

Barry Reynolds

Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

Start to ask you some questions. Lemme get everything rolling. May have an interruption. Let's see how far we get

Speaker 2 ([00:13](#)):

And go. Good morning. Good morning. My name is Monica El Amin. I'm the African-American History coordinator at the DeKalb History Center. Thank you so much for coming today. Alright.

Speaker 1 ([00:26](#)):

Glad to be here.

Speaker 2 ([00:27](#)):

And so to get started, what is your full name? My

Speaker 1 ([00:31](#)):

Name is Barry Reynolds. Barry Reynolds

Speaker 2 ([00:35](#)):

And Barry

Speaker 1 ([00:36](#)):

White.

Speaker 2 ([00:38](#)):

Barry Reynolds

Speaker 1 ([00:39](#)):

Like Barry White. Everybody get

Speaker 2 ([00:41](#)):

Oh yes sir. And so when and where were you born?

Speaker 1 ([00:46](#)):

I was born in the Grady Hospital, downtown Atlanta in 19 June 9th, 1950.

Speaker 2 ([00:56](#)):

And so what were your parents' names?

Speaker 1 ([01:01](#)):

My mom's name was, maiden name was Mary Sanders. My dad's name was (Grover?) Reynolds.

Speaker 2 ([01:10](#)):

And what were the names of your grandparents?

Speaker 1 ([01:13](#)):

My grandparents, I had Anna Sand, my mama's Anna Sander. Her name, her dad's name was Austin Sanders. And my daddy's parents were Grover Reynolds and also his mom was named Beatrice ("Beat") Reynolds.

Speaker 2 ([01:34](#)):

And so growing up did you have any siblings?

Speaker 1 ([01:37](#)):

Oh yeah, we had, there were eight of us. We had, it was four boys and both girls going up. We lived on Arabia Street. My grandma Beat, she lived right next up to us.

Speaker 2 ([01:56](#)):

And so growing up in Lithonia, could you speak to what that was like for you?

Speaker 1 ([02:04](#)):

It was pretty good run around Lithonia, a little small town had two or three stores out here downtown Lithonia. My neighborhood, the neighborhood I lived on was over Arabia Street, off Klondike Road. And at that time everybody in the neighborhood was, most of people lived was Reynolds. All my daddy's first, second cousins always lived right there. That same section more or less started out on the dirt road and I think the road got paved when I was around about 13 or 14 years old. I think it was something like that. Oh wow. But it was nice. We had a lot of fun. A lot of kids live in neighborhood and we played ball better. In fact, we had a big old park, it wasn't old park but a black kid had called Johnson Park and made a baseball park over there. We would go to that neighborhood and play baseball, played football and run down the street all day long. Just had a great time with kids. Bunch of kids, bunch of kids. We stayed out late. In fact they had a streetlight right there from our house and we stayed out there at like 10, 11 o'clock at night. So I just talk and still playing.

Speaker 2 ([03:28](#)):

Wow. And so what were the careers that your parents and your grandparents had?

Speaker 1 ([03:36](#)):

Well, they did day work, clean houses and stuff like that. That's what my mom did and my grandma too now Granny, I can't remember Granny Sanders. My mom said Mom's mother I think I never seen her work. She always stayed in the house. She worked around the house, stuff like that. But dad, my dad, he was a cement manager. He pulled concrete all around this side of town and DeKalb County, a lot of construction going on. In fact, he took us to, during the summer we had to work with him a lot of the time because he was self-employed for a while. So, we had to help him out pouring concrete, rolling wheelbarrows, stuff like that.

Speaker 2 ([04:25](#)):

That's interesting. And so what school did you go to? Well

Speaker 1 ([04:31](#)):

I started off in Bruce Street over here, Bruce Street and in first grade and went there, stayed in Bruce Street until I went through the ninth grade there. And then that's when they had to volunteer student integration and back. Lucious Sanders, that was my uncle. He was a real high on, he was a civic leader so he told all his nieces and nephews they go out to the school. So, we to all went, most of us Stone View and Lithonia High, related to Lucious Sanders, but it was alright.

