

Civil Rights History Project
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Interviewee: Mr. Lucius Holloway, Sr., and Mrs. Emma Kate Holloway
Interview Date: March 9, 2013
Location: Campus of Albany State University, Albany, Georgia
Interviewer: Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries
Videographer: Petna Katondolo Ndaliko
Length: 00:30:35

[Recording begins with technical setup conversation]

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Right, right. Okay. That's a good point. Okay.

Petna Katondolo Ndaliko: I think we may use that one, [for it was good]...Oh, okay, I guess, yes, that one.

Unidentified Male: This one?

Petna Katondolo Ndaliko: Yeah, that's good. We're good to roll.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: We're ready?

Petna Katondolo Ndaliko: Um-hmm.

HJ: Sound's okay?

PN: Yeah. Three, two—but I can't see you. Yeah, okay, that's good.

HJ: Better?

PN: Yeah.

HJ: Okay.

PN: Three, two, one, and rolling.

HJ: Today is Saturday, March 9th, 2013. My name is Hasan Kwame Jeffries of the Ohio State University and the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I'm with videographer Petna Ndaliko in Albany, Georgia, on the campus of Albany State University to conduct an interview for the Civil Rights History Project, which is a joint undertaking of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Library of Congress. We are here this afternoon with Lucius Holloway, Sr., and Emma Kate Holloway. Thank you so much for joining us and for sharing your story and the history of the Movement with us.

Lucius Holloway: Thank you for having us.

HJ: Mr. Holloway, where and when were you born?

LH: I was born in Terrell County, Dawson, Georgia, in 1932.

HJ: And your parents? What were their names?

LH: My parents—my father was Bobbie Holloway, Sr., and my mother was Louise Thornton Holloway.

HJ: And what did they do?

LH: Sharecroppers.

HJ: So, you grew up on a farm?

LH: Grew up on the farm, the hard way.

HJ: The hard way?

LH: It was half-cropping. They pay for all of the bills and, at the end of the year, they take that out, and if anything was left, you'd divide it. But it was never anything left.

HJ: Umm.

LH: You always broke even.

HJ: And life on the farm—I mean, you grew up doing what kinds of things? With your dad, working in the field, I'm assuming?

LH: Right. Well, life on the farm back in, I would say, at least '35—that would give me at least to be three years old—and on up to '35, '36, and '37, during that time, now, it was good, because that's all I knew. So, life was good. I had something to eat and a place to sleep and loving parents. So, if I look at it *right then* and forget about today, it was good. Because, you know, that far back, those privileges was just like inside today, old Sears catalogue, you know, all this—it was fine, if I look at it then and forget today.

HJ: Yeah. What was life like away from the farm in Terrell County?

LH: There was not much of a life away from the farm, because Terrell County was so farming till even right uptown Sasser, there was cotton and corn right up to the streets and mule stables all around it. So, you never got out of the mode of farming. It was farming everywhere you looked. Even going to church once a month, you rode the wagon. So, farming was embedded in you. That's all it was. That's all it was: farming.

So, we had to like it. We was born in it. We was growing up in it. And it was good then, very good.

HJ: Now, you eventually will serve in the military.

LH: Right.

HJ: When did your service begin?

LH: Well, my military service began in June of 1952. That's when my military time started. And my only reason for going to the military—because my parents, like I said, they

worked most all their lives half-farming and they had very little of nothing, and there was a whole bunch of us. So, that was one of my ways—in other words, I was hired out. Daddy hired—if somebody needed somebody to work, he hired me out, and I worked and I brought the check home. But they wasn't paying with no checks then. They paid cash money in a brown envelope, so I brought that home. And to go in the military, to me, was a better way to help support my family, and I enlisted and I was sworn in June the 19th, 1952.

And, at that time, a private in the military was drawing *sixty dollars a month*, so that was a *big* pile of money for me. And it was so large till, [05:00] when I went to talk about making an allotment to my parents, I said to the recruiter I wanted to send my mother an allotment. And, of course, I couldn't—I had to send a Class A, not a Class Q. A Class Q allotment during that time was when who you sent it to was a dependent of yours. My parents wasn't dependent on me, so I had to send a Class A allotment. And that meant whatever I sent, they didn't match it. So, I was getting sixty dollars a month; I sent Mama forty. He said, "You're crazy! How can you live out of twenty dollars a month?" I said, "I can," and I did.

