

Georgia Government Documentation Project

Series E: Black Involvement in Politics

Interview with Beulah Clark Dollar

October 14, 1989

Copyright Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library

DISCLAIMER:

Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account. It reflects personal opinion offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

RIGHTS:

Unless otherwise noted, all property and copyrights, including the right to publish or quote, are held by Georgia State University (a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia). This transcript is being provided solely for the purpose of teaching or research. Any other use--including commercial reuse, mounting on other systems, or other forms of redistribution--requires permission of the appropriate office at Georgia State University. In addition, no part of the transcript may be quoted for publication without written permission.

To quote in print, or otherwise reproduce in whole or in part in any publication, including on the Worldwide Web, any material from this collection, the researcher must obtain permission from (1) the owner of the physical property and (2) the holder of the copyright. Persons wishing to quote from this collection should consult the reference archivist to determine copyright holders for information in this collection. Reproduction of any item must contain the complete citation to the original.

CITATION:

Dollar, Beulah Clark, Interviewed by Clifford Kuhn, 14 October 1989, P1989-16, Series E. Black Involvement in Politics, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library, Atlanta.

GEORGIA GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

SERIES E: BLACK INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

NARRATOR: BEULAH CLARK DOLLAR

INTERVIEWER: CLIFFORD KUHN

DATE: OCTOBER 14, 1989

KUHN: Are you from the City of McRae?

DOLLAR: Yes.

KUHN: And are you a native? I always like to ask people a little bit about their background. Are you a Telfair --

DOLLAR: Yes, I am a native of Telfair County -- McRae.

KUHN: Maybe you could tell a little bit about your background, your education, about what you did before you got into this whole area.

DOLLAR: Well, I came from a large family of twelve children. My parents were Mr. and Mrs. T.L. Ashford, and I was reared on a farm. I married, and I am the mother of four children, and I reared two of my sister's children. I attended Fort Valley State College in Fort Valley, Georgia, and I had majors in mathematics and science. I am presently employed by the Telfair County Board of Education, and this is my twenty-ninth year that I am teaching.

KUHN: So you started around 1960?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: And that was right after graduating from Fort Valley?

DOLLAR: That's correct.

KUHN: Had either of your parents any sort of interest in either voting or politics or

--

DOLLAR: No, because in their times, they really -- the white race really didn't want black people to be involved; so at that particular time, they just didn't really get involved because they didn't want to make a disturbance among the whites; so they sort of stayed in line so they could be on good terms with their white neighbors and what-have-you. So whatever happened to black people, they would just take it, and that was it.

KUHN: As far as you know, had there been any efforts to register voters in the years before the 1960s?

DOLLAR: No.

KUHN: In essence, there was no black registration before that time?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: Now, how -- you came back home in 1960, as a teacher --

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: Then, how did you begin to get involved, or how did other people get involved in the whole area of politics and voting?

DOLLAR: It just worried me to see that you had so much in a small town -- You had a few people that were [the] power structure. Then, there were quite a few young people that were -- and, I will say, adults -- that weren't registered to become voters -- then, if they were not registered to become voters, they did not have any choice in who was being elected to serve us in the county. I really got concerned because we had this power structure that whenever an election was held, they would always get elected back to

office. And they had their little gang that they used to run the county, run the city.

So I felt that by getting some of the minorities registered, that this could sort of help determine the voting to get some people elected that we thought would probably be fair to all people, not just only blacks, but, you know, to all people.

KUHN: Right. When did you first register yourself to vote yourself?

DOLLAR: Oh, it must have been -- It probably was about 1960.

KUHN: Did you have any trouble yourself? Or what was your experience?

DOLLAR: I had to read, and I had to write a script. They gave us something to write on, and they told us that if you couldn't write well enough to understand -- that they would understand our handwriting, that would be one thing that we would be disqualified. And they gave us a passage, something from the Constitution -- the Georgia Constitution or it might have been the U.S. Constitution -- to read. And if we couldn't read that properly, then, that would be grounds for us not to become registered voters -- when I first had gone down to register. But, then, later on, we made complaints because there were some blacks that could not read, and they couldn't write, and we made complaints, so they finally got rid of that. It might have been just a little earlier than '60.

KUHN: Did you go down by yourself, or were you with other people?

DOLLAR: I contacted, at that time, a Miss Ruby Hurley, our state NAACP president, and I contacted her. And she was the one that, you know, looked into it. So for some reason they abolished this rule they had that you would have to read and write in order to become registered voters.

KUHN: Now, at that time, how many registered voters -- black registered voters would you say there were -- in the county -- or in the city?

DOLLAR: Oh, you probably had about -- probably about twenty-five or thirty.

KUHN: And your efforts start a little bit later than that --

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: In the early 60s, you are talking about?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: Then, what did either you or other people do at that time to try to get people to actually register to vote?

DOLLAR: Upon attending NAACP meetings and talking with Mrs. Hurley, she told us that they really couldn't hold that against us. And when they found out that they would have to stop, then, this was when I went out in the community, and I went into all sections of the community and to the churches, and I started encouraging the black people to, you know, go out and get registered. And I tried to emphasize the importance of becoming registered voters.

KUHN: Was this by yourself or as part of an organization or --

DOLLAR: Well, no, at the beginning, I just started out by myself. I would just go out to the churches and try to encourage the black people to go out and get registered. Then, I started taking a lot of them.

KUHN: Okay, but it was pretty much an individual effort, really?

DOLLAR: Yes.

VOICE: [Tell him about] Miss Shipp.

KUHN: Miss Shipp? Who was Miss Shipp?

DOLLAR: It is a lady who used to live in McRae.

KUHN: What was the story with her?

DOLLAR: She just got involved with working with the young people in the NAACP.

KUHN: Okay, now, what kind of opposition or reaction did you have when you would go to the churches or go out in the community? What kinds of response did you have from people about voting?

DOLLAR: Well, there were a lot of them that were in favor of voting -- you know, getting registered, but, then, they were afraid. And I just kept telling them that they need not be afraid that, you know, that this was something that was going to have to come. And so, they just might as well go ahead. And I told them, I said: The more we have registered, and the more go out to the polls to vote, then, they will begin to see that we are really planning to get something accomplished. So, you know, when we first started going out to the polls where I had to go vote, there were only three blacks voting in that area. There was a little voting place out in the community, out in the rural area. And when you go to the polls, it was a paper ballot, and you have all these white people standing around the polls. And, you know, when you walked in to vote, you know, you didn't feel too secure because they were wondering were you coming in there to vote against somebody running against their little gang. So you really didn't feel too sure of going in or safe when you were going in to vote. It was a little house -- you know a little old house about half larger than this room, and this is where you would go in. And they had paper ballots. And so when you pull up -- That was all day. You had all these whites standing around so when you go through the line, they would be giving you bad eyes, because they are just wondering if you are going to vote for their candidate.

