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Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, can you tell me when you were born and something about the area that you grew up in?

Ulysses Marshall: I was born March the first, 1926. I'm a Missourian. I was born in Missouri. I was born and raised in Missouri until I was around thirteen—in St. Louis, Missouri, until I was around thirteen years old. And we moved here to Fargo at the age of thirteen.

Paul Ortiz: And Mr. Marshall, why did you move to—or why did your family move to Fargo?

Ulysses Marshall: Okay, why did my family move? Because my daddy, he was raised in this town. And he used to tell us all this big open space they had out there. He made it sound like it was fun. And I guess maybe it was fun to him. And I thought the most pleasurable thing that I could experience is to get out of a big city. And so we finally, after two or three years, I talked with my mother and I talked with me dad, every chance I thought that they want to listen. And he finally gave in and moved down here to Arkansas. But things was real bad there anyway, because it wasn't any jobs at that time in St. Louis. And he was working for the WPA, I think is what it was. And so I think he's kind of wanting to get out of it too. This is why we wind up in Fargo.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall had you lived in the south before?

Ulysses Marshall: I had never been out of the city before, until I was thirteen years old.

Paul Ortiz: Had your father?

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, yes, because he was raised and born in the south and he was fully grown, probably up in his late 30s when he moved to the city or when he went to the city, St. Louis.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, now, you said that when you got to Fargo, things weren't—

Ulysses Marshall: It was bad. I remember we moved here and we had a little—we share-cropped and that was a—well, it wasn't no exciting experience. It was a real tragedy experience, or something like that. And during the time when we would get through with our crop, we'd go out there and we'd work by the day. And I remember when I first started to work at that age, it was fourteen, I think it was fourteen when I first did my day's work. I worked for, it was six cents an hour, and see the adults, this was chopping cotton, the adults would get twelve cents an hour. That's ten hours a day. There was a dollar and ttwenty cents for them. And my brother and I, and I was a year older, it was pretty much the same way.

Ulysses Marshall: And so we'd have to carry our row, same as the adult, but they would only pay us half the price. And so we made a dollar and twenty cents a day together in a ten hour day. And you had to do it. And

then they were firing people, if you're sick, wasn't feeling good, needed a little help, you were fired. You were fired. It wasn't no going there and, today I'm going to have to take it easy. It wasn't like that. No, you had to work. And it was an experience I never will forget. I think about it often, now. How did we survive in those days here?

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, were you and your family working on a plantation?

Ulysses Marshall: No, it wasn't on a plantation, now. It was just right up here. Share-cropping with the man that, he owned his own little old house. In fact, he stayed in the house there with us. I never did live on a plantation. That's a bad experience, too, from what I heard, and stuff like that. I never wanted to experience nothing like a plantation. But this was—couldn't have been much worse, as far as—the only thing you could accomplish, you'd make enough money to buy you some food, and I mean nothing fancy. I mean just, only survival. And you'd make a little money to buy you some overalls or something, and maybe you could have one little cheap suit or something like that, to go to church. And that was your wardrobe, right there. And some people used to say, "I wear this suit all through the week to work in. On Sunday, I turn it inside out and that would be my dress suit." So it wasn't like that, but pretty much like that, too.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, can you describe the Black neighborhood, the Black community in Fargo?

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah, well, this was all pretty much predominant Black during that time, or something like that. And it was everybody, much—it was one or two people in this community that had their own place, maybe more than one or two. But there was a few of them had their own place or something like that. And some of them survived pretty good. Some of them did real good because of the good management. Management had a lot to do with the deal. And some of them managed real good. But it wasn't anything like somebody here getting way ahead or probably having lots of money in the bank. I don't think anybody had that.

Ulysses Marshall: And I remember we had, the only car that it was—no, it was three cars. When we come here, it was only three cars. We had a car that we drove down here from St. Louis, and it was another resident of Fargo had a car and it was another one lived out in the country, he had a car, and that was the only three cars that was in Fargo. You could walk from around, you could leave here walking from Fargo to Brinkley at that time, and no one would ever pass you. It wasn't no cars available, it was horses and wagon. But usually you made just about as much time as they did. And I walked from Fargo to Brinkley many a time, and you would never see a car. Never see a car.