HJ: Now, it was during your time in the military that you met the future Mrs. Holloway.

LH: No, it was after my tenure.

HJ: After? Okay.

LH: I met her in 1955, June. And I had never seen, never heard, never thought of her before the first day I saw her. But that's when I met her, about the last of—I was discharged honorably June the 19th, '55, and I got home, could have been the 20th of June. And probably either the evening of the 20th or the evening of the 21st of '55 is when I met her.

HJ: Mrs. Holloway, were you from Terrell County as well?

Emma Kate Holloway: Yes, I was.

HJ: Born—?

EH: Born in Terrell County.

HJ: And do you remember when you met?

EH: I remember when I met him. And I was in high school and I was in the eleventh grade. And I had taken on a job working at a café, Richmond's Café, on Main Street. But I was a farmer. I picked cotton every day. I was my daddy's best cotton-picker. I picked four hundred pounds of cotton a day.

HJ: Wow.

EH: And I could pick more than my brother. And I loved my daddy and I loved for him to come to the cotton patch where we were, because he worked in the cotton patch and my mother also worked in the cotton patch. We farmed it.

And we had moved to Dawson, Georgia, Terrell County. And he was still farming, but he moved in the city. My mother kept telling my daddy, "James, you need to get something of your own. James, you need to get something of your own."

So, my mother went to work at a house where Daddy was renting land from this white man, Frank Smith. [Sound of voices in the background begin and continue intermittently] The first year that we moved to this farm and Daddy was farming with this white man, we did good. Daddy made a profit. That year he made that profit, the man that we was farming for found out that my daddy had said that that year he was going to buy him a home. So, that year Daddy worked at that farm, the man took most of the farm, and we come out—Daddy made six hundred dollars. He gave it to his wife, my mother. My mother went to town and she bought this home. They purchased this home. It was kind of shabby, but they bought it because we needed

somewhere to stay, because Daddy was coming from the farm to come to town to do public work.

And he started at the mill where they ginned cotton, and my mother went to the hospital as a dietician, cooking for the hospital. And at that time, when I went to work to get little items to buy for school, because we loved school, and my mother and daddy loved for us to go to school. So, when I got this little job, my husband came in from the military, I thought. He told me he was a military boy.

And I was walking home that evening from my job, and this car, Chevrolet, loud, yellow, and brown, rolled up behind me. I kind of looked around and I saw this man in this car. He said, "Hey!" I said, "Hey, hello, how you doing?" He said, "Would you like a ride home?" I looked at him, and he had on his soldiering uniform. I said, "No! [Laughter] My mother do not allow me to ride with boys, plus the ones in the military because they don't do nothing but come home and get girls pregnant! So, no!" [HJ laughs]

So, I walked on, and he on rolled slowly—he asked me where I lived—he rolled slowly behind me until I got home. And then, he found out where I lived and he asked me could he come visit me. I said, "Yeah, you can come visit me." So, he started to visiting me and he was coming so regular, *too* regular. [Laughter] [10:00] I said, "Don't you think you need to slow down? [Laughing] My mama don't want me to go every day because I have chores to do." We had to milk them cows, and get their milk, and bring in wood to have a fire.

So, he did start coming, you know, in the evening and he would stay from, maybe, I'd say, seven to nine. And when nine come, I started looking at that clock. My mother don't allow us to have no company no later than nine o'clock. When nine o'clock come, that boy had to be out of there. So, he would come and he would stay till nine and he left. And he came about a

year, and then, [laughs] he asked me to marry him. I was in the twelfth grade, and we got married in June '57.

And my aunt had told me that when I graduated from high school, she wanted me to go to beautician [school], because that's what I liked. I liked doing hair. So, she told me, "When you get out, you're going to school." I said, "Yes ma'am! I'll be glad to go to college for cosmetology." So, he wanted to marry me, and I had told him what my aunt said. I couldn't marry because I had to go to school, to college, and my aunt was going to pay for it. So, he told my mother and my father that he would pay for me going to school for cosmetology if he would marry me. So, he did.

