

DeKalb History Center

Lithonia Community Engagement Oral History

Marcia Glenn Hunter

Speaker 1 ([00:03](#)):

And do this. And I have a pen.

Speaker 2 ([00:12](#)):

You need a pen?

Speaker 1 ([00:15](#)):

No.

Speaker 2 ([00:16](#)):

Oh, okay.

Speaker 3 ([00:18](#)):

So Ms. Glenn, I usually have people, so by the way, it's what is today? Today is Tuesday the 10th of January. There it is, 2023. And

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

I'm, it's Glenn Hunter.

Speaker 3 ([00:29](#)):

Glenn Hunter. I'm so sorry Ms. Glenn. That's

Speaker 2 ([00:31](#)):

Perfect. Right.

Speaker 3 ([00:32](#)):

Marcia Glenn Hunter and Ms. Hunter. I usually ask people to start at the beginning in terms of where you grew up, where you were born, your family, and so on, and we'll go from there. Okay?

Speaker 2 ([00:47](#)):

Okay, sure. That's fine. And I'm terrible with dates too. But anyway, I'm one of eight children born to my now deceased parents, Roger and Maggie Woods in Lithonia, Georgia in 1945. I grew up in the public schools of Lithonia, DeKalb County, more specifically Bruce Street Elementary and Bruce Street High School. After leaving high school, I went to Clark College, Atlanta, Georgia, where I had a very good experience, but we were so poor growing up. When I say poor, I really mean we were so poor, we couldn't afford the other "o" and the "r" and poor. So we were poor, but we were rich in love and

sharing and caring for one another. We were a very, very close family. Most of us were close in age, and I was the first one that was able to go to college. But when I went to college, not only did I go, but my siblings and my mother went with me because they supported me throughout my college career. I knew that by going to college, I could return home and help my family, and that was one of my greatest desires to be able to get a decent job and support my parents, my parent, and my siblings because they had been so good to me. Because in going to school, I still lived in Latonia, going to school in Atlanta, Clark College at the time, now it's Clark Atlanta University.

[\(03:22\)](#):

I would have to get up and catch a Greyhound bus at five 30 in the morning. I would have to walk from my house that was on Magnolia Street in Lithonia to Main Street every morning, rain, shine, sleet or snow. I had to catch that six o'clock bus, then get off in Decatur and catch a trolley. I think it was 17 or 18 main Decatur. And then I'll have to transfer downtown and catch the Fair Street Trolley to school and then have to do the same thing in the evening after my last class. Now, when I didn't have enough bus fare, because I would get a book of tickets for the week, but when I didn't have enough money for my trolley fare, once I got to downtown Atlanta and I didn't have enough money for a transfer, I would have to walk from downtown Atlanta. Never will forget this. Walk from there to school. It would take about. It took a little time, but I was just determined that I was going to school.

[\(05:07\)](#):

It was rough because most of the time it was dark when I left and dark when I got back. But during some of those times, I was able to get a ride with a friend of mine who went to Spelman. And then, I can't remember, my mother had this old pink rambler. And every once in a while, especially if I had a Saturday class, she would let me drive her rambler to school. Now, that was a real treat, not having to get on all those buses. But my first job was with an insurance company, and I knew I was just doing that for a short period of time until I could get something in my field because I had changed. I was a business education major in college, but when it was time for me to do my student teaching,

[\(06:27\)](#):

The desire for teaching just left me. And my mother told me that she had prayed for that. She said, because I was such an impatient person when I wanted something, I wanted right then and right there, and it was difficult for me to tolerate foolishness and she didn't want me to lose my job. So that's when my federal career began. My first federal job after college was with Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and I worked at BLS, I think maybe about four or five years. It was a very disciplined federal agency. I mean, when they said you start working eight, you started work at eight, you had your morning break, you had your evening break, and then you got off at four o'clock, four o'clock, four 30. You didn't start putting your, clearing your desk before then at four when you clean your desk and you left. And I was there for about four years. But that was a very good experience for me because it was very, very disciplined. But even at work on my first job, I was still a social butterfly. I just loved to talk to my coworkers to find out what was going on with them and their families. I got in trouble a lot of times doing that because they were so disciplined, they wanted you to work. And so I got in trouble doing that. But I worked there, like I said, for about four or five years. And then I went to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Speaker 1 [\(08:49\)](#):

I

Speaker 2 [\(08:49\)](#):