KUHN: So that was -- you are saying that that kept people away?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: When you talk about fear, what other kinds of things are you talking about?

DOLLAR: Well, then we had this policy wherein they would just almost demand black people who they had to vote for. You know, along in then you didn't have any black candidates. They were all white, but, then, you know, you had a lot of these blacks living on the white people's places and what-have-you, so whoever they tell you to vote for, you know, was a must that that's who you had to vote for. This is what my daddy -- instilled in me -- My daddy had his own farm, but some of the leading whites in that particular area were always directing him who to vote for, so he felt that because I was his daughter I had to vote like those white people told him to vote. And, you know, we used to have differences because I told him that: You have your right to vote for who you want to, and I have my right. But we used to have some stiff arguments because that was instilled in the older people -- black people's minds that they had to do this. So that was handed down from the years. When this started allowing them to register and vote, this is what they had to do.

KUHN: Where would the registration places be?

DOLLAR: Okay, we had to go to the courthouse in McRae. Everybody at that time had to go to the county courthouse to register.

KUHN: Explain what that meant to people, too, what the courthouse meant.

DOLLAR: You know, that this was a place that you had to go and get registered, this was the county courthouse, this was the registration site, and, also, when you go up to get registered, you know, they still had this little political power group standing around to see what blacks was coming in to register. You know, they were here like sometimes you

would go up to register, and they would tell you to come back another day. So, then, when you get back, they have got the word around, and you have this political power of whites standing around to see, you know, what blacks are coming in to register now. And you really didn't feel safe even going out to register.

KUHN: And that's why you started to take groups of people?

DOLLAR: That's right. I started taking carloads. I started going around and getting them up, and I would take a carload at one time, so they felt sort of secure like that I was going to go along with them. Then I felt more secure by taking five or six or seven sometimes -- I said, if they start acting up and get behind us, I have more than one person to be at my side.

KUHN: I think people -- you know -- it is only twenty-five or thirty years later, but I think people today have a hard time understanding that element of fear that actually was involved right then.

DOLLAR: That's right.

VOICE: It's still there.

KUHN: It's still there. Okay. This is in the days, though, when you are talking about a handful or a couple of dozen people registered when you came back. Then, how did the numbers go up from that point?

DOLLAR: Okay, well, when I really got them to get involved, we had a -- we wanted to get a law passed to get some blacks on the Board of Education. So they had a referendum. They said they would increase the school board if the referendum passed, and if it passed, that they would put on two blacks. So, at that time, I was very much concerned because, you know, I was teaching school, and I felt that we needed some

blacks on the Board of Education. I was getting involved in -- I was teaching in Ben Hill County. So I felt that we needed some blacks on the School Board because, you know, we had black teachers in the school system, black students having problems, and if we would have some blacks on the Board of Education, that would be helpful, you know, probably help solve some of our problems.

KUHN: This was still a segregated school system, though, right?

DOLLAR: That's right, a segregated school system -- so this is what they -- the rule they made that if this referendum passed -- let the people decide whether they want to increase the School Board, and if it passed, that they would guarantee us two blacks. So I went out, and I got people registered. Then, on the date that the election was held, I had one car -- my son had another car -- and we hauled something like about a hundred and fifty -- about a hundred and sixty people to the polls. Okay, so the whites didn't think that it was going to pass, and they stayed home because they just -- you know, they knew that black people hadn't been voting, just a very few, so we carried all these people to the polls. And in the other areas of the county, the other polling places -- when we had started voting in McRae, they had gotten rid of the little place out in the country. So we started -- we all had to go to the county courthouse to vote. So we carried all these people up and round about, just before closing time, word got around to the whites that I had brought all these people in to vote, so then they started coming in. But it was too late, and the referendum passed.

So after it passed, then, they had to put two blacks on it. But what happened is that we submitted names of blacks that we wanted them to pick from, but they didn't use the blacks that we wanted. They handpicked them two blacks -- and one of them was my

father -- that they knew that they could handle because they knew how they had always handled my father. And they told him that, you know, whatever they tell him, he had to do what they said and go like they wanted him to -- so that's who they picked. And, you know, I didn't submit his name because I knew how he was. But this is who they appointed.

KUHN: How did that agreement actually get worked out, you know, the agreement to put on two if the referendum passed?

DOLLAR: We had a meeting with the whites --

KUHN: The "we" is -- Who is the "we"?

DOLLAR: I went up -- We were involved with the NAACP branch --

KUHN: Oh, there was a chapter --

DOLLAR: The Voters League; that's right.

KUHN: The Voters League.

DOLLAR: That's right; I think we went through the Voters League or the NAACP, but we just had a group to -- a small group to go in and talk with them, and we told them that we saw the need for blacks to be on the Board of Education. So, then, this is when they made that agreement. But they didn't think it [the referendum] was going to pass. So, then, when they made the agreement, I started registering the people. They just assumed that, you know, well she carried them up there and got them registered, but, then, they are not coming back to the polls to vote. But I fooled them there.

KUHN: Right.

DOLLAR: I went from door to door, and I knocked on doors that morning. And I pulled a lot of them out. They told me: Well, you know, we are afraid to go. I said: No,

don't be afraid this morning. I am with you. I am going to stand by you. And that was what was shocking. I carried all those people up there, and we had enough votes to pass it, so then they couldn't back off because they had made a -- you know -- an agreement that this would happen.

KUHN: Can you describe what you felt that day?

DOLLAR: Oh, I was just so happy until I really couldn't explain how happy I was. I had blisters on my feet I ran around so much that day, all day, getting people to the polls; and my feet were so sore that night that I couldn't hardly sleep.

KUHN: A lot of first-time --

DOLLAR: That's right --

KUHN: Voters.

DOLLAR: And so from then on, then, the whites started watching me.

KUHN: Now, what was that date you were talking about, that election date?

DOLLAR: I can't think of it, not right offhand.

KUHN: The sixties?

DOLLAR: Yes, it was in the sixties because I was -- It was in the early sixties because I was still working --

KUHN: Was it before the Voting Rights Act?

DOLLAR: I just can't remember now --

KUHN: But you were still working at Ben Hill?

DOLLAR: Yes, I was still working in Ben Hill County because if I had been working in Telfair, I couldn't even have gotten involved.

KUHN: When did you move back to Telfair to teach in the Telfair schools?

DOLLAR: Oh, I started in Telfair in '69.

KUHN: So, this was before that time.

DOLLAR: This was before, that's right.

KUHN: So that was the key election, this first bond referendum, school bond referendum?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: But then you are saying that the School Board in turn, turned around, and they picked two people --

DOLLAR: They handpicked the blacks that they wanted to serve, you know.

