



John Ford

## Lowndes County Election Fraud

by Gwendelyn Patton

The polls opened at 8:00 a.m., but Black folks were there at 7:00 to make sure that they cast their ballots for those candidates who hopefully would take them out of their 'fundamental trick bag.' Lowndes County--Black Power--later to be corrupted by white power. Black folks were anxious and frightened.

"Remember we are the second lever."

"Pull the Black Panther lever and go home."

"Ask the Black sisters to help you in the booth."

So the conversations went for the greater part of the morning. Black folks for the first time felt like citizens. The great day was here in Lowndes County, Alabama.

"Us folks sho' are coming out. Folks want to vote."

"I'm seventy-five, and I feel like I've been born again."

"De Lawd sho' want us to vote cause dere ain't a cloud in the sky."

The lady was right...there was not a cloud in the sky. Black folks walked, rode in trucks and cars to the polls--all of them trying to remember the instructions given them that night before at the Mass Meeting. Some of the new citizens had to be carried because they couldn't walk; others had to be led because they couldn't see. Many were around because they had not registered and wanted so desperately to be citizens, to be a man like their neighbors, to be a part of the 'American Dream.'

Brenton, a predominately Black precinct, was running smoothly. No trouble...not a cloud in the sky. It was a family reunion, a town's meeting. Folks were helping one another and feeling for the first time in their lives 'American.'

"There's trouble in Sandy Ridge."

The conversations changed as the morning progressed. Trouble seemed to be everywhere, and even though there were no clouds in the sky, white lightning was striking everywhere and on every Black man.

"I saw Jim Clark."

"White folks ridin' round with guns."

"My boss evicted me because I wanted to vote; I wanted to be

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County the example to show niggers that they better stay in their 'places'? Johnson, is that what you are trying to articulate? Is that what you call democracy?

There were no reporters as there were at Wallace's headquarters. Was it because the white folks had conspired together and did not want reporters to relate to the public their overheating, their stealing of the elections? Is the political struggle of Black people anything in this country? It is thundering now. There is no place to go, no homes, no farms, no lands,...NO CLOUDS in the SKY.

So it was. A beautiful day in Lowndes County, Alabama. God controlled the skies, but the white man determined the clouds, the lightening, the thundering...and the victims. Who controls the silver lining?

"Man, you got your shit?"

"Naw, ain't no clouds in the sky."

Election day was over, and night began to fall. There were no clouds in the sky, but the white man's clouds began to thicken as the night grew darker.

"A Black man got whipped by a white cop for challenging. He had to go to the hospital out of town."

People had gathered at the Lowndes County Freedom Organization Headquarters to discuss protection for the women, for the children, and especially for the candidates.

"Man, you got your shit?"

"YEAH!"

There seems to be white clouds everywhere groping for Black men in the dark. We have to stop that to make certain that there "ain't a cloud in the sky."

"Man we better go home and get our shit together because we got to control that silver lining."

a man."

"Dese white foks sho' got something up 'cause dey is too quiet."

"Why is the Alabama Troopers here?"

"White folks lined across the street from the city hall; dey waitin' for somethin!"

"Look at the nazi sign above the courthouse."

"I'm scared!!!"

"Man, you forgot your shit?"

"Naw, there ain't a cloud in the sky."

The man was right, but there were clouds: god-fearing, gloomy, death-like clouds over every Black man in Lowndes County. If they won, white folks would kill them; if they lost, the klan would have license to kill the uppity niggers, the bad niggers. There wasn't a cloud in the sky....

The Black Panther candidates lost.\*

Why?

How could they lose? How could our Black candidates lose in a county 81.4 per cent Black? How did Mr. Logan get 164 votes in this precinct and Mrs. Moore only 64 votes in the same precinct? Don't cry. HOW DID WE LOSE?

"My voting machine did not make 'X,' but they said I voted anyway."

"It's some folks from Tuscaloosa voting in our county, white folks."

"Miss Ann voted from Montgomery. She lives in Montgomery, but she

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votes in Lowndes County."

"Miss Ann voted for her dead husband."

"Will you help me cause ain't nothing but white folks in dere?"

"I is too scared to 'challenge' white folks; I knows dey cheating."

"I as't the Federal watcher to let the Negro woman help me, but he pointed to the white official."

"My boss told me to pull the first lever and go home."

"Man, we is the second lever."

"Mr. Charlie voted twenty times cause he voted fo' all the Black folks on his plantation."

"Man, white folks are stealing the election. You got your shit?"

"Naw, there ain't a cloud in the sky."

Lowndes County is a foreign country, full of Black people, controlled by white people from Johnson on down. Did Johnson and his boys in the Democratic Party have a meeting to make certain that Black people didn't win the election? Is Lowndes

	Black Panther Cand.		Democratic Cand.	
Sheriff	Sidney Logan	1,426	Frank Ryals	1,943
Coroner	Emory Ross	1,391	Jack Golson	1,901
Tax Assesor	Alice Moore	1,557	Charlie Sullivan	2,234
Tax Coll.	Frank Miles	1,556	Iva Sulivan	2,227
Board of	Robert Logan	1,620	David Lyons	1,894
Education	John Hinson	1,620	Tommie Coleman	1,933
	Willie Strickland	1,552	C. B. Haigler	2,139