Got an administrative position there, and that's where most, I retired from there as a matter of fact. But at the same time, I was working for the Environmental Protection Agency in their legal department. That's also when I really became interested in politics because I was the one who would drive my mother when she had her state conferences and the like, and I would take her, and I was exposed to that type of environment, watching politician making decisions that would impact the lives of other people. And then I knew even then, and that was what in the sixties maybe, that there was no equity, there was a lack, especially people of color being heard. Because my mother often told me when she lived in Lithonia, she would go to city council meeting. But of course, back in those days, they weren't letting African-Americans in their meetings. If they had an issue, they would have to wait until council meeting was over before they presented their issues. And doing it like that. Nine times out of 10-year-old issues were not resolved because whatever your complaint may have been was not recorded in that minutes. And I know that was one of the main reasons that my mother ran for seat on the city council is she was the first, if she wasn't the first, she was among the first women to become a member of Lithonia City Council. And I know that she was the first African American woman to become a member of the city council.

[\(11:39\)](#):

And then I was saying how hard she worked on behalf of everybody in Lithonia, and she wanted to make sure that as African Americans, we had a seat at the table. We knew what was going on. And I watched her for four years, Jennifer, and I watched how hard she worked, and she had been like that throughout our life. She was very involved, even though she did domestic work. My mother was always involved in her children's life. It wasn't like we could just go out and do whatever we wanted to. At all times. My mother wanted to know, and she knew where we were at all times, and she was hard on us, especially my brothers, because she said oftentimes that she wanted them to have strong backs so that if they had to bend, they wouldn't break.

[\(12:57\)](#):

And it was very hard back in those days because really and truly, she raised the eight of us alone. My father was not in our lives as we grew up, but mother was always there. And so I just decided after watching her for four years, and she said, I'm not doing this anymore. I said, come on mother, you're doing a really good job. And she said, no, I'm not going to do it. And then she said, you can do it. But at that time, believe it or not, if you ran for city council or mayor in Lithonia, you had to be a property owner. You had to own property. So when I went up to qualify to run for a member of the city council, and they told me that, then I told 'em, I challenge them, I'll take them to court. And I don't know how it happened, what meeting it happened in or what I, but the city, there was some kind of measure that was taken that would allow non homeowners to run for office. So I did. I ran for office.

Speaker 3 [\(14:34\)](#):

Do you know about what time period that was? Oh God. I knew you were going

Speaker 2 [\(14:37\)](#):

To

Speaker 3 [\(14:37\)](#):

Ask. You were mayor in the nineties. So I was mayor in the nineties. It would've been pre-nineties.

Speaker 2 [\(14:44\)](#):

It would've been pre-nineties. It would have to have been in the seventies maybe. Okay. Early to mid-seventies. Now, keep in mind that I still had a full-time job and I was on the city council and I worked hard. I'm not patting myself on the back, but I worked hard for my constituency and I worked hard to earn the respect of not only my council members, but to earn the respect of my constituency. Because I would tell people, and a lot of times when they come to a city council meeting, they come angry. They have a reason problem that had not been resolved or whatever.

[\(15:52\)](#):

But I always told them, I give you respect because you deserve respect. I demand respect. You have to respect me regardless of what your issue is, we can work it out. That's what we are here for. We can work it out. And I had a very successful career as a member of the city council and Mayor pro tem. And then as mayor I, I've always been involved in various organizations. I'm just not a one issue person. Never have been. So being active in other organizations, what was that? Well, I did. I was a member of Leadership DeKalb.

[\(16:55\)](#):

I was president at one time of the DeKalb Municipal Association. I was very, very active on the board of the Georgia Municipal Association. I was a board member for a while. And after becoming mayor eventually and becoming a member of the National Coalition of Black Mayors, I was elevated to, I served as treasurer. I served as vice president for the National Conference of Black Mayors before I left the city council. But I've had a full life. I know that I made a difference. I know that it was challenging. And the one thing my only son said to me that really touched my heart, he said, mom, I know when I was growing up, you were busy in your meetings and all because I would take him to city council with me too sometimes.