KUHN: One of them was your father.

DOLLAR: That's right, and Mr. E.C. Graham. You know, they were their "Yes, yes" ["yes men"] -- And the names that, the persons that we wanted to serve, they wouldn't -- They wouldn't use those people. They handpicked who they wanted to serve.

VOICE: [Inaudible comment.]

KUHN: What was that now?

DOLLAR: No, what happened, we submitted names to the Grand Jury because the Grand Jury was going to pick. But we submitted the names to the Grand Jury, and the Grand Jury didn't pick any of the names that we submitted. They, you know, picked my father's name, T.L. Ashford, and E.C. Graham.

KUHN: Okay, how was the Grand Jury composed at that time? How did they pick the Grand Jury? Was it from the property owners, the voters or --

DOLLAR: They were then from property owners, I believe. At that time, you had to own property to be selected on the Grand Jury, but it was all whites. At that time, they

didn't let blacks serve on the Grand Jury.

KUHN: What was your response when they picked these two who you didn't want?

DOLLAR: Well, I let them know that we weren't -- that we weren't satisfied, but, you know, they made their decision, and there really was nothing we could do about it at that time.

KUHN: Then, where is the next step, the next stage after that? You have gotten some people to the polls and done some registration.

DOLLAR: So then they served, you know, because they were appointed by the Grand Jury. And until the Grand Jury sees need to replace them and the present whites that were serving, they just always remain, no matter whether they are doing good or bad.

KUHN: Those were all appointed by the Grand Jury.

DOLLAR: That's right, so they remained there until the Grand Jury decided that they wanted to make a change. So then, later on, we made complaints, because we had a lot of -- you know -- the white and the black serving, we didn't think that we were getting good service. So, then, this is when they went to -- We went to our state representative. I was talking to our state representative at that time; it was Ronnie Walker.

KUHN: What was it?

DOLLAR: Ronnie Walker.

KUHN: Ronnie Walker, okay.

DOLLAR: So we decided that we felt it was unfair for them to pick who to serve from the black community and also from the white. So then our senator introduced a bill to change it from the Grand Jury method to --

KUHN: Elections?

DOLLAR: Electing the school board members.

KUHN: Now, who was that? The state senator?

DOLLAR: Ronnie Walker.

KUHN: That was Ronnie Walker.

DOLLAR: So he introduced a bill to change it from Grand Jury selection to -- you know -- letting the people elect. But what happened is that the way he set up the districts, we wouldn't have one black serving then.

KUHN: Oh--

DOLLAR: Okay, we had two blacks when they were appointed by the Grand Jury.

KUHN: Right.

DOLLAR: And the way he set up the district, he put the majority of the blacks in one district. And it was impossible anywhere in the county to get a second black, so then that eliminated one of the blacks that we had.

KUHN: That's out of how many Board of Education members were there?

DOLLAR: I don't -- Was it seven or five?

KUHN: So that was his plan to --

DOLLAR: That's right, so he tried to make us think that he was in favor of what we were doing, but, then, in the process, he fixed it to eliminate one of the board members. He knew that just having one sitting up there -- although the ones we had, they weren't doing anything, but in case if we had elected a stronger person, we would have one against five. You understand? So this went on for awhile, so this was when I contacted the Justice Department and told them that I thought it was unfair, that we had one black -- that they had eliminated one of our blacks when they went to the district plan -- so then

we filed a suit.

KUHN: Under the Voting Rights Act?

DOLLAR: That's right, through the Voters' Rights -- to redistrict the Board of Education.

KUHN: How did you get to the Justice Department? I mean, how did you contact -
-

DOLLAR: Oh, I contacted -- Well, I think I called Atlanta, and Mr. [Robert] Flanagan was serving as state president at that time. And so, you know, he gave me names in the Justice Department to contact. And I called, made direct contact; and from there, he started working on it through the Justice Department.

KUHN: So they came down to McRae?

DOLLAR: That's right, and when they came down and studied the district plans and that we would never be able to get another black, at least having two blacks serve [before]; so, this, is when we hired an attorney, Laughlin McDonald. And he filed a suit for us through the Justice Department to redistrict the Board of Education. And when they redistricted it, then they increased, I believe, to seven -- it might have been seven. I can't remember. Anyway, the way they redistricted it, we won the case. And when we had the election, then, that put a second district with about forty-something percent blacks, so when we had the election, that gave us another black. A black was elected, so that gave us two blacks on the Board of Education.

KUHN: Okay, and that comes down around what time, the redistricting of the Board?

DOLLAR: Oh, this must have been -- It was probably about '84 or '85.

KUHN: That recently?

DOLLAR: That's recently.

KUHN: So this one district plan lasted for some time then -- this one [black] member --

DOLLAR: It had gone on for quite awhile.

KUHN: Ten years or more?

DOLLAR: That's right. We had one black to serve. I told them that, you know, that eliminated one of our blacks by the way they set up the district, so, then, that's when we went to court to get it redistricted to set up to give a larger percentage of blacks in another school board district. That resulted in now us having two blacks.

KUHN: Okay.

DOLLAR: And what we are getting ready to tackle now [is that] they have a rule -- it was approved through the Assembly that if they -- Now, I think Telfair County is the only county that has this law -- that if a vacancy should occur on the Board of Education, and if that Board member didn't serve but one week and resign or -- due to death, illness, or what cause, the other board members have a right to appoint who they want to. Okay, the terms are for four years. What if you came in and were elected, and you served one week and decided you didn't want to serve? Then, the school board members and the superintendent go and pick, handpick who they want to serve out that almost four years. That's not right to the voters in the County, but it is the law. This is what we are fixing to tackle. So I have contacted my representative --

KUHN: Terry Coleman? Who is the --

DOLLAR: Terry Coleman, Walter Ray, Paul Branch -- I have made contact with all of

them, so we are having a meeting with them soon.

KUHN: What has their response been up until this point?

DOLLAR: They understand our problem, and they seem that they are willing to -- you know, try to get it changed. All we want them to do is spell out a time limit, like if it is less than a year or six months, then -- then, they can appoint, you know, when there is not that much time left.

