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On Love: Tenisha Campbell and Ron Holloway



Tenisha Campbell and Ron Holloway exchanged vows in D.C. Superior Court on Valentine's Day. In honor of the holiday, which fell on a Saturday this year, the court opened to perform 14 weddings. (Linda Davidson/The Washington Post)

By Megan McDonough February 27 Follow @meganmmcd

In January, Tenisha Campbell and Ron Holloway headed to D.C. Superior Court to apply for a marriage license. Little did they know that they would be returning there soon to wed on arguably the most romantic day of the year — Valentine's Day.

The couple has a marriage clerk to thank for this. While processing their license, she informed Tenisha and Ron that, for the first time, the courthouse would be opening its doors on a Saturday to accommodate 14 weddings in honor of the holiday. The courthouse had coined the occasion "Fourteen on the Fourteenth."

According to Tenisha, both she and Ron looked at each other and simultaneously said, "Why not?" They snagged one of the last reservations, for 11 a.m., and spent the next three weeks planning their nuptials.

The two met in a computer graphics class during their senior year at Frederick Douglass High School in Upper Marlboro. At the time, though, both were busy balancing schoolwork and part-time jobs. Tenisha was an ambitious student with a knack for fashion and design,

and Ron was a recent transfer student and member of the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

"We were in completely separate worlds," Tenisha says.

But at every computer graphics class, she would try to muster up the courage to engage Ron in conversation. A shy and reserved person, Tenisha found herself even more nervous and flustered around him.

"I didn't have any game," admits Tenisha, a management staff assistant at the U.S. Department of Labor who moonlights as a fashion designer. Most of the time, Ron would chat, but he was unaware of her romantic interest. "I wasn't Romeo in high school," he says. "I was a pretty quiet guy."

Like many school friends, they didn't stay in touch after graduation. Both went on to historically black colleges, and both began their careers in the Washington area. They linked up on social media but didn't really interact until years later, in November 2013, when they were both 31. Tenisha received a Facebook message from Ron, and as soon as she saw his name on her screen, the old high school butterflies rushed back. She realized she still carried a bit of a torch for her former crush.

Over the next few weeks, the two traded online messages and had long phone conversations about their careers, ambitions and future.

"He wasn't like other guys," Tenisha says. "He asked me about my goals, what I was looking for in a person and my values. You know how people hear you but they don't listen? He hears you and he listens."

Ron concurs: "It was just so real. It wasn't phony or fake. She is genuinely interested in getting to know people. . . . There's not a phony bone in her body."

But it wasn't until Jan. 10, 2014, that the two met again face-to-face and had their first date. Ron surprised Tenisha by taking her to a show at a D.C. comedy club and dinner at Burger Tap & Shake.

"I recognized her the minute she got out of the car," Ron says. "I felt like I was seeing the same face from 15 years ago."

By the end of the date, it was clear there was a spark. But both expressed nervousness about jumping into a new relationship too soon. "I wanted to make sure this was the person I wanted to be with," Ron says.

The surprise dates, however, didn't end there. Ron continued to plan creative and romantic mystery outings, from the classic dinner-and-a-movie to the more unconventional afternoon date at a shooting range.

"Usually, with guys, they'll be chivalrous for a while and then it will just stop," Tenisha says. "But by our fifth or sixth date, Ron was still strategically planning dates and surprising me. It was then that I realized this wasn't an act."

Tenisha decided that Valentine's Day would be her chance to reciprocate. She planned a romantic dinner out, followed by ice skating at the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden.

"It was one of the best dates I have ever been on in my life," Ron says. Tenisha jokingly gloats, "I got him back good."

At the end of the night, she further surprised him with a goodnight kiss. "I knew right then," Ron says, "that this was the person I was going to marry."

Within months, the two had become best friends and partners, even while juggling opposite schedules: Tenisha worked days at the Labor Department and Ron worked nights as a security guard at Bowie State University. They constantly compared schedules and took turns making the 25-minute drive to see each other (Ron lived in Bowie, Tenisha in the District). She would go to sleep early to be able to get up in time to squeeze in a couple of minutes on the phone with Ron before he fell asleep.

In December 2014, on a three-day trip to Deep Creek, Md., to celebrate Tenisha's birthday, Ron surprised her with a proposal. She enthusiastically accepted. Later that month, they moved in together in the District and soon began planning their wedding. They were considering a church ceremony, but after they learned about the court's special Valentine's Day event, "everything fell into place," Tenisha says.

On that day at the courthouse, the pair held hands and exchanged vows under an ornately decorated trellis entwined with ivy, flowers and hearts. The bride held a small bouquet of red and purple roses and wore a custom-made birdcage veil and scarlet heels. They sealed the 10-minute ceremony with a kiss as 14 witnesses smiled, clapped and cheered.

Neither expected the outpouring of local [media](#) covering the occasion. "We wanted to have a small and intimate ceremony," Tenisha says, "but it worked out perfectly because family and friends were able to see us in the paper and feel like they were a part of it."

Afterward, Ron and Tenisha celebrated with 42 friends and family members at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington. Guests danced to a Valentine's Day-inspired playlist of love songs that spanned soulful standards to contemporary R&B ballads.

But it was just after the courthouse ceremony that the pair shared a truly special moment.

“I just looked at her and thought, ‘Wow, I can’t believe this is my wife,’ ” Ron says.

Tenisha echoed that sentiment: “I looked at him and thought, ‘Wow, this is the beginning of our life together.’ . . . I couldn’t stop smiling. I was so happy.”