lost contact with brother and father, Gamal Harris and Earl Harris, who remained on St. Thomas, and they did not reconnect until later in life. Robinson and her mother moved to the United States, where they joined an integrated community in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, Robinson attended Thomas K. Finletter Elementary School. She played flute in the band, and participated in school plays. Robinson went on to attend the Philadelphia High School for Girls, where the student body was racially and economically diverse. During this time, her mother earned a degree in human resources from Temple University. After graduating from high school, Robinson attended the University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she studied economics and foreign language. As part of her program, Robinson spent a summer abroad in Costa Rica, where she studied the healthcare system.

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:38 ?

Tamara Harris Robinson earned her M.B.A. degree from the University of Pittsburgh Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After graduating in 1989, Robinson joined the management training program at 3M in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When the program ended, Robinson was offered the position of assistant manager at a 3M plant in Cynthiana, Kentucky. Because Cynthiana was majority-white, Robinson requested to live in nearby Lexington, which had a larger minority population. After 3M denied her request, Robinson left the company and moved to New York City. There, she worked as a financial analyst in the New Business Installation Team of Prudential Financial Services until 1993, when she married. The next year, Robinson moved with her husband to Hong Kong, where he was

offered a position with a small investment fund. While there, Robinson worked as an analyst at Morgan, Grenfell and Company, Ltd. and Citigroup Inc. She and her family returned to New York City in 2000.

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_005, TRT: 5:28:14 ?

Tamara Harris Robinson returned to New York City in 2000, after working in Hong Kong for six years. She decided to relocate her family to New Jersey following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Shortly after moving, Robinson and her husband began hosting fundraising events for the United Negro College Fund. In 2004, they founded a nonprofit organization called the New Jersey Advocates for Education, as well as Robinson Harris Foundation, Inc., which worked with UNCF to provide scholarships for minority students. Then, Robinson and her family relocated to Beijing, China. They continued their nonprofit work remotely, until returning to New Jersey in 2007. At this point, Robinson talks about the development of the Chinese banking industry. In 2009, Robinson divorced her husband, and enrolled in New York University's Silver School of Social Work. She also served on the board of UNCF, at a time when many of the nation's historically black colleges faced criticism and funding problems.

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_006, TRT: 6:26:48 ?

Tamara Harris Robinson served on the board of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) from 2008 to 2013. Through UNCF and her own nonprofit organization, the New Jersey Advocates for Education, Robinson worked to address issues such as the lack of college preparatory classes in inner city schools, and provided scholarships for minority students. She also hosted fundraising galas in New York and New Jersey with speakers like Johnnetta B. Cole, Norman Francis and Sybil C. Mobley. During this time, Robinson divorced her husband, and earned a dual master's degree in social work and public policy at New York University. In 2011, she founded Tamara Harris LLC, where she worked as a divorce coach. In this role, Robinson used her social work training and personal experiences to guide clients through the process of divorce. Many of her clients were recommended by friends, and she also received referrals from divorce attorneys and financial advisors whose clients needed additional assistance.

Video Oral History Interview with Tamara Harris, Section A2016\_142\_001\_007, TRT: 7:16:42 ?

Tamara Harris Robinson became an adjunct professor at New York University's Silver School of Social Work in New York City in 2015. In addition to her teaching, Robinson describes her plans for her nonprofit organization and Tamara Harris LLC, where she works as a divorce coach. She also talks about raising two daughters, Paige Robinson and Simone Robinson, as a single parent. Robinson reflects upon her life and legacy, and concludes the interview by sharing her advice to future generations.