KUHN: But after that --

DOLLAR: But, you've got, I said, almost four years -- Now, this has happened to us. So what our superintendent is doing, she is handpicking, handpicking who she wants to serve. Okay, now, see two of the people -- persons that serve on the board now, they are of her choice. We didn't even know a vacancy occurred. We had one of our board members resign in January. He had three -- about three and a half years left. We didn't know he had resigned. We didn't know that the Board had picked someone to serve in his position. When we found out about it, it had happened about two or three weeks. Whenever the voters in that district -- Okay, now, this is a majority black district, but they didn't tell us that the board member had resigned. They didn't tell us that they had replaced the board member. And there was about three and a half years of that term left. We felt that the voters should have -- with that much time left -- we should have had a chance to elect who we want to serve and not the superintendent and board members. So she handpicked someone that she knew was going to go along with all her plans that she had. The same thing happened for a white board member. This white board member had about, a little better than three years left -- He resigned to run for County Commissioner's seat. So, then, she handpicked and presented to the Board who

she wanted to serve his time. So, see, right now, she has two persons serving on the Board of Education that she handpicked because she knows that they are going to go along with all of her plans. They are not the voters' choice, but they are her choice. So this is what we are going to tackle.

KUHN: Has there ever been a black candidate for school superintendent?

DOLLAR: No.

KUHN: Is that at all feasible even?

DOLLAR: Well, some of them have been talking to me about running after I retire. I have one year --

KUHN: [One year before] you retire?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: I was wondering about that. I mean, with all this school board stuff and you back in the school system, what kind of pressure or whatever did you have as a school employee in all this?

KUHN: I am always -- you know -- I am always being approached by the superintendent, problems that -- being involved. See, my husband is the branch president. So, you know, I tell her when she is always approaching me about certain issues that are being handled through the NAACP, then she always pinpoints me because -- You know what she told me? She told me that my husband didn't have enough intelligence, and that she knew that I had to be the one doing it -- like discrimination and complaints about the students and discipline in the schools among the students, changing grades for white students and giving them grades so that they can finish and what-have-you and not doing the same thing for blacks. So every time some complaints come in from the NAACP,

then, she always calls me in and says I am responsible because she said my husband didn't have enough intelligence.

There was an article in the paper about the school system. My husband signed the article, but she told me [that] he didn't write it because he didn't have enough intelligence to write it. She knew I had to write it. She didn't see me write it, but, see, everything that happens, they always pinpoint me.

KUHN: What about the school stuff in particular, you know the school board elections in particular and the seats involving the school board? Did you, as a school employee, feel any heat from that?

DOLLAR: Well, not really, you know. I guess they have -- She has tried everything she could to come up with things of being insubordinate and what-have-you, but she really hasn't ever been able to get anything that would hold. The nitpicking things she comes up with, you know, she probably knows that it would be a court case just like -- One of our black teachers had problems last year in the school system. And the NAACP got involved and saved her job. Then, later on, she approached me and told me that the news reporter said that I gave her information about it -- So I told her, I said, well: You come to me talking about what the news reporter said? I said: If you don't have my voice on a tape -- I said: What the news reporter told you, that's your word against mine against the news reporter's word and your word. So I didn't hear anything else from it.

What she is saying [is] that, you know, anything that is happening, we are not supposed to let it go to the press. And she just about controls that because we have had TV people come down several times for issues that were really involved. And when they came down and they would go back, they couldn't even air it because when they tried to

contact her, she wouldn't talk with them. She wouldn't respond in any manner. There are some things that you can't print until you get both sides of it, so a lot of things that go on in the school system are not exposed because she won't talk with the news media.

KUHN: I was going to ask how the media -- how, like the local paper, has treated all of the voting stuff or all of the election stuff?

DOLLAR: Well, we don't get too much from them because I told you, it is a small town. It is a political thing. She is such a great power -- She has people controlled from McRae to Atlanta and from McRae to -- I'll say -- Brunswick -- news reporters and things. We can call them to come in. They will tell us they are going to write articles, and we haven't gotten but a very few to put these articles in the paper because they come back and tell us they can't print but so much because they didn't get her side, that she refused to talk with them. She has the board members -- they refuse to talk with them.

So, you see, there is a lot of stuff going on that the press, you know, they told us they couldn't print it. And the local paper -- they are just out of the question. Because one of the local persons is on the school board. And I'll tell you what happened in that case: One time he was printing things about the school system -- you know, negative things and what-have-you -- so to stop him, one of our school board members -- well, they've got a law that after you have stayed in two terms, you can't serve anymore, so she couldn't run again. She had served two terms. So, then, they got -- she got together with this lady, and they encouraged this news -- this person that owned the local newspaper to run for that Board of Education seat. Okay, so, see by him on the Board of Education now, some of the things that he used to write about the school system -- you know --

KUHN: He can't do that now?

DOLLAR: She has control over that now.

KUHN: What about elections? What kind of coverage have you got in the papers about these suits, for instance, the Voting Rights suits?

DOLLAR: Well, they all came through Macon Telegraph and Atlanta Constitution.

KUHN: Okay.

DOLLAR: Probably -- I think probably at one time I saw one of the articles in the Telfair Enterprise, not the Telfair Times because, see, the Telfair Times -- this guy that owns the Telfair Times is on the Board of Education, so he won't print anything, but the Enterprise did.

KUHN: So there are two newspapers in --

DOLLAR: Yes, we have two newspapers.

KUHN: Okay --

DOLLAR: Two local papers.

KUHN: That's unusual.

DOLLAR: But they -- She has everybody -- See, she has a lot of money. Her parents died, and they left her a lot of money. So, you know, she's rich; and what she is doing is that she is creating a lot of positions -- and some of the whites that she knew were dissatisfied with what she was doing in the school system, she gave them jobs; she gave their friends jobs; their relatives jobs -- so, you know, it is just a political thing.

KUHN: How long has she been in there?

DOLLAR: This will make her second term. See, what happened -- She is so powerful until nobody would qualify against her when time to be elected -- And, I think one of the reasons is -- under this QBE she was doing all this consolidation of these schools, closing

out these schools, so I don't think nobody wanted to walk in --

KUHN: Because their school might get --

DOLLAR: That's right because all of this stuff going on under, you know, closing out schools in the community, so I think nobody really didn't want to -- they were going through a lot of renovation and what-have-you. And, another thing, this is what the whites said: Why should they qualify because when time to have the election, although she has discriminated, mistreated a lot of blacks, you see, down there all you have to do -- which I wish something could be done about this -- the whites go out and hand out money when time for the election. These blacks will take it. I mean, what you think would be an intelligent black.

KUHN: I was going to ask you about vote buying. Tell me how that works in Telfair.

DOLLAR: This is the problem, so, you know, those whites knew -- They said: Well, she can go out and put out enough money. They didn't have the money. Those whites that would have run against her. They said they didn't have the money. So they knew that she was going to go out and put out and get some of these blacks. She would put out money among these blacks and that she would get their votes and they said they probably wouldn't have a chance to beat her. I think the whole point was that they just didn't want to go in to all this stuff that was going on. You know, she had closed down schools in this renovation and QBE and I think that's one reason they didn't have anyone to, you know, qualify against her.

KUHN: How widespread is vote-buying in other races, too -- you know, not only the school system?

