**C.O. Hollis, Jr., CPA, CIA, B.S. HBCU Hampton University, MBA, The Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania founded by Benjamin Franklin, Chairman of the 1966 Yearbook Committee**

Thank you for agreeing to “Interview” with me for a book with the working title: “The Mindset Shift!” I value you and the perspective that you bring to the table. I feel that the readers will gain a lot of insight and value from you.

Please read and answer all of the questions.

Also, please list your name, your degrees, any certifications that you hold or have held, and any other accomplishments that you may be proud of in the space above the line below.

C.O. Hollis, Jr., CIA, CPA, MBA. HBCU Hampton University 1964, The Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania 1966, including being Chair of the 1966 Yearbook Committee.

Colonel, (ret) U.S. Army 1964 to 1996

First African American Internal Audit Officer, at Connecticut General Life Insurance (now CIGNA) 1966 to 1973, Hartford, Connecticut. First African American Chairman of the Affirmative Action Committee.

Pilgrim Life Insurance Company VP Secretary – Treasurer, Augusta, GA 1973 to 1991. Various board, and teaching positions, including Board of University Hospital, in Augusta Airport Authority, Berry Center for Special Needs / Handicapped Children, taught accounting courses at Paine College.

VP and Chief Audit Officer, Atlanta Life Insurance Company Atlanta GA, 1991 to 1996

Various board and teaching positions including board member DeKalb Community Service Board 1997 to 2011, Morehouse College, Oglethorpe University, Georgia State University now an Internal Audit Education Partnership (IAEP) University in the IIA Global Program 1997

Chief Audit Officer, HBCU Morehouse College, 1998 to 2013

Professor of Accounting, Morehouse College 2013 to 2018

Professor of Accounting, Clark Atlanta University 2011

Board member Institute of Internal Auditors Atlanta (IIA) Chapter 2006 to 2014

Board member Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) 2002 to 2014

Co-Founder of IIA – ACFE annual joint meeting 2006

Namesake of C. O. Hollis, Jr. Certification Honor Roll of the IIA Atlanta

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1. **Why is having the right mindset critical for achieving success in life?**

Growing up as an African American child in Augusta, Georgia much can go wrong. However, my parents instilled a great mind set via academic and career objectives for instance my Mother and Father both attended HBCUs which moved me forward in life.

1. **Can you describe a situation that occurred in your life that shifted your mindset to a better place?**

Through education at Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Hampton University and The Wharton school seemed my life was going to be set and I was headed in the right direction. However, I failed to mention that with my bachelor’s degree from Hampton in 1964, I also received my ROTC Commission as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, Finance Corp. So, after my MBA at Wharton, I was committed to 2 years active duty which meant at least one year in Vietnam. My Mindset shifted from education to survival. My time in Vietnam was during the height of the war, which resulted in the death of many military and civilian people. I still feel the effects of this experience which made an indelible impact on my career when I returned. I did learn in the military that African Americans were treated with respect because of the necessity of achieving results to objectives without consideration of skin color, which moved me to be better place.

After Vietnam, my life took another brief upswing when I became the First African American Internal Audit Officer at Connecticut General. But the good times were short lived when my first wife, Rosalyn became ill and we decided in 1973 to move back to Augusta to be close to our families. Our son C.O. Hollis, III was born in 1974 with special needs. We lost Rosalyn in 1977. Again, forced to learn how to deal with adversity and come out on the other side with a better mindset.

1. **What lesson have you learned that are you most grateful for?**

Grateful for 1991 for three things,

1. Married Pearl
2. Moved to Atlanta.
3. Promoted to Colonel

I am grateful to my current wife Pearl who taught me in my personal life I could find happiness again in life after earlier ups and downs… so here I am late in life after my journey from Augusta Ga, to Virginia, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Vietnam, to Connecticut back to Augusta and now in Atlanta for last 30 years, doing pretty good.

I’m grateful in my business life for my friend Bill Mulcahy. I picked Bill to be my mentor as we were both Chief Audit Officers in the Atlanta area, but I saw he had certifications. A bit hard getting through to Bill because he was at the time leading what he later described as his business cocoon life, with an Executive Assistant (gate keeper) who would not let people he did not know through to him. But I prevailed. I am a Vietnam War veteran; I finessed my way around to meet him and get on his friends list. Bill recommended I get my CPA and CIA, and I did. As Morehouse College President Walter Massey told me on giving me the biggest raise of my life – You don’t get a raise for doing your job, you get a raise for doing more than your job! So, here I was some 40 years after getting my MBA from Wharton I was going back to class to take the Becker CPA course and the Glenn Sumners CIA Review Course. Later I would teach for Becker and teach Glenn Sumners CIA Review course to NABA. The IIA Atlanta made me the namesake of the C.O. Hollis Certifications Honor Roll. Induction to the Honor Roll is becoming certified by the IIA for passing the exam. I am grateful I picked Bill as my mentor. I am pleased with the picture shown here that Certifications are open to all races, genders, and national origins. I was also awarded the William J. Mulcahy Excellence through Leadership Award in its inaugural year, 2007. My CPA also opened the door to become a Professor at Morehouse College teaching accounting to freshman and auditing to seniors, to push the students to be better men instilling being honest with ethics and integrity. I enjoyed teaching these students who were soon to become “Morehouse Men”. Plus, teaching auditing to Clark Atlanta University students.

1. **Any advice on how anyone can develop a better mindset?**

Education and Certifications are the keys to keep advancing even when you have setbacks, it positions you to come back even stronger than ever. So, do not get complacent in your good situation because it can turn downwards quickly and conversely, if you are down because of being born black in Georgia in the 1940’s you can achieve. I have done it and – you can do it too!

1. **Any final advice that you would like to give to the readers?**

As the first Chapter in this book says, you must learn to play the cards in life that you were dealt.