Speaker 2 ([05:14](#)):

And so what was your school experience like going from just being at Bruce Street and then going to Lithonia?

Speaker 1 ([05:21](#)):

I hadn't been around too many. One thing about Lithonia, black people live all around Lithonia. We have a city almost circle. So, when we left off Arabia Street, walked through the back, we going to school, guess we walked by three or four houses that have white people all black all the way bushy. That's over mile and a half from where I live. All around we, I circle the whole city, city. A lot of places I traveled, they didn't have the cities, they had black population, they had pocket of black people. But Lithonia man, we were all around the city. But it was as far as going to school, I left Lithonia in 19 Bruce, 1965 went to Lithonia High School. There was nine of us went over there, nine black students at Lithonia High. It was an experience. Now I was kind of naive when I was thinking about going over there. They told we all going over Lithonia High. I said, well think white people. I had envisioned going over having some white friends. No bring him home with him and stuff like that. When I got, I found realities. So again, these folk hate us.

([06:51](#)):

It was good people, it was some good people, friendly people. But I found out that this thing, these people don't like black folk. I found that out. So, I started in the 10th grade, Lithonia high school I got on the, I was athletic, I got on the basketball team, I played my best sports was basketball and track and field. So I did that all the way through until I graduated. I played one year of football, played one year of football. But as far as going into classes and stuff like that, I didn't have many hall problems. I think had one incident, I believe a lot of people particular might call him negative, something like that a few times. But I had one incident, I was one in the hallway and some white guy walked up behind me and knocked my books out while we was changing classes, knocked out of my hand.

([07:51](#)):

I turned around and looked at it. I just looked at him. It seemed like he was getting dirty because I was scared because all these other white folks had nothing go for me anyway. So anyway, I said he was just scared as I was. He thought I was going attack him but I just picked my books up and gave him hard book and everybody just moving on. But it was something now playing. I was an athlete. The biggest thing about it is that I was on the team, I was the only black on our team playing basketball, basketball and stuff like that. And it happens lot. So many times when I go into a gym away from knock on you, I look around and so many times I was the only black in the gym. I mean I may not look for some janitors or stone.

([08:47](#)):

I was looking few times I was the only black in the whole gym. They have janitors. I felt more comfortable once I saw a black face somewhere I seen of the janitors over there, I felt a little better for my mind. I was the only black in the gym, probably my worst life. It worried bad. But we had to go to South Gwinnett, we played South Gwinnett, in Gwinnett County out there. They were more rural than Lithonia was. The thing that struck me in that night. We played a game. I'm playing, I run down basketball, playing basketball, playing back to do the best I could. And what had happened was after I got through, went to the dressing room to get dressed head back to get back to Lithonia, I walked in the dressing room and I'm looking around and I said, I saw all these guys were locked on there, these old smoking pit type guys in there, bad white boys, they have no school spirit.

[\(10:01\)](#):

I looked, I said I look at that, wait a minute Robert, what? What you doing in here? Not Barry, I here, I'm guessing here over here. Get dressed. And I said Wilkerson and all them guys, y'all guys got no stupid spirit. Y'all in here. So anyway, so I said I couldn't figure what in the world they doing in there. So I left. I went and they said, you ready to go Barry? I said, yeah, I'm ready to go. Why come on, let's go. So, I walked and I kind of like walking out, got on the school bus, got to the school bus, got on the school bus, took me back to Lithonia High, went home, got up Monday morning to go to school. I got up Monday morning to go to school and got in class. This guy named Gary Wilson, white guy. He come flying in there, took me running, I was sitting in my seat.

[\(11:03\)](#):

He come running. Hey man, boy I heard you had a time out that other night. What you talking about man? They had to escort you out the gym. I said, what? They escort me out the gym? Yeah man, coach Home told him to get some guys together to go in there with you because man during the game, they was calling you all kind of niggas up in that place out there, believe me. And shouting at you. But I was playing ball, it was just crowd noise. Me, I didn't hear all that stuff. But he said, man they was calling you all kind of names. So the coach told some of them guys to go in the restroom. I go in the restroom with me and escort me out and that's when I found out that morning when I got to school, that white old guy was in it. I couldn't figure out what in the are y'all doing up in him.

