

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Verna Holley

PERSON

Holley, Verna

**Alternative Names:** Verna Holley;

**Life Dates:** April 29, 1936-

**Place of Birth:** Detroit, Michigan, USA

**Residence:** Lansing, MI

**Occupations:** High School Music Teacher; Choral  
Director

## Biographical Note

Retired choral music teacher Verna Dorsey Holley was born on April 29, 1936 in Detroit, Michigan to Pearl Richardson Dorsey and Henry Dorsey. Holley attended Dwyer Elementary School in 1948 before graduating from Northern High School in 1952. Holley completed her B.A. degree in music education at Wayne State University in 1956 and went on to earn her M.A. degree in music at Michigan State University.

Holley was hired as the fine arts director at J.W. Sexton High School in Lansing, Michigan and worked in the Lansing Public School System until she retired. She then continued to give piano lessons in her home. Holley became the pianist and music director of the Earl Nelson Singers. Founded in 1963, by Earl Nelson, The Earl Nelson Singers Company is an integrated ensemble of singers from the Lansing, Michigan area. As the company's musical director, Holley selects the sacred songs of slaves for them to perform. The group's repertoire included songs reflective of the early "gospel" style. Holley's work has also been associated with the Okemos String Program.

Holley is a member of the Religious Conference Planning Association, United Conference for Women and the Capital Area Music Teachers Association. She lives in Lansing, Michigan with her husband, Melvin Holley. They have three adult children: Mark, Timothy and Millicent.

Holley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 29, 2008.

## Related Entries

**Trowbridge Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Dwyer Elementary School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Northern High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Wayne State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A>**

**J.W. Sexton High School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to 1993]

**Music Teacher**

**Sampson Elementary School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Music Teacher**

**Cedar Street School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Music Teacher**

**Oak Park School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Music Teacher**

**Dwyer Elementary School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1956 to 1958]

**Music Teacher**

**A.L. Holmes Elementary School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1966 to 1967]

**Music Teacher**

**Balch School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1967 to 1969]

**Music Teacher**

**C.W. Otto Junior High School** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1970 to ?]

**Earl Nelson Singers** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