[\(18:43\)](#):

But you were always about helping other people and you were a good mom, and you were a perfect example of being what a true servant is all about. And I appreciate it, he said, because when I first went into the military, I was listening to the guys saying how their lights were turned off or they didn't have water or food or even a roof over the head. But he said, you always provided for me, and I just appreciate that. So I just thought that was a beautiful compliment. And he grew up to be the type of young man that any mother would be proud of. Good husband, good father, good grandfather, very active in his community also. And I guess I know that was one of the reasons that we grew up like we did, because my mother always said, if you see a good fight, get in it. And that's what we did. And it was a challenge because not only did we have to fight back in those days for ourselves, but we had to fight for those citizens who felt like they had no voice. And we became their voice because our house was always the meeting house. Mainly Jackson came to our house, what's his name? Jordan, Vernon Jordan. Vernon Jordan. Our house was the epicenter of activity.

[\(20:57\)](#):

And we just grew up with that servant attitude, that commitment. We're always very compassionate people. Even I can still have folks from Lithonia to call me today and ask me about a particular candidate. And I may say, well, I'm not telling you who to vote for. You really need to do your due diligence and find out about this person. I said, but for me, this is the way I'm voting. You vote the way you want to. And if you want to vote for this candidate, do your research. Just don't do, because I say so. Know who you putting in office. Know their background, know whether or not they have it. They have any values. What about their ethics and the likes? Because I declare that's why we are having so many problems now. We don't know who we're putting in office and they're going into office for the wrong reason.

[\(22:13\)](#):

They're going into the office for themselves. Now, the one thing I can say about us, even on the city council, even though we got a small stipend, it did not equate to the hours that we spent the taking care of city business. Because oftentimes I would go into the office at City Hall before I went to my job, and I had to be at work at eight o'clock. And when I got off work, and I had a small job too, I was stopped by City Hall to make sure everything was all right. And there was never a job that the employees at City Hall were doing, doing from administrative to janitorial that I wouldn't do.

[\(23:25\)](#):

I know at one particular time, over on Bruce Street, where the old city dump used to be, had some complaints about that. Man was saying, I forget what it was, but I put on my blue jeans, a long sleeves and some boots, and walked through all of those woods and all to see for myself what he was talking about, which he ended up not being the truth. But that's just the person that I was. If I had to go in a ditch, if I had to go under the house, somebody calling about a water issue, I went, I would not require anybody on my staff to do one job that I wouldn't do, including clean the bathroom. That's just the type of servant I knew I was there to serve and not to be served. I was a public servant, and I did it because I loved it. I had that kind of serving attitude. And I'm still engaged. I'm Vice President, a homeowners association here in this community where I live. I still serve on the Arabia Mountain Alliance in Lithonia. I still work with DeKalb for Seniors, which is a nonprofit organization that raises funds for the Lou Walker Senior Center.

[\(25:16\)](#):

So while I'm not as active because I have more caregiving responsibilities now, I'm still very, very active because when it's all over and it's my time to answer the call, I do. And I tell people this all the time, I just want him to say, well done, good serving. And I do it until the day I take my last breath. I work just as hard to ensure that people or respected that if they have an issue, if I can't help them to resolve it, I can tell 'em where to go for help. As a matter of fact, I'm supposed to be on a brain health call at two o'clock today. It's a brain health from Emory University, and it's really geared toward senior citizens where there are senior citizens find themselves being caregivers

[\(26:39\)](#):

Because people don't realize caregiving is not reserved just for older folks. We have so many seniors, Jennifer, that are caring for disabled children, disabled grandchildren, and it takes a toll on your body. And I just see, I, what a toll it has taken on a lot of my senior friends since the pandemic, being isolated, being lonely, not being able to socialize with people with common interests, common ages, common issues, takes a toll on the physical, mental and emotional help of caregiver. So that's one of those. I have in that bag right there, a bunch of, it's about pretty close to \$700 worth of gift cards and about 200 cards for the seniors that's in this caregiver group that I work with at the Lou Walker Senior Center, because the need is so great. And if you listen to some of their stories and you can say, but by the grace of God, there go, even though I have my challenges too, but there's so many other folks who are worse off than what I am. And if I can bring a little joy into their lives because I collected those gift cards from my sorority, alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated. I'm a member of Lambda Epsilon Omega chapter, and they know what my passion for seniors.

