

A LIFE WELL LIVED
HONORING AND REMEMBERING
**BROTHER HOLLIS WATKINS
MUHAMMAD**



SUNRISE: JULY 29, 1941
SUNSET: SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

TOUGALOO COLLEGE | KROGER GYMNASIUM

500 W. COUNTY LINE ROAD
TOUGALOO, MS, 39174 | 11:00 A.M.

STUDENT MINISTER, DR. ABRAM MUHAMMAD,
N.O.I. MISSISSIPPI STATE MINISTER, OFFICIATING



JANAZAH SERVICE

A LIFE WELL LIVED

HONORING AND REMEMBERING

BROTHER HOLLIS WATKINS MUHAMMAD

July 29, 1941 – September 20, 2023

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL

PROCESSIONAL

OPENING PRAYER

READING OF OBITUARY SILENTLY

Expressions 3-5 Minutes

John Watkins

Hollis Watkins, Jr.

JANAZAH SERVICE

JANAZAH PRAYER

CLOSING

RECESSIONAL

Significance of the Peppermint:

The mint represents the sweetness of life and how life gradually wears away.



BROTHER HOLLIS WATKINS MUHAMMAD

SUNRISE: JULY 29, 1941 – **SUNSET:** SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Brother Hollis Watkins Muhammad was an uncommon man with extraordinary qualities embodying skill, intelligence, character, and leadership; plus, he had a huge capacity to love others. His humility and passion to improve the conditions of his people invigorated everyone in his presence, especially in meetings and trainings. His singing alone lit a fire in one's soul and motivated ordinary people to join the struggle and fight for fairness, justice, and liberation for Black people. He held many titles: Son, Husband, Father, Brother, Uncle, Nephew, Cousin, Friend, Leader, Organizer, Teacher, Mentor, Dr., but all the titles failed to describe this phenomenal and brilliant man.

Sankofa is a principle derived from the Akan people of Ghana that one should remember the past to make positive progress in the future. Brother Hollis community organizing and teaching style connected historical times and conditions with present day conditions.

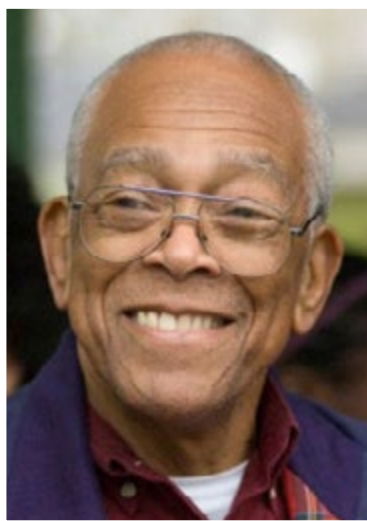
The Journey Begins....

Brother Hollis Watkins Muhammad, the youngest and twelfth child of sharecroppers John Watkins and Lena Wise Watkins was born Hollis Watkins on July 29, 1941, in Lincoln County, Mississippi near the town of Summit. When Brother Hollis was seven years of age his parents purchased 120 acres of land in Lincoln County, giving them an independence that the family had never experienced. Brother Hollis first attended

the McNulty School, a small community school, then was bussed to Lincoln County Training School, from which he graduated in 1960.

He was exposed to movement work in 1959, at age 17, when he attended the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) youth meetings led by Medgar Wiley Evers. In 1960, Brother Hollis attended meetings in McComb, Mississippi and started working with Robert Parris Moses (aka Bob Moses) of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Brother Hollis helped conduct the state's first sit-in at the Woolworth's Department Store, which resulted in 34 days in jail. The conditions of his confinement were so harsh, he lost 18 pounds. Brother Hollis participated in a walk-out at McComb's Burgland High School, a school just for colored children, which resulted in another 39 days in jail.

Brother Hollis traveled to Hattiesburg, Mississippi to work on a voter registration project. He stayed with Vernon Dahmer, a NAACP leader and landowner. A few Black people, including Victoria Gray Adams, were persuaded to attempt to register to vote. Brother Hollis assisted CBS News to document voter discrimination in Forest County, an area ripe with Klan activities, by carrying a hidden camera and microphone into Theron Lynd's office, who was the Circuit Clerk. CBS used the footage to produce the mini documentary "Mississippi



and the Fifteenth Amendment.” The footage has since been re-released on DVD and renamed “Mississippi and the Black Vote.”