[\(11:50\)](#):

Like I said, it was just crowd noise. Me, they call him me names but they called I another place that played and heard some words too. But I don't think it got that bad. Cause that little small gymnasium and people was almost packed. It would get packed. Had five bleachers high and it was all on the floor. All this walls and all around the wall. (Inaudible) I didn't even know actually at the time when I was in there. I don't know what I did the other time. It was just, I had very few incidents, racially motivated incidents while I was in school like that. And I was like, it was good because I played ball and ran track and won the state track, track, qualify for state competition, stuff like that. We went to stadium in basketball my junior year and that was an experience.

[\(12:48\)](#):

It weren't that many blacks down there when I got there. Not either. There were some blacks. Like I say when I saw the blacks on the other team, I saw some blacks in the stand there. Okay, alright. I felt a bit more comfortable but when I was the only thing and I'm looking around and see, look around and nobody, nobody. Ain't nobody black. I'm the only the ball players, like I said back then they all right. But they didn't really, I didn't get to be real friendly with it for some reason. I didn't. That's pretty good experience. I came out of school pretty good.

Speaker 2 [\(13:28\)](#):

That's good. And so after you finished high school, did you go to college or

Speaker 1 ([13:35](#)):

Yeah, I went to DeKalb Junior College and went there. Then after I graduated from DeKalb, that was like a field school for the Georgia State University back then. So, I went at Georgia State.

Speaker 2 ([13:54](#)):

And so can you speak to a bit of just when you went to DeKalb Junior College and all of that, did you end up leaving Lithonia at all or did you stay No, it

Speaker 1 ([14:05](#)):

Commute the whole time. That's one thing I wish I could have gone away to school because they get that feel of being in college because, like DeKalb, I left, drove up there in the morning, took about 20 minutes, 20, 30 minutes to go up there and go back to Lithonia and that was my same buddies. Everybody I went to high school back in, they were still playing ball with me, that kind of thing like that. Then I got graduated from DeKalb. I went to the Georgia State and that I was there for a while but I had gotten a job. It started going to night school. So I finished up at night school at Georgia State. I had gotten a job at DeKalb County and so when I was new downtown Atlanta, then driving back to

Speaker 2 ([15:02](#)):

And so do you have any, trying to think. Do you have any interesting memories? Just from

Speaker 1 ([15:11](#)):

Just one thing about named Lucious Sanders, that's my uncle too. My uncle too. He was very civic, go-getter person. He dealt with the commissions down at DeKalb County all the time. He was instrumental in getting the streets paved and all that kind of stuff. Good stuff for black people. He had made some connections down with the commissioners down, down. And by me going to school and I went into DeKalb County, he had come to here, went the commissions being down there and had a conversation with him in his office. He said, you know what he told uncle?

([16:02](#)):

Yeah, he talked. Uncle Lucious said, he told Lucius, look Mr. Sanders, I'm going to hire, I'm going to hire a black guy, black people. Lucius came home that afternoon, came by the house and told me, Barry, I want you to go down there and put in an application with DeKalb County. And so next thing I got up, I said, okay, Uncle Lucious. So, I went down there and applied. I went to the tax department, first tax department. I went in there out. They had some openings, had some. When I went in there, the guy gave me a negative interview. He was saying that, he said, yeah, Mr. Reynolds, we got some openings. But he would say something like, we have to work on Saturday during tax season. I know you don't want to work on Saturday. I said, no, I don't mind working on Saturday. I have no problem with that. Well okay. And everything he said, you don't want, don't like that. You may not get some overtime. You don't want no overtime. I said, well I don't have no problem with overtime that kind of this man. You try to beat the conversation negative. You don't want to do this, you don't want about him.