We got married in June '57. And I came home. We had—after two years, we started having our children. I had—my first was a girl, Beverly; my second was a boy, Lucius, Jr.; my third was a girl, Charlene; and my fourth was my baby, Patrick, and that was in '64. So, he was going to military school. So, he paid for me to go to cosmetology at Albany Tech College at that time. And I went for beauty culture, and I graduated with a Master Cosmetologist license. And I started my business, and he built a business for me to do hair. And I was a very successful beautician to help him raise our children, because he was fired from the Post Office because he was involved with voter registration movement.

He was in the Movement with SCLC, and he was getting people to register to vote. So, if we voted, registered and voted, we would not have such a hard time. Because the white peoples didn't want you to register and vote, because they wanted to keep you down so you would be enslaved in the cotton patches and corn patches and doing all that stuff. So, that was the reason why he was working so hard, so we could get people to register, where they could better themselves and get good educations, so we wouldn't have to do all this stuff that we're doing and

being dogged out and punished and beaten and dragged up and down the streets and all of that kind of stuff.

And so, I went and I finished and got my license and started doing hair. But when I started to doing hair, the peoples, they didn't like that too well, because they knew the white peoples had told them, "Don't fool around with the Holloways, because bad things was going on in their home, getting people to register to vote. And y'all don't need to register and y'all don't need to vote. Y'all need to stay just like y'all is, dumb." So, my customers were limited, but we didn't pay that any attention. I just kept on doing and kept on working and kept on going to the SCLC organizations that they had, what he was involved with—until it got real, real crucial as we stayed in it.

He was threatened. They took the gas tank from our house the coldest night that we had with our baby. I was there, and it was just getting cold. That was the coldest night in that year, in '59, when my first child come. And it was cold, and I had the baby laying on my lap. And he said it was cold. I said, "Lucius, it's *cold* in this house!" He said, "I just filled the tank up with gas, had the people to bring the gas out here." I said, "But ain't no gas in there because the coal's still getting darker and darker."

He went out and looked. Those white people had come there and cut that gas line a 'loose from our house and left! [15:00] And we did not have no gas. It was cold. And a friend of ours that next day had an old-time heater that you could put kerosene in it, so she let us use that kerosene heater until we could go to get some heat. And it was hard for my husband to get out and get heat and stuff like that at that time. So, somebody lent him a coal heater. They had to cut a hole through the house to put a wood heater in there for us to get the wood to put in there to have heat for a while.

Then it went on. We went to the—kept going to the Movements and things. They told him—he went to work one day. He was working at the Post Office. They said he didn't have no job there no more. And they told him he didn't have no job—they said that he had put more time down than he was supposed to have to get a chance to fire him. But he hadn't did that, but that's what they did to get him fired from that job. So, they got him fired. So, then, after they got him fired from that job, he kept still getting people to register to vote. Still, he didn't give up. He just still was fighting for the rights of getting peoples to register and vote.

And this night that I knew that we was going to die—I just felt it, that we was going to be killed, this particular night. He came home and he said that he was going to that meeting that night. And the white peoples that an old lady worked for in our community—she cooked for those peoples—and those peoples told her that they was going to kill Lucius Holloway that night, because they tired of that mess of he getting peoples registered and voting, and “These niggers don't need to be no registered to no vote. They need to stay like they is.”

And she come down there and she told him, she begged him, she said, “Holloway, please don't go to that meeting tonight.” She said, “*Please* don't go to this meeting tonight!” Lucius said, “Miss [17:13],” he said, “I got to go.” So, she said, “Alright,” said, “I done warned you.” Said, “They're going get rid of you tonight.”

So, that night, around seven o'clock, my husband come in. He told me, “Y'all get ready.” Everywhere my husband went, I don't know why he want to carry me and them children with him! He dragged us to go! But I think that was to have more spirit. He had us standing with him. He was covered, you know, the spirit. But he didn't realize that God had his back, had our backs. And we went on that night to this church they called Mount Olive Baptist Church in Sasser, Georgia.

I had them four kids sitting with me on this bench in the church. And we went in that church. It was some boys on the outside. And one of the boys knocked on the window and said, "Mrs. Holloway, don't sit beside of that window," he said, "because these people out here, they said they're going to riot, they're going to kill tonight."