DOLLAR: Oh, it's in everything. They have got it so wide until when we had an election for the NAACP two years ago, and this black guy was out buying votes trying to become president of the NAACP. Now, I wrote a letter to the Secretary of State about -- We had this election for Board of Commissioners, and -- you know, I don't care if it is black or white --

KUHN: Vote buying is vote buying.

DOLLAR: Right, and this district that I am living in it was all blacks running against each other, but the black that the intelligent black people felt that would be better to serve us, that person lost out to a lady. You know, she has never been involved in anything in the community. She has never been involved in budgeting or anything. This black guy that was running against her was well -- he had been working on the federal programs and what-have-you; he probably knew how to help set up budgets and things like that. And he lost. And do you know why he lost? Because this lady that won, her boyfriend is a bigtime dope man, dope racket man. He is a bigtime gambler; he is one of those professional gamblers. So he had money. And he went out into the black district and passed out money to the black people. And some of the black people that were saying that they were going to vote for [the other one], that money turned them. She won. Now, she is sitting up there -- Now, we are having the biggest uproar down there about property tax. We had a meeting Thursday night, and I imagine there were probably, oh, about two hundred people met up. She voted to increase our taxes, and she doesn't even own any property.

KUHN: So what did Max Cleland's office say when you wrote him?

DOLLAR: Well, they wrote me back. And they told me to, you know, get up some

information and some of the people that I could get to verify that they were given money or they were offered money -- but you see what would happen in that case, when they find out that somebody is going to come down here and investigate it, well [they say]: I don't want to be a part of it. But, see, they were going around telling that they had gotten money. And I had one person to say that they were offered money, and that was my son. But, see, they wouldn't take just that one person. He said he was offered money from this guy.

KUHN: And that was your son.

DOLLAR: That's right, but you see there were a lot of other people talking about it.

And we knew that they were passing out money, but you see, just like I said, to have somebody to come in and investigate, you have got to have a person to be willing to sign a statement to verify that they would be willing to cooperate with them. And when it comes down to that, you know, to send their names in -- Then, they would come in and say: No, he didn't give me any money. So -- you know -- Okay, the same guy -- There were some guys that he carried up there and voted absentee ballots. The day of the elections, they were walking around the streets in McRae. That was another thing. So I really didn't never did send any information back. But it has been something like about a month, about three weeks since I received the letter. And I have been very busy, so I hadn't had a chance to file and send the complaints back in.

KUHN: Speaking of the Secretary of State's office, what kind of contact have you had with Registrars and election officials over the years, either on the state level or local registrars. What has their response been to black voters and black registrants and so forth?

DOLLAR: We called them concerning the blacks that they handpicked to serve on the Board of Registrars. They said it was on a local level. See, what they do [is] they go out -- They've got two blacks on the Board of Registrars -- I think three blacks out of, probably, nine [members]. But they handpick them. Okay, they are blacks that they are not going to be concerned about the black people. Just like they had had this election for the Board of Commissioners. That was just one. They had to send letters to every voter that would be involved. And do you know what happened? I went up to the Registrar's office, to let them know what district they were in because some of them, when we won this election, some of them didn't have -- they wouldn't be in the same district. They were supposed to send everybody a letter. Also, when we had this new -- won this case to redistrict the Board of Education and this election was held -- those two new districts that were set up -- they were supposed to have sent a letter to all the voters and verified as to what district that they would be serving -- the education district.

I went up to the Registrar's office that day. She had about a hundred letters up there on her desk returned. That was like about a week before the election. So I said: Why do you have all this? See, I wasn't supposed to see that. I said: Why do you have all these letters up here that were returned because of incorrect address?

She said: Well, we mailed them out, and they sent them back. I said, well -- you see a lot of those people I knew -- you know, because I know a lot of those black people. I said: Well, what do you want to do to try to get the letters to them to let them know what education district they will be voting in. [She said]: There is nothing I can do. The letters came back. I said: You don't have their addresses in your file up there? And she said: Well, yes, I guess. I said: Will you let me look in your files? And I went there and

pulled out one and said: Here is this man's address. I said: It's correct. I know his address -- this person.

She said: Well, you know, I had someone else helping me. This was a white lady. She had another white lady helping her. I said: Where are the two black people that are on the Board with you. I said: Why didn't you have them to come in and verify?

Like she might have put their address on there -- Like they might have lived in Lumber City, but she put a McRae address. They weren't intending for them to get those letters. I said: What are you going to do about getting these letters to the people out there? I am going to call the Justice Department. She got in her car, and they went out and went to hand-delivering those letters. But, see, that was just a week before the elections.

KUHN: And it was only chance that you happened to be --

DOLLAR: That's right. If I hadn't gone in, you see, that was about a hundred voters that would not have gotten their letters. Do you know where they lived? They lived in this new district that they created that was about forty-three percent black -- no, it was about forty-nine percent black, so you see that was the reason, to make sure that no blacks got elected to the Board of Education out of that district. So we have two blacks on there, but, you know, they were handpicked, and they are not concerned about these black people being notified of their new districts or what-have-you. They are not concerned about them being notified when they -- you know how they go back and take the voters' names off of the list after they have --

KUHN: Purge them.

DOLLAR: Yes, purged, after they haven't voted in so long. See, they are not concerned. So the whites sit up there and take these black peoples' names off. And none

of our black people that serve go up there and try to see --

KUHN: Right. So you are saying that they kind of do the minimum without really doing outreach to keep --

DOLLAR: That's right, and every time their times are up, they will go back and reappoint.

KUHN: So it is self-perpetuating, and the Board selects itself. Is that how it works?

DOLLAR: I think the Board submits to the Judge --

KUHN: To the judge.

DOLLAR: To the judge who they want to serve. So if the Board submits those names, then, the Judge goes along with them.

KUHN: Automatically?

DOLLAR: That's right. Because we submitted some names to the Judge, and, you know, they were just ignored -- some blacks that we wanted to be placed on the Board of Registrars, on the Jury Commission, we sent some names in. But our names were just totally discarded because the judge said that he goes by what the Superior Court Judge -- I mean, the Clerk of Court submits for the Jury Commission and the person that the Board of Registrars submits to the Judge, that's who the judge acts on. So, you know, we don't have any say there. I'm thinking about if there is any way to try to file a suit to start that.

KUHN: Have there been any suits about Board of Registrars. I don't know.

DOLLAR: I don't know, but I am thinking about it because, see, just like I said -- I told her -- She said: Well, who do y'all want? I said: I am interested in serving. But two months ago, they appointed the same two blacks to serve. And I told her I was interested

in serving. But, you see, they had a choice to pick who they want to serve. So you see they don't want me on there, but they know that these little old small things, these irregularities that they are doing, that I will detect it. So they don't want me on there.