([17:24](#)):

And then I went back home and the guy saw that I was going to school in Management Accounting at the time. And so one of the other guys department head, he came and he called me up for an interview. So I went back in the accounting department. That's what I was going to school for anyway. So I got back

in there. The guy said, I'd love to have you board. Would you like to come in and work us work for us? I said, well sure, no problem. Yeah. So that's how I got over DeKalb County. And when I got, I think the complex downtown Decatur where it government, DeKalb County, I think I was the only black in that whole

Speaker 2 ([18:13](#)):

Section. Wow.

Speaker 1 ([18:16](#)):

They had the blacks working for the county, sanitation and board of sewers, stuff like that. But I was like the only black in that whole section that worked for the county. I worked there for a long time and I told that story to, I had a retirement before I was retired. I worked 30 years. I worked 30 years for the DeKalb County retired before I turned 50. Wow. Yeah. And at my retirement party, everybody came had in the auditorium, one of the black, he worked in commissioner's office too. He had a pretty high position. I was telling that story about how I was only black in the here a couple, few years and he looked around the audience. He said, everybody now is black. He said, in 30 years, it looked like it caught on.

([19:18](#)):

He said, looked like it caught on. But most people, it was predominately black when I left, I worked there for 30 years, got a retirement and made some accomplishments. In fact, they gave me a recognition when I was there when they started Dr. King Birthday celebration. Birthday celebration, downtown Fulton County. I was just talking to looking. I said, no, I think don't that stuff downtown in Atlanta but here we ain't doing nothing. We ain't doing nothing. I said, well, I said, I tell you what I'm going do. I got thing I was taking all in the bathroom, taking the bathroom. We need to do something right. We need to do something for Dr. King. Get some kind of recognition. We ain't doing nothing out here. So when I got to work the next day, I went and talked to this couple of people, my coworkers and they said, Barry, I got idea we need to do something, plan some kind of program or something here.

([20:27](#)):

And they said, well whatever you want to do, Barry, I'm with you. Whatever you want. Talk. One of the guys in the data center, he did the print. I went talk to him about it. Man, you go for whatever you need, man, you want, I print out, I do it. How you do, I do it. So said, okay, that's fine, that's fine. So, we went and I said, let me go upstairs and I'm going to the commissioner's office. I can't remember the guy's name right now, but the office, he had a position in the commissioner's office. So I said, man, you know what Barry? He said, I want to have do a program and put together a program and do something in the auditorium down there. He said, well go for it. You go for it.

([21:16](#)):

They already sketched out because we have a prayer and then we going do a song. You going get somebody do a short speech. I had John Evans, he was big back then. Maybe I get him to come out like that. And I had it written out what we going do? And so, he said, Barry, I tell you one, you need to, before we do anything, we need to go there and talk to the chairman about this, Manual Maloof. Go there, talk to him about it. He said, I go there with him. So we went around the hallway, they told address said Cameron Barry S and think of the guy's name right now. But anyway, he said he over, they going to see you. We're going to talk to you about something he said. He said okay. Said Okay, well send him in. So, I got Mr. Maloof, I said, we'd like to have a program recognizing Dr.

([22:24](#)):

King's birthday here because we are not doing anything out here, not doing anything out here. And so we need to have a program. And I said, I've talked to some people and I've got itinerary, itinerary program to do, you know. He said, what you got? I said, this is everybody who had it typed up already. I gave it to him. He looked at it, threw it back over the desk and I'm telling you the truth. That man went off on me like crazy me out. He just went on, on, on and off. I said, said what? I said, y'all do stuff like this right here. Don't include no white people like that. I said, I'm just trying to get something to going. I said, I'm just trying to get something going. He went on to cussed, went on, ranting and raving. He said, y'all get out of my office.

[\(23:31\)](#):

Get out of my office. I said, I said, but okay. So, we got up and we walked back around his name, first name Michael, Michael's office. We walked back around and his talking and he said to his chair, he sat at his desk. I sat in front of him. We just sat there about five minutes. I said I'm worried. This man is cussing, like a friend, he retired and he said the fall ran and secretary called to y'all. Mark y'all embarrassed. He said, yeah, we still here. The chairman wants y'all to come back over there, wants to come back over there, come see what he wants and so get back over there. He said, y'all sitting there. He said it pisses me off. But you y'all have a program and then don't include white folks. I want to be in this program.