And my husband had a friend that he had been in the military, and he came to that Movement meeting that night. And when he came, he got to my husband, and he said, "Lucius, I done heard about they're going to kill y'all tonight." I was just as nervous and scared as I could be, but I just said, "Whatever happens has got to happen." So, he told my husband, he said, "You give me your key, your car key." He said, "You take my car, and when you leave here, you go the way for safety. I'm going take your car, and I'm going go back the way you came."

So, that young man was Herschel Blackshear. He gave Lucius that car. Those peoples come in that night, that church, they raided that church. They had guns, had them cocked to shoot everybody, the Sherrods. Charles Sherrod and them, the SCLC Movement people, they was there that night, too, all of them. And the way we were saved, we got in his car and we went the other way around, the longest way around.

And when this young man got in our car and went back the way we came from Dawson, by the creek, the police and all, just a gang was sitting down there, waiting to shoot and kill us. And when they got there, they would throw these flashlights in these men's faces—in this young man's face in our car. He said, "You ain't the nigger I'm looking for! I'm looking for that Lucius Holloway! We're going to kill him tonight!" They said, "Where is he is? You're hiding him!" He said that he had to go pick up some flyers for a meeting. "Some flyers for a meeting?" And he said, "Yes, yes sir!"

And so, they harassed him [20:00] because he figured that they had outsmarted us, and we was in a car, but they didn't have no way of knowing it. They just took what the man said. And we came on around through the back side of Lee County. It took us about [laughing] it took like three hours to get to our house, and it would have took about thirty minutes to get there otherwise. But we were safe that night. They didn't kill us that night.

The next week or two, they came to the house. And my husband always sent me to answer the door. There's a man came to kill him that night. And when I went to the door—somebody knocked on the door. He said, "Go to the door." And we would just be real still and go and peep out. And that night, I peeped out. This man had come to kill him. But he wouldn't answer no door, and I peeped out and I saw this man kneeling down at our door. And nobody said nothing, and we went back in the house, and I told him about this man was out here. So, we just got still, some of them went up under the bed, carried the children up under the bed, and we just paced there.

And the next day, when he got up and went to the Post Office, I think the next day, this same man was around there to kill him. But the man said later that he just couldn't kill him. And he went on and moved out of town, because I think the white folks run him out of there, because he couldn't—he didn't kill my husband. And thank God, we're still alive!

His story is longer than mine, [LH laughs] but some of mine [laughs] I could remember, and some of it I didn't because I was just so scared and so frightened about what happened *just because* we wanted to register and vote so we could better ourselves and help people in the community as we did. But we still helped people in our community. We're still there, and we're still helping people. And I thank God for all of this, because it's all about Him, not me.

LH: Let me fast forward real fast to pick up on that. Emma Kate didn't tell you she gave me an ultimatum. She said, "You've got to do two things before I'll marry you. You've got to get out of the Army, number one," and I didn't want to do that, "and number two, help me through school," but I give them up. But after I—that was some time in '55.

It was just a few days later, I met three men in a conversation, Allen Edwards, D. U. Pullum, and M. J. Hall. And, of course, we was introduced to each other. And on the spot, in 1955, the president of the NAACP appointed me his first vice-president, in 1955, a position that I have been in ever since. Now, he got beat up to die, but he died from it. That made me the interim president for a little while. So, we got another man, J. L. Barnes for president. I fell back to first vice president. He served faithfully for several years, and he got killed, right in the office, right in the office, killed dead. I served in the interim until he was buried. So, as we speak, Ezekiel Holley is the president of the NAACP. I'm still first vice president, and I've been since 1955.

But, you know, it was all about the vote. The whole thing was about the vote. So, I stayed on course, despite all of the threats I had on my life. I stayed on the course and filed all the lawsuits. Black men and black women, they backed off. And in Dawson, I would be told *anytime*—if I was walking down the street, and some black folks met me, they would run on the other side, because they'd say, "When them white folks shoot you, I don't want to get shot." So, if I would walk up in the church or on the crowd, they would just get away from me. So, I was just like a sore finger standing up there by myself.

But, as my wife said, I never stopped. I never give it up. And they all wasn't no easy nights and days. I was just as scared as any other human. I was human. But I went along with it.

And I had a couple of black men who was paid to shoot me—well, I said “paid,” maybe they wasn’t, but they was told to because they said they were. But I never was shot. I lived through it.