Even though registering voters was dangerous, Brother Hollis and other SNCC organizers such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Willie Peacock, Sam Block, June Johnson, Annell Ponder, Amzie Moore, and John Ball remained on course. They organized voter registration campaigns in Holmes County and Greenwood (Leflore County). The white power structure in Greenwood halted their work by arresting Brother Hollis and other workers. He was sentenced to serve his time in a maximum-security camp on death row at the notorious Mississippi State Penitentiary where he remained for 55 days.

Brother Hollis participated in the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project also known as Freedom Summer. He is one of many people spied upon by the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, which investigated civil rights workers and created files on them for the government. His name appears in the files 63 times. Some of the reports dubbed him a communist, although he had little idea what that even meant at the time. Brother Hollis also participated in the 1964 Democratic Party Convention held in Atlantic City, New Jersey in support of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which attempted to unseat the regular Mississippi Democratic Party as the true representative of the state.

From 1968 through 1972, he served as Director of Social Services for the state-wide Headstart Program. While in this position, he established co-ops and buying clubs throughout the state. Brother Hollis worked continuously to empower people through the political process.

Brother Hollis joined the Nation of Islam in 1970,

and he remained a member of the Nation of Islam for the rest of his natural life. Over the many years of service in the Nation of Islam, he served in the posts of Secretary and FOI Captain. Brother Hollis loved his people and one of his most proud moments was when The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan asked him to help his ministers. He worked hard to do as The Minister asked.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, he organized voters in four small Mississippi towns—Marks, Rolling Fork, Belzoni, and Gloster. His work in these towns resulted in the election of their first majority Black city council and Black mayor.

In 1973, Brother Hollis, implementing The Honorable Elijah Muhammad's "Do For Self" philosophy, led him to obtain a real estate license and set up his own construction company. In 1974, he established a produce and egg distribution business. From 1975 - 1978, he went to Alabama to manage farms for the Nation of Islam, which consisted of 5000 acres in Greene County and 3700 acres in Marengo County. After one year in Alabama, he was also asked to manage the livestock production in Georgia, which included 100 heads of dairy cattle and operation of a dairy. Later, Brother Hollis served as Field Director for the Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Program of the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives.

In his efforts to continue the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement, Brother Hollis founded Southern Echo in 1989, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to community organizing using an intergenerational approach and improving the quality of life of Black people. "When I was much younger," he said, "I got my strength through the older folks; and now I'm a little bit older ... and I get my strength through young people." He was a core participant in the 1990-



1992 successful community-based redistricting efforts in Mississippi and was the lead plaintiff in the 1991 federal redistricting lawsuit challenging the State of Mississippi to comply with the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Brother Hollis' work through Southern Echo led to doubling the size of the Mississippi Black Legislative Caucus. Through a single election, the black legislative seats were increased from 21 to 42. Brother Hollis had been instrumental in preventing several unwanted and undesirable landfills from being established in the State of Mississippi, as well as preventing the establishment of huge hog farms (factories) in Mississippi. Brother Hollis' work continued to force the political and educational systems of Mississippi to become more accountable.

Because of his comprehensive work, Brother Hollis was invited to travel extensively throughout South Africa in 1996. His twenty-one-day trip, beginning in Johannesburg and extending up to Pretoria and back down to Cape Town, allowed him to meet with government officials, local organizations, and community leaders. He was able to share his American experience and compare it to the Black experience in South Africa.

In connection with the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Censuses, Brother Hollis conducted redistricting workshops in Louisiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and throughout the State of Mississippi. He presented residential schools and workshops and had provided other kinds of training and technical assistance for communities across Mississippi, the United States, and Latin America on community organizing, African American culture, redistricting, political access and accountability, candidate caucuses, and sustainable agriculture. The Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network [REJN], was one group through which Brother

Hollis extended his trainings and technical assistance to community-based, marginalized workers, women and youth groups and Indigenous communities. He played a key role in REJN members' collaborative efforts to help Southern workers and grassroots communities understand racist immigration policy, the transformation of the South that was underway, and build relationships with immigrants. Besides REJN, he also served on the board of directors of several community-based non-profit organizations, including Highlander Research & Education Center, and Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group (SSAWG).