KUHN: What about places to register over the years? We were talking about voting and the Board of Registrars. What about where people could register? You said it used to be just the courthouse.

DOLLAR: Everybody had to go to the courthouse. We finally went up there and talked to them at the courthouse. I think we talked to the Grand Jury about that. They decided to let registration places be set up in each little city in Telfair [County], like in Lumber City, Jacksonville, Milan, and Helena come to McRae because I think -- No, Helena has its own place to register.

KUHN: What about hours of registration?

DOLLAR: They are from nine to four-thirty. A lot of people are working at nine o'clock. A lot of them have not gotten home at four-thirty, so we met with the Jury Commission about that -- no, the Chief Registrar about that. Some of the places that we submitted to have on-site registration or special registration drive or places -- most of the places that we submitted, they find other places to do it. Like we submitted the black funeral home -- that's a public place. We wanted it at the middle school, at [inaudible] Middle School, up the street, not too far from where I live. That's a public building. And we listed -- where else -- one other place. But the places that we submitted -- I guess it was left up to the Board of Registrars, they didn't use those places.

They picked a church of one of the black -- board -- persons serving on the board, the church of the other black board member and -- I think they got the shopping center --

but, see, what I am trying to say is that both of those churches, you don't have very many people going to those churches. You know, they are sort of the 'up-class' people. So they just don't have many people coming to their church. We were trying to pick some places that were convenient and that we could get probably, you know, a church with a large attendance, and we could get a lot of people registered there. But they wouldn't use those places.

KUHN: Okay, they would just go with the places of smaller attendance and the more upper class --

DOLLAR: That's right, the upper class that weren't encouraging and they weren't concerned about those people coming to register to vote. This is a problem we are having.

KUHN: The School Board, the Board of Education -- That was the first effort, you were saying, and that was mainly by chance because this bond referendum was coming up, and that was used as a lever to get two new board members even though they were handpicked.

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: When did you start to -- Maybe you could tell me about the City Council and the efforts to deal with the City Council over the years.

DOLLAR: Oh, we started with the City Council in McRae -- It was in eighty-- I can't think of what year. We contacted the Justice Department there. So, what happened was they settled that. They didn't want us to bring a suit. We contacted the Justice Department about breaking the city up into wards so we could get some blacks on the City Council because we had -- Blacks had been running over the years at large, and they

could never get enough votes to be elected.

KUHN: Now, the City of McRae is what percentage black?

DOLLAR: I --

KUHN: Is it about half; is it a majority?

DOLLAR: It's about half.

KUHN: It's about half, okay.

DOLLAR: Just about half, but we could never get blacks elected, so when they found out that we were getting ready to bring -- to file a suit to have it broken into wards, then they decided to go ahead on themselves and agree. So they broke it up, and they have one black district, majority black district -- well, there are not but about four or five whites in the district. And from that ward, we have -- we always are guaranteed, you know, two blacks coming out of that ward. So we have two blacks and five whites on the City Council.

KUHN: Does that mean that the whites don't even have to campaign in the black districts?

DOLLAR: No.

KUHN: They are not accountable then, right?

DOLLAR: No. They don't have to come over in our district to campaign.

KUHN: So, they --

DOLLAR: Well, now, you have a few handful of blacks in one of the -- But they don't even have to come over there because they are mostly in the majority white district. They have to go more in the white, and our two black city council members, they have to deal with just blacks when they are running for their positions.

KUHN: Right, so the whites still are not accountable, politically, to the black community at all?

DOLLAR: No, no, because they don't --

KUHN: They don't campaign in the black community?

DOLLAR: No, they don't really need to because they only have a small percentage of blacks in any of those white wards, but you have -- in our black ward, you only have about -- I don't even think we have any whites. The blacks have to go among the blacks to get their votes, and the whites -- there may be just a small percentage of blacks that are in those wards.

KUHN: Okay, I just was wondering -- So, there is never an opportunity where a white candidate, say, would speak at a black church or anything like that?

DOLLAR: No, they don't have to because they know they know that there are not but a few blacks that are in their ward. You know, they really are not going to need their vote, so -- you know.

KUHN: Was this the first -- The first actual suit was the Board of Education?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: Then, the City Council was just a threatened suit?

DOLLAR: That's right, and then we came back and redistricted the Board of Education.

KUHN: Right, okay.

DOLLAR: See, we filed this at first to --

KUHN: To get rid of the Grand Jury --

DOLLAR: That's right, to get rid of the Grand Jury selection and go to the district

plan. But, see, that didn't work. So, then, we came back and we started working on the City. But they made an agreement, so then we came back and filed suit to redistrict the Board of Education which would give us a better chance of getting at least two blacks on the Board.

KUHN: Now, on the City Council, tell me a little bit more about those negotiations to have the two and the five. Was that more or less what you had wanted or --

DOLLAR: Not really, but at the time, we were just interested in getting some blacks on the City Council. We knew that this would be the only way that they would be elected. So this was the plan that they drew up. See, in the plan that they have drawn up now, we would never be able to get but two blacks on the City Council.

KUHN: Right, right. No matter what.

DOLLAR: No matter what. The only way that we can get a possible -- out of seven -- another black is that we are going to have to go back and redistrict.

KUHN: What about census or reapportionment -- I mean, is that at all a possibility to use as a sort of a lever to get --

DOLLAR: Well, no because what happens on the census -- I was talking with Reverend Thurmond over there a few minutes ago -- They have mostly whites hired to go around to take these addresses right now. There were some blacks that passed the test. So you see our superintendent and the mayor -- The superintendent runs the school system in the county, and he is in charge of the City of McRae -- you know, so he has all the other mayors under his thumb in the other little towns in Telfair -- So they tell them who to hire, who not to hire, and what to do.

So, when they took this census test, they had some blacks that passed the test.

Okay, but they never gave them a chance to work. If you wanted to be hired, you had to go up to the City Hall. They started out at the Community Center, so the next thing that we knew it was at the City Hall. And they had this article in the paper and on the radio that if you were interested in part-time work taking census -- then, some of the people that had passed the test went up, and because they weren't the right blacks, they didn't get hired. So they had mostly whites working, and you know how it is. Some of those whites are not going to go into some of those black neighborhoods --

KUHN: That's right.

DOLLAR: Now, you know -- because some of them I would be skeptical about going into -- some of those blacks, so you know some of those whites are not going to go into those sections. So what happens is that there are going to be a lot of blacks that are going to be left out.

[Off the record brief interruption]

KUHN: So people are going to get left out on the census, too?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: When did you start to attack the one-man commission? Tell me about that story.