[\(29:25\)](#):

And they asked me, well, what can we do? And I told 'em during the pandemic, especially with our caregiver group, our caregiver group meet, we met once a month at the,

[\(29:42\)](#):

And as part of that program, we brought in resources, but we also fed them because they come to our meeting at 4:30 in the evening. And so they may be missing a meal. And we also provided respite services for them. We would pay somebody to either stay at home with their care charge or if they brought them with them. Then we had a resource there at the center where we paid for respite services so they could have a couple hours to exhale. And it helped. It really helped. And even today, we still have members who have lost their care charge, who continue to come to those meetings because they find some solace. They find comfort in being around people who know what they're going through. It is one thing to say that, well, I know how you feel. You don't know how I feel unless you walked a few blocks in my shoes. So that's me in a nutshell.

Speaker 3 ([31:19](#)):

Amazing. Do you mind if we go back through and just, I can ask some follow up questions or do you need to be on your phone call at two?

Speaker 2 ([31:27](#)):

Oh, no, they're just, let me do this. I can just check in, but I mute. Let me do that because it is an excellent resource and they have some excellent presenters. They really do. This

Speaker 3 ([31:54](#)):

Is through

Speaker 2 ([31:54](#)):

Emory. This is through Emory. Every Tuesday it is called Brain Talk.

Speaker 1 ([32:05](#)):

Very good.

Speaker 2 ([32:08](#)):

And let's do this. And I'm then, I'm going to just put it on speaker. I usually do it on my computer, and I think that's what I'm going to do. So, could you. Yeah. Yeah. Because one thing about it, if you don't join the call, they will let you know the next day, sorry, we missed you.

Speaker 1 ([32:55](#)):

I'll

Speaker 2 ([32:56](#)):

Just check in. Robert Aerobics instructor. That's the one thing I got to get back to because, well, even since I retired, I still worked out because we have a work workout room, but I don't work out nearly as much as I used to.

Speaker 3 ([33:38](#)):

Okay. Where did you teach aerobics?

Speaker 2 ([33:40](#)):

I taught at the federal building, downtown Atlanta. And also at my church. I taught it my church. That's John. So we can fill in some

Speaker 3 ([34:16](#)):

Stuff. So I wanted to ask about your son. What's your son's name?

Speaker 2 ([34:21](#)):

Miguel. M-I-G-U-E-L. That's him right up there. He retired from the military, seven tours in Iran, I mean Iraq. And I forget how many tours he did in Afghanistan. Something like five tours. Wow. It was in special operations. I to ask him what they did, he said, I can't tell you, ma, if I tell you I have to kill you.

Speaker 3 ([34:59](#)):

And you mentioned the National Conference or National Coalition of Black Mayors

Speaker 2 ([35:04](#)):

National Conference.

Speaker 3 ([35:05](#)):

National Conference of Black Mayors. Was Elizabeth Wilson on that council with you,

Speaker 2 ([35:10](#)):

Elizabeth,

Speaker 3 ([35:12](#)):

Because you were mayor around the same

Speaker 2 ([35:14](#)):

Period, right? Right, right. Oh, that was my friend, Elizabeth, Patty. What was her name? The mayor of East Point and I, pastor Joe Hillard, call ourselves the three, I think Patsy and Elizabeth was members of the National Conference of Mayors. I wasn't a part of the national conference. That's the bigger organization, but I was a member of the National Conference of Black Mayor.

Speaker 3 ([35:57](#)):

Okay. And you also mentioned, so the rule about being a homeowner in order to run for public office. Do you know if that's still in effect? Did that change?

Speaker 2 ([36:09](#)):

Oh no, that changed. They changed it. Yeah, because I challenged

Speaker 3 ([36:12](#)):

It. Right. And that was in the seventies when you were running for city council.

Speaker 2 ([36:16](#)):

Right.

Speaker 3 ([36:18](#)):

Do you remember the term, the years you were mayor of Lithonia?

Speaker 2 ([36:24](#)):

I don't even, dates are not that important to me, and so I never focus on dates. But let's see here. When I left in 2004, I had been on either a member of the council or mayor for 23 years.

Speaker 3 ([36:51](#)):

Oh wow. And when you say left in 2004 left.

Speaker 2 ([36:59](#)):

I lost, yeah, I lost my seat to Donald Honore in 2003, I believe. But I didn't have any regrets because working the hours that I was working and then working full time really was taking a toll on my health too, because I was having to attend so many meetings. And I travel a lot because I was a motivational speaker also. So all that traveling and all, so really and truly, that was a blessing in disguise.

Speaker 3 ([37:42](#)):

So you were a mayor when you were on city council. You were working full time for the federal government. Can you talk a little bit about what the work is of a city counselor in Lithonia? What kind of work were you doing?