[\(24:29\)](#):

I said, sure you could be in it. Sure you could be in it. But that was his problem. He got mad because he did not see a white person's name on the program. This was something last minute your celebration was coming up. We had like three years to get this thing together and I'm glad it became my last burning moment. And I got put it together. I said, Mr. Maloof, no, I didn't come up here. Just ask you to be on this. But I didn't know how you thought about that. I just wanted, I just want us to do something right here so that we can support Dr. King. He said, well yeah, well put my name down, put my name down. I want to be on it. I want to be on it. Yeah, okay. Yes sir. Yes sir. So we went in and I got the program.

[\(25:17\)](#):

I called John, told what we going to do. I called John, don't get a program. Just you come out, say some words to us. Oh yeah, what's going on? I said, well, the chairman, he's going to come up first and then you come up after him and we'll sing a song like that. And then John Evans said, he said, wait a minute, Barry, wait a minute now, John Evans. He was a commissioner also. He was like, I think it was Fulton County I think. But he said, wait a minute, you got that backwards.. You got put me in front of the chairman. I said, put you in front of the chairman. Yeah, put me in front of the chairman.

[\(26:04\)](#):

I said, now. So he said, well wait a minute. And then we went back there and the (inaudible name) said, Barry, that man don't know protocol. No, uh-uh, you got to keep the chairman first. He's the head. He knows protocol. He said, we just kept it like that. So, program, we had about 200 people came that day and pretty good turnout. We just able to get just the people in the local right around the DeKalb, downtown Decatur to come in, we're finally excited. That's wonderful with the program,. Then two days after that, two days after that, he told me to come on and come back up to his office do he said, Barry, that was good. That was a good idea, but you did we do it. He said, but next year we're going to do it. Next year we're going to do it next year, but we're going to do it in this office. So we going take it over.

[\(27:21\)](#):

Chairman, what going do? But we going to have a committee. We're going to form a committee. We going to do on that committee, but we going to do it out of this office. So, every year, every year after that, we had the program and we got people, I mean all over the county from sanitation workers.

Everybody was able to come into it and participate in the program. It got real big. We had big speakers coming in our event, you know. And then after that, when I retired, when I retired, they gave me, Liane Levitan gave me a certificate showing that I started that Dr. K program there.

Speaker 2 ([28:03](#)):

That's wonderful.

Speaker 1 ([28:04](#)):

You have a program? Yeah, right here. This is a program that the community put on A few years ago was Lithonia Veterans Day celebration and this was a, we did this on November 10th back in 2012. Barbara Lester and other people spearheaded. She spearheaded and I was on that committee also. We worked on this right here, trying to be real good. We had a parade, had marching bands come in. It was real good. We later found a lot of black deputies, lot on, I guess we recognize them. Most of 'em was deceased and most of 'em were just deceased. But we had a really real good turnout. We started and we marched from Lithonia High School over to Bruce Street. And so we had one problem. We had one problem was that just like that train went down through there, when we getting ready to do the parade, go down through there, we had to make sure that the train wouldn't go down when block, we couldn't stop the train.

([29:26](#)):

So that so happened I had to call the county and calling CSX called them and they said, well the trains coming down through there. And so when the train got down there, I went down there and asked them could they the whole law to be home off and let this parade go through and guys, no problem. We let y'all go through. So we ready to go take the home, we have to stop the parade and things like that. We march from over to the cemetery when we had had the festival activity. Cemetery turned out real good though. We had a lot of participation. Good thing for Lithonia. This is one of the biggest things that happened. Lithonia in many years. Many years.

Speaker 2 ([30:08](#)):

Wow.

Speaker 1 ([30:10](#)):

Monica, we wrap

Speaker 2 ([30:12](#)):

And

Speaker 1 ([30:12](#)):

We get session.

Speaker 2 ([30:14](#)):

Okay.



Transcribed by REV AI

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Mr. Reynolds was interviewed in May 2024