DOLLAR: Oh, well, we just had one man running the county. He was doing what he wanted to do, and I just felt that some of the decisions he was making, you know, they weren't good. No blacks ever had any sayso. And I felt that the only way that we could get some blacks involved -- you know -- not only blacks, but I just felt that there should be more than one man in charge of determining how the county operations and what-have-you would take place. So I became interested. And I was going to sign the paper,

but Attorney Laughlin McDonald said: Since you work in the school system, don't you be the plaintiff. But it really didn't matter with me because I was at the point that I wanted to see a change made.

KUHN: So your daughter was the plaintiff, right?

DOLLAR: So, then, my daughter signed.

KUHN: Sheryl, right?

DOLLAR: Yes, Sheryl Clark, my daughter, signed and my nephew -- well, that's one I reared, Kirk Paige [sp], and we had another guy -- two other guys to sign. And that's how it took place. My daughter --

KUHN: What was the basis of the suit? On what grounds did you try to challenge the one-man commission?

DOLLAR: We challenged because we said that it was unfair that blacks would never get a chance to serve on the County Commission.

KUHN: That the one-member sole commissioner guaranteed --

DOLLAR: That if it stayed one member --

KUHN: -- Guaranteed that it would be white.

DOLLAR: That's right, so that was one of our bases that we filed it on -- that a black would never be elected to serve as Commissioner.

KUHN: And I gather that this was the first successful suit of this type that you won challenging the County Commission.

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: It was decided in Augusta; is that right?

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: And you were there at the hearings and so forth.

DOLLAR: My daughter was at the hearings. After they signed, I told them to use my daughter as the lead plaintiff because there would be a lot of contacts that were going to have to be made. And one of the other guys that signed, they probably wouldn't know what type of response to give back when they needed it. So I told them that we really needed somebody that would understand and, you know, would be handy to get in contact with them.

KUHN: What was she doing? What kind of work was she doing?

DOLLAR: She's a teacher.

KUHN: She's a teacher, too.

DOLLAR: She doesn't teach in Telfair County. [Laughing.] She teaches in Macon.

KUHN: Then after that court decision, which I guess was just last year, I saw in the paper that the county officials had ninety days to set up a government plan consisting of a multi-member commission -- single district and so forth. Tell me what has happened at the county level since that time?

DOLLAR: We had -- you know -- we had the election.

KUHN: Did they guarantee how many black out of how many --

DOLLAR: Well, now, the way that the percentage was set up, we had a chance to get three blacks on there.

KUHN: Out of --

DOLLAR: Out of five. I am going to tell you what happened now. In Lumber City, it is thirty-nine percent black. The voters there -- it is thirty-nine percent black population in that group. We had four white men that qualified, but we couldn't get not one black to

qualify. If that one black had just qualified, and you know how these people do about this voting -- you know, the blacks are going to vote for their color, and the whites are going to vote for theirs, you know -- You are not going to have a whole lot of -- In some cases, you have some whites voting for black.

KUHN: Cross-over, right.

DOLLAR: But it is a racial line thing. So if we could have just gotten one black to qualify down in Lumber City, we could have had two blacks on the Board.

KUHN: And what was the problem?

DOLLAR: Well, it was sort of confusing. One black was supposed to have qualified.

Then, some of them didn't want that black to qualify, so they picked another black. And, at the last minute, all -- there were three blacks that were supposed to qualify, but at the last minute didn't any of them go up and qualify. So that left all whites in the race. But I believe that if one of them had qualified, with three -- no with four whites in that race and one black, if just those thirty-nine percent black had voted for that black man, you know -

-

KUHN: He would have had the plurality, the most votes.

DOLLAR: That's right. He would have had the most votes, but, you know, didn't no blacks run.

Okay, the same thing happened out in the Jacksonville area. There were several whites in the district in Jacksonville. That district is thirty-two percent black. Now, we had several whites who qualified for that district and one black. I am going to tell you what happened in that case. The blacks didn't like the black man that was running; so they split their votes up among the whites, and that's how that black lost. There is a

thirty-two percent black out in that area, and, you know, I am just saying that if they had voted for him --

KUHN: He would have won.

DOLLAR: But, see, when he qualified, there were some other blacks that didn't like him, so, you know, they supported some of the white candidates.

KUHN: What other kinds of obstacles exist for black candidates to run these days? Why are there difficulties in getting people to actually qualify for office?

DOLLAR: It has been instilled in them all their lives that they weren't supposed to run for office, that they were supposed to support the white candidates. You know, this has been instilled in a lot of blacks, and this is why they won't qualify. For instance, some of them will say: You blacks aren't going to vote for me anyway, you are going to vote for that white man. Then, some of them say: Well, I know no whites are going to vote for me, and I am going to need their vote. But, how do they know? They need to go out and campaign among the whites.

KUHN: What about filing fees and things like that?

DOLLAR: This is another problem. You know how black people want something for nothing. They go out and waste money. That's their business -- on a lot of other things. But they want someone to pay their qualifying fee. We have limited funds in our branch, so we couldn't pay it. Some of them came up and said at the last minute. We said: Why didn't you tell us that? We would have tried to get out and solicit the money. That's another problem. Blacks do not want to pay for what they want to serve for -- They don't want to pay the cost. This is another thing that kept some blacks from qualifying because I think it was -- I don't know if it was a hundred and something dollars they had to pay,

qualifying fee -- I can't remember. But it wasn't a whole lot, but that's what some of them used.

MR. KUHN: Unh-huh --Hold on a second [Tape turned to Side 2]

[See next page for continued transcript from Side B]

Copyright Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library

MR. KUHN: You've said, basically, as far as the City goes, it is a pretty segregated situation. Blacks vote for -- Black candidates are elected by blacks. White candidates are elected by whites. Is that the same on the county level, too, now. Or are there episodes where --

DOLLAR: No.

KUHN: I guess not because you --

DOLLAR: All but -- One of the seats is majority black. One of the seats is about eighty-five, about eighty-something percent black.

KUHN: But at the county level, though, whites might have to seek black votes, or blacks might have to seek -- I mean, you know --

DOLLAR: Well, whites will have to seek some black votes.

KUHN: Right.

DOLLAR: But the district I am in is eighty- I think about eighty-five percent black. You know, if you got a real strong white in there, they could come in and buy votes, but you would have too many blacks that would have to go to --

KUHN: But you say Lumber City, for instance, is a more open kind of --

DOLLAR: Yes, now, whites have to go to those blacks there, or the blacks have to go to the whites in Lumber City.

KUHN: One thing I am interested in is, again, a black church might open up for a white candidate, say, in Lumber City, but would a white church do the same for a black candidate?

DOLLAR: No. No they wouldn't. I don't imagine they would open it for a white either, you know.

KUHN: I am just talking about access. In a situation like Lumber City.