Brother Hollis participated in managing and advising many political campaigns, some of which included the following:

- 1967 - Helped Robert Clark become the first African American elected to the Mississippi State Legislature since reconstruction.
- 1984 - Mississippi State Campaign Manager, Presidential Campaign of the Reverend Jesse Jackson.
- 1987 - Coordinated the Black vote, which led to Mike Moore's election as Attorney General of the State of Mississippi.
- 1988 - State Coordinator, Presidential Campaign of the Reverend Jesse Jackson
- 1989 - Coordinated the Black vote which was instrumental in Kane Ditto's election as Mayor of the City of Jackson, Mississippi.
- 1989 - Campaign Manager for the Honorable Pat Wise in her first campaign for Hinds County Chancery Judge (MS)
- 1990 - Campaign Manager for the Honorable Robert Gibbs in his first campaign for Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit District (MS)
- 1993 - Helped Bennie Thompson get elected as a Congressman from the 2nd Congressional District, Mississippi.



- 2003 - Campaign consultant for Eddie Fair, the first African American to be elected as Tax Collector in Hinds County (MS)

Brother Hollis has received many awards and accolades for his dedication to improving the conditions of his people and communities. Some of his accomplishments include: the President Award for an outstanding humanitarian and civil rights activist at the 1990 Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); three honorary doctorates from Southwest Minnesota University, Ursinus College, and Tougaloo College; the prestigious Bannerman Award for his activism; the 2000 Minister Louis Farrakhan Award for outstanding and dedicated service from Jackson City Councilman Kenneth Stokes; the 2002 Trailblazer Award from the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice; the first Living Legend Honor from the Muhammad Mosque #78 in 2012; the 2013 Fannie Lou Hamer Humanitarian Award from the Hamer Institute at COFO from Jackson State University; the 2015 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award; and the Century Award at the 2015 Freedom Flame Awards Gala as part of the “Bloody Sunday,” Selma to Montgomery Bridge Crossing, and the Voting Rights Act 50th Anniversary Commemoration in Selma, Alabama.

Brother Hollis, the late Jimmie Travis, the late Owen Brooks, the late Jesse Harris, and other Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement decided that they needed to come together to form an organization to document and accurately record the true history of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement. This led to the establishment of the Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, Inc. in 2004. For the past nineteen years, the Veterans have been the leader in providing and influencing civil rights programming in a region of historical significance, where the contributions of many of the individuals who were actively involved

have been overlooked traditionally. Brother Hollis served as the chairman of the organization.

One Voice launched the Hollis Watkins Muhammad Leadership Development Program in May, 2016. The program is a nine-week internship aimed at providing critical leadership tools to college students that help them to become world leaders in the field of social justice.

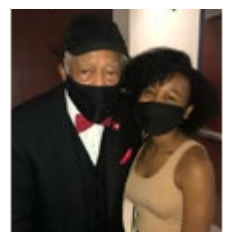
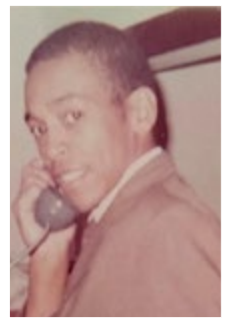
Brother Hollis Watkins Muhammad departed this life on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, around 5:28 pm, at his home in Clinton, MS with his loving wife, Sister Edna by his side. He is preceded in death by: His parents, John and Lena Watkins; his son, Nyamekye Malcolm; brothers, Johnny, Leroy, Solomon, Willie C., Joe Louis, and Monroe; sisters, Eula, Mattie, Elizabeth, and Doris.

Brother Hollis Watkins Muhammad leaves to cherish his memory: His wife, Sister Edna Watkins Muhammad; children, John (Desiree) Watkins and Hollis (Asha) Watkins, Jr.; Donna Spearman, Denise Thompson-Hogan, James (Stephanie) Brown, Jr., Kimberly Brown, Stacy Brown, Zurifah (Hamzah) Muhammad, William Jr. (Teresa) Flanagan, and Nicole Flanagan; goddaughter, Deborah Dodd; sister, Jeweline Berry; 24 grandchildren, 30 great grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and special friends.

Brother Hollis’ biography, *Brother Hollis: The Sankofa of a Movement Man*, co-written with C. Liegh McInnis, is a must read.

“I felt like I had the knowledge to help my people. I felt like I needed to use my talents to do what was necessary to make things better for my people.”

-Bro. Hollis, 2012





TRIBUTES

"I am John Watkins. Hollis Watkins is my father.

I AM MY FATHER'S SON"

-John Watkins

HOLLIS WATKINS.

He was many great things to so many people. He had remarkable accomplishments throughout his life and is cherished by all who got the chance to know him. However, I am one of the few lucky people. Unlike others, I had the pleasure of calling Hollis Watkins my granddaddy and he was the best granddaddy.