Speaker 2 ([37:55](#)):

Well, the city council was that body of the government that were policy makers, were responsible for the budget planning, establishing a budget, serving on various committees, and assisted the mayor in any way that the mayor needed at that time.

Speaker 3 ([38:36](#)):

And when you were mayor, were you also working full-time, or does mayor become your full-time job?  
No, mayor was

Speaker 2 ([38:42](#)):

Not my full-time

Speaker 3 ([38:43](#)):

Job. Okay.

Speaker 2 ([38:44](#)):

So you were doing was not enough for bread and butter?

Speaker 3 ([38:47](#)):

Yeah,



Speaker 2 ([38:48](#)):

No.

Speaker 3 ([38:48](#)):

So you did city council work and mayoral work in addition to your full-time

Speaker 2 ([38:53](#)):

Job? Absolutely. About 18 hours a day, including Saturdays and Sundays. Wow. It was a lot of work, but that's just the type of person that I was.

([39:09](#)):

I didn't have to do it, but whatever I do, I put my whole heart into it. I'm still like that today. And that's why tomorrow I have, I was telling you that I had a board meeting at the (Arabia) Alliance, and Thursday I have a homeowner's association and board meeting, of which I've already established the agenda. And so I'm just busy. I'm still busy, not quite as busy. But even with the homeowners association now and people having issues with certain issues in the community, those issues need to be addressed. People need to know that we care about our community. So even though I'm not the president, I'm not the president because I don't want to be president. I still work hard at ensuring that we have a very viable community and that we maintain our covenant and that people are treated fairly and their issues are addressed and we do something about those issues. But yeah.

Speaker 3 ([40:45](#)):

And you said you left government work in 2004. Did you also retire from the EPA at that time, or when was your

Speaker 2 ([40:53](#)):

Retirement? I retired, let's see, I retired from EPA, I believe in 2008. I remarried in 2004, and I retired in 2008.

Speaker 3 ([41:12](#)):

Right. And were you living in Lithonia proper Up until, what brought you to Ellenwood and how long did you live in Lithonia? In total?

Speaker 2 ([41:23](#)):

I lived in Lithonia all of my life until 2008. I moved to, no, to 2000. I got married in 2004, so that's when I left Lithonia and moved here to Ellenwood.

Speaker 3 ([41:46](#)):

And then you grew up in Lithonia, your mom, your mom grew up in Lithonia as well?

Speaker 2 ([41:52](#)):

My mom grew up in Rockdale County. Both my parents grew up in Rockdale County. Okay.

Speaker 3 ([42:07](#)):

And you went to Bruce Street Elementary. Have you participated in the Bruce Street School program or the revisiting of the campus?

Speaker 2 ([42:16](#)):

Well, just by way of just talking to whoever was over that project, I didn't attend those meetings at the time because I had a health scare issue when all that was going on,

Speaker 3 ([42:35](#)):

So

Speaker 2 ([42:36](#)):

I wasn't able to.

Speaker 3 ([42:38](#)):

And any of your siblings still in the Lithonia area?

Speaker 2 ([42:41](#)):

Oh, they all are. Except one, my three brothers. My three brothers are still in Lithonia. I have nieces and nephews in Lithonia. My one surviving sister is in Decatur. I lost two sisters, but they were still in Lithonia also. And one of 'em was a member of the city council at one time too.

Speaker 3 ([43:15](#)):

Very much a family of service.

Speaker 2 ([43:17](#)):

Absolutely.

Speaker 3 ([43:18](#)):

That's wonderful.

Speaker 2 ([43:19](#)):

Absolutely.

Speaker 3 ([43:24](#)):

I love the story about you driving your mom's pink Rambler on sometimes when you had Saturday classes. I wonder if you have any photos of her car?

Speaker 2 ([43:31](#)):

I don't. I don't. But I remember that little boxy, that little boxy car.

Speaker 3 ([43:38](#)):

This transcript was exported on Oct 25, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

I'm going to have to go look that up on the internet when I get back to the office because I'm not familiar with that car at all. But I love that story. Well, thank you so much for your service, Ms. Hunter. I appreciate you talking with me. I'm going to stop the recording now. Okay. It's been a

Speaker 2 ([43:52](#)):

Joy.

Transcribed by REV AI

Edited by human J Blomqvist, archivist, DeKalb History Center, January 2025

Ms. Hunter was interviewed January 2023