DOLLAR: Now, what we do -- When we have our meetings, have something like a political forum, we invite all -

KUHN: This is the branch [NAACP], you are talking about --

DOLLAR: That's right. That's our political action part of our branch. We have a political forum, and we invite all the candidates, black and white. And back there when we didn't have no blacks to qualify for anything, we didn't have no choice but to pick from whites, so we would just invite all the whites, no matter how many were running. We invited them, and we gave everybody a chance to come in and give their little platform.

KUHN: Okay, now, again, in a place like Lumber City, where there is no clear, you know, dominance of one race over the other in terms of population, what obstacles does a black candidate have compared to a white candidate?

DOLLAR: The only thing down there is that most of the blacks down there are controlled by one white man.

KUHN: Who they work for or --

DOLLAR: Yes, he works a large percentage of those black people. If he doesn't work them, they live on his land. He has a large trailer park.

KUHN: Okay.

DOLLAR: And a lot of those black people didn't have land, so they have their trailers on his land. And he controls -- He has something like probably a hundred, a total number of persons of probably a hundred and fifty or more living out there in his trailer park. Okay, he owns the liquor store. He lets those black people have liquor on credit,

and they pay him the next -- I'm going to get paid on Friday evening -- all that paycheck goes to him, the majority of it. So he controls the black people, and he tells them -- that was one thing that you couldn't get any blacks to qualify.

He sort of tells the blacks not to -- because he qualified, so the blacks were supposed to have supported him. But he was in the runoff, but he lost in the runoff. That's what happened. So that's really why we couldn't get any blacks to qualify. I forgot to tell you that because he controlled the blacks, so he was running, so he told the blacks not to qualify. And, at present, we have a suit against Lumber City to break it up into wards. And we won that suit, but the Justice Department -- they won't pre-clear it because of some things that they think are not going to work -- like they are going to pick so many city council members from this ward and so many from that ward. And we would have, I think about two or three, at large. And the Justice Department doesn't think that is going to work, so this is what they are holding off on now, you know, pre-clearing.

KUHN: What other kinds of obstacles can you see still remain to black people having an equal access to politics and the political process right now. We have talked about a fair number of them and the Board of Registrars --

DOLLAR: The thing that would happen now is that you still would have these whites that would have control over, I would say "weak-mind" black people, still telling them that they don't need to hold office. And, you know [telling them] that they don't need to be a part of the governing board or they don't need to hold office. So, this is about the only thing I know. So you know they are threatening them with their jobs, see, just like at some of these plants and what-have-you. Complaints have been brought against the school system. Some of the people that were involved, you know, it's a power structure

thing. You know, you contact the head of this company and that company, and then they will find something or just come in and the next thing people know they will be laid off.

So some of them are afraid to get involved because of their job.

KUHN: And you are saying that still goes on?

DOLLAR: It still goes on. And it is getting back strong. At one time it was sort of limited. But now --

KUHN: What "for instances" have you heard.

DOLLAR: Since the Supreme Court made its ruling about Affirmative Action, job discrimination and what-have-you, you know, it looks like it is just really beginning to really open up now, especially in Telfair County.

KUHN: What kind of specifics are you talking about in Telfair?

DOLLAR: When it comes down to -- I'm saying -- getting jobs, just like jobs that they had blacks in, blacks held in, they are no longer doing it. It looks like they are laying them off, and they are not putting blacks to work in those positions.

KUHN: The picture that you are painting is a pretty bleak one. You are talking a lot about how there still are real barriers to equal access in the political process.

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: Let me flip the coin and say: What changes have taken place as a result of black involvement, increased black involvement over the last twenty-five years in the political process in Telfair?

DOLLAR: I think it has helped in easing some of the tension on the Board of Education until she [the superintendent] handpicked --

KUHN: Those new interim --

DOLLAR: That's right, as to who she wanted to serve -- And we have had better results like in blacks getting jobs and what-have-you.

KUHN: County jobs, you are talking about?

DOLLAR: That's right, county jobs and --

KUHN: City jobs?

DOLLAR: Unh-huh [indicating affirmative].

KUHN: At what levels? I mean, are there clerical workers now?

DOLLAR: Yes, we were able to get blacks in the City Hall and because, you know, we had black City Council members; and we talked to them. We told them: You are up there to represent us, and these are the things that you need to take back, questions as to why. I think we get improvement, like over in the black community as far as improving the status of the community -- roads, sewerage, and stuff like that. Now, since our superintendent has been in, she has eliminated blacks in positions. But the banks have hired blacks -- all the banks have hired black people. We had meetings with them. We didn't have any problems.

KUHN: Where do you see the next frontier being, sort of the next areas of battle, sort of the next things to move on?

DOLLAR: I think what we are going to battle with now -- and [inaudible] can't do anything about that -- the problem with housing. You have a white that's over these projects and what-have-you in these public housing. And when certain people go in and apply, they have vacancies, but, see, like I said, the mayor knows everybody. So they have to go through the mayor or superintendent, and she tells them, like, you know, who to let live in these public housing projects and who not to. Some of them have carried

their verification papers back of their salaries; and they have openings -- then, all of a sudden, they tell them that they don't have openings. Or they tell them that they went through the Credit Bureau, and they had a bad credit rating. So we have a problem now with housing there, and I am just wondering if they are being fair.

KUHN: How do you fix that through the political process, though? How do you get at that through elections and politics?

DOLLAR: I think that is a part of it because there are certain people that they let come in and certain people they don't. So, that's why.

KUHN: Is the mayor elected city-wide?

DOLLAR: Yes.

KUHN: Is there any possibility of a black mayor?

DOLLAR: We are going to try to work on him, but, see, the problem is that they have money. And the other white candidates -- some white candidates that we feel would be fairer to whites--to blacks, you can't get them to run because they say they [would be] wasting their time because then what happens is that the few blacks that have been trying to help the cause of blacks, these lower income or lower social group blacks, will take money when election comes, and that puts these same people back in. Then, once they get back in, they have paid you, so, see they don't owe us anything. And they treat us like they want to. And all they'll say is: Well, that's that Beulah over there causing trouble.

KUHN: So the more moderate whites, then, say: There is no point in us running because we don't pay off the voters and --

DOLLAR: That's right, because they don't believe in doing it illegal. They believe in being elected fair.

KUHN: Right.

DOLLAR: See, those are the kind of whites that we support, and we just never had no black to -- Yes, we had one black to run. No -- No, we haven't had blacks to run for mayor, I don't believe.

KUHN: So the vote buying is a real important thing to try to --

DOLLAR: That's right.

KUHN: I appreciate this very much.

DOLLAR: Okay.

KUHN: I have learned a lot. And I thank you very, very much.

DOLLAR: All right, any time you want to talk, just get in contact.

[Whereupon, the above-referenced interview was concluded on 10-14-89.]

Copyright Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library