And, as a result, after filing the lawsuits and all this kind of thing in Terrell County, we were able to get black folks elected to positions, we were able to get black folks appointed to positions, and as we speak right now, we pretty much dominate the electorate in the City of Dawson in Terrell County. We’ve got black folks in all phases of elected positions, and some of them is kind of in the leadership. We had a [25:00] black man elected mayor for about twenty-two plus years. And, of course, he got comfortable. He got too comfortable and too selfish, and we voted him out the other day. We’ve got a young, twenty-two-year-old black man for our mayor, and we’re very happy for him.

And I served four years on the city council. I’m right into my seventeenth and a half year on the board of county commissioners. And I’m on every board there is and every organization that’s worth anything. And I tell them all the time, one time back in the middle ’60s, I tried to join the Ku Klux Klan, [laughter] but they wouldn’t let me.

So, I’m really saying that I was a part of everything. And it wasn’t in a selfish way. You know, I did it to help the people. I’ve always—from nine years old, as far back as I can remember, I always had a desire to help people. [Voices in the background] I always thought it was a better way and a better time. And being in the military, I could see things different in other states and cities. I could see peoples doing a little bit better than they were in Terrell County. And I said, “If you can do it in South Carolina, if you can do it in Maryland, if you can do it in Korea, if you can do it in Amman, Jordan, if you can do it in Madrid, Spain, you can do it in Dawson.”

So, I stayed on it. And I'm very humbled and I'm very excited and thankful to God that a lot of things that I worked for some fifty-seven, fifty-eight years ago, I'm *seeing* it into fruition. And at the time, if you had asked me, "Would you see it?" I'd say, "No, but it will happen." But I'm actually seeing it, and it's amazing to wake up every morning and see things that fifty-five, fifty-six years ago that I was struggling for. Men have died right in Terrell County trying to do the same thing.

And I've got an article over there entitled "The Last Man Standing," and when you read through the whole article, and they say that man is Lucius Holloway, because it was four of us. Three of them are dead—two of them got killed, and one died naturally—of course, I'm the last man standing. I don't know how I'll go. I might die naturally. I might get shot. I just don't know. But right now, I'm the last man standing that ever did anything big for Terrell County.

There were a few peoples come in later on and did something, but they were just like rabbits. They hopped about the bedroom. Some of them even left the state, and some of them gradually left the city, and some of them gradually come back. We had about two families left the state, and we had any number of them left the city. And they gradually come back when everything gets smoothed off, and the plane had got up to 40,000 feet, and he had it set on cruise, and the stewardess said to unbuckle your belts—they come back. [Laughter] They come back.

But I'm very humbled, I'm very happy, and I'm very blessed to even just to sit here now and talk about it. And for the past few years, I've been from place to place. I even wrote a book, *The Civil Rights Movement through the Eyes of Lucius Holloway*. And, of course, I had about five or six of them this morning, and they all went fast as somebody knew I had them. But I wrote that book, and a lot of these things we're talking about that's in there. And I'm just, as I said, I'm humbled, I'm blessed and thankful that I'm able to see it.

HJ: Let me just ask you one last question: What would you like children, the younger generation today, to know about what you all went through over the years, but really during the height of the Movement in the '60s?

LH: I would like for them to know that my family, although I was the spokesman, I was the one doing everything, but they were *there*, so that's just like they were saying what I'm going to say. I would like for the young children, boys and girls, to know today, number one, trust in God for what you want and stay focused. If you believe in it, stay with it. I would like for them to know that. And when they know that, then they will begin to achieve. I would like for them to know that.

HJ: Mrs. Holloway?

EH: Um-hmm?

HJ: Same thing. What would you like the children of today, young people of today, to know about what you went through during the Movement?

EH: I would like for the young people today to know that they *can* make a difference if they be obedient, respect the elders and respect themselves, and try to get a good education and stay in school, and be honorable to themselves, because you've got to respect yourself before you go anywhere. Respect themselves, and [30:00] education is the key to being successful, from the womb to the lap, from the lap to toddlers, training and listening and obeying, and they will make it. And trust God.

HJ: Mr. Holloway and Mrs. Holloway, thank you so much for sharing your story.

LH: You're welcome.

[Recording ends at 30:35]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Sally C. Council