Nayomi Watkins

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON,
AND A TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE UNDER
THE HEAVEN:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

-Kim Brown and Family

TRIBUTE OF LOVE

from your god-daughter & family:

Your vision made a mark.

Your mission made an impact.

Your life made a story worth telling.

But, your LOVE made a major difference in our lives and we are forever grateful for the opportunity to have experienced life with you as our "Papa Watkins."

We salute you and acknowledge your many dedicated years as a humble servant to blood, family and humanity.

Rest Well!

We love you through eternity,

Debra, Brandon, Jasmine and Jameia

FOR OUR GOOD

Uncle Hollis, or as we affectionately called him, Uncle Big was a mere 5 feet and a few inches, but he stood tall as a civil rights activist. He stood tall in making a difference for our people, and he stood tall as an example for others to follow. He was a man of many talents and gifts. He often sat on our parents' porch shelling peas and singing songs. The lyrics often told the story of his defiant struggle and his determined strength. It will not be possible to ever forget his smile, his support and his sacrifice.

He did it for our guidance

He did it for our growth

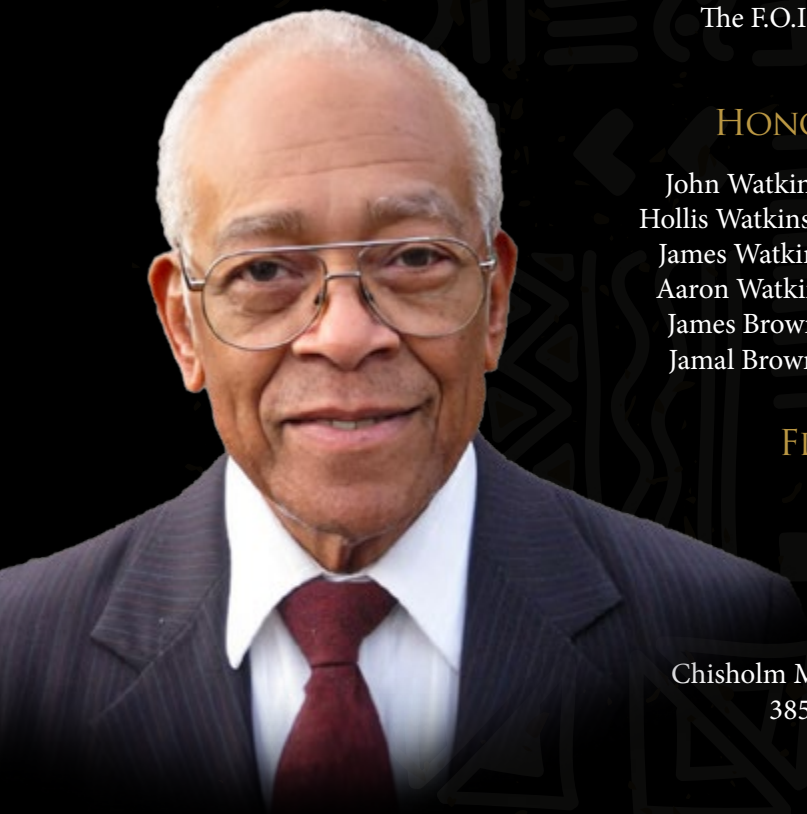
He did it for our greatness

He did it for our good

Uncle Big, you will forever be in our hearts.

-From "daughter," nieces and nephews





ACTIVE PALLBEARERS

The F.O.I. of Muhammad Mosque #78

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

John Watkins
Hollis Watkins, Jr.
James Watkins
Aaron Watkins
James Brown
Jamal Brown

Toussaint Wise
Terrance Jackson
Rhashad Johnson
Michael Lewis
Kellen Hubbard
Joshua Morris

FLOWER BEARERS

Ushers and Friends

INTERMENT

Chisholm Mission AME Church Cemetery
3859 Chisholm Drive, SW
Summit, MS 39666

REPAST

Chisholm Mission AME Church
3859 Chisholm Drive, SW
Summit, MS 39666

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The family of the late Brother Hollis Watkins Muhammad would like to express their sincere thanks to everyone for their prayers, phone calls, visits, flowers, food, thoughts, and other acts of kindness during their time of bereavement.

May Allah Continue To Bless You.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES ENTRUSTED TO:

Jackson Memorial Funeral Service
1000 W. Woodrow Wilson Avenue
Jackson, MS 39213
601-969-9457

Program Design by D'Artagnan Winford | 662.515.5989

Photo Credits: The family, Al White, Jay Deville Johnson