Ulysses Marshall: And so whenever somebody needed to go to a doctor or something like that, my dad was real generous, and so they would always call him up. They couldn't call up. They had to walk and get him and then we would take him to the doctor, somebody gets sick. In fact, we had people that die in our car. They had to walk maybe two or three miles to get—it was an emergency, and then to get us, by the time we made it there and make it to town to a doctor, and—I know one guy, my brother was—he was driving, and he died right there in the car.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, during the time you were growing up, would Black families share things with each other during hard times?

Ulysses Marshall: Definitely. If it hadn't been for that, I don't think a person could have really survived, because work, then, is a seasonable thing. The only industry that you had around here was picking cotton or working on the rice farm. And this was a season thing. Now, if you didn't make that money during the season that it was available, like cotton picking, which it lasted about three months, and rice farming lasted a little longer, but that's because they planted then they harvested, but if you didn't make that money during that time, you had those, about four months of winter. If you didn't have anything and somebody didn't help you out, I believe you could have starved. Because I remember I went through the experience once, and ran out of food. And this is one of the reasons why I left Fargo, left the South. I'm glad I did, really. And didn't know where in the world that we was going to get something to eat.

Ulysses Marshall: So we was staying in this house and they had some molasses in there, that my cousin had made, and two or three gallons, and they used to have an old commissary truck that would drive through all of the community and they would trade. You would trade something that you had, for something else they had in the truck like that. So we traded some molasses for some rice and some beans and some flour. And I think if it hadn't been for that, I kind of think that I would have starved. Really, if anybody had anything, they would help you out. But at this particular year, this was a hard year. I can't really think of the year it was. Now, I think it was in 1949 or somewhere along there. Now, it was bad. It was real bad.

Ulysses Marshall: I remember when people went to work at this time, it was 1949, it was the year my son was born, and they went to work for two dollars a day. In fact, I never will forget this, because there was one man, I thought he was pretty well off. He had his own place and stuff like that. And he had some pretty good land and I thought he was fairly well off. And so he caught this truck, they was clearing new ground, and he went to work for this two dollars a day. And I determined that I wasn't going to work for two dollars a day. That was the year 1949. I said I wasn't going to go back to that. So, things got so bad until after Christmas, then I said, well, I seen that food was running out. So, after Christmas I said, well, I'm going to go and catch this truck and I'm going to go and work this two dollars a day. But after Christmas, the guy that they were working for, he ran out of money. And so he didn't have any money so he had to stop the whole thing.

Ulysses Marshall: And there I was, no money and no food. Now that was a bad experience. Bad experience. And this is where the commissary truck come around, and we happen to find these molasses. We never knew they was in there. And we traded this molasses for these bean, flour, and sugar, and stuff like that. And I think I would've starved, really. I think I would've starved.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, where was the commissary truck from?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, I think it was coming from the cotton plant. It was just like it was a person on a small grocery store. Well, he had a truck and he was kind of like the old ice cream man. And so he would drive around in the country with different things on his truck. He picked up my molasses. Well, he might trade those molasses to somebody else for something else. And so it wasn't too much money involved in it. And I

don't know how he made his living, and maybe some peoples gave him money.

Ulysses Marshall: But the most of those things, you would trade. I'm for sure that he had an advantage to it, because he couldn't do it for free. And when I gave him molasses, he gave me—it wasn't really very much, but he gave me enough to last maybe a week or something like that. And so, if I think this commissary truck here, I think it was from a cotton plant in Arkansas. And he used to drive all down these country roads and he'd trade. And if you had money, I'm for sure he would take money. This is probably the way he made—but I didn't have any money, so, well, I had to do mine through trade or something like that.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, was he a Black?

Ulysses Marshall: No, he was a White man, now. Black didn't really have nothing, then. It wasn't no way they could get nothing. Even the farmers couldn't had nothing because you couldn't borrow nothing. I even tried farming. They couldn't borrow no money. You might could borrow 100 or 200 dollars. I never was able to borrow 200 dollars, and this would supply me for the whole year with food and everything. Figure that. And this is why you don't see, at that particular time, you're seeing all these wealthy rice farms up there. Well, they could go there and they could borrow thousand, thousands of dollars. And as a Black man, the most I could borrow was 200 dollars. Now this is supposed to do me for a whole year. And it was rough. It was rough.

Paul Ortiz: So the White farmers had a clear advantage?

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, oh, sure. Definitely. Had a clear advantage on everything. And if you take the job, regardless how much experience you had, as long as he was White, he would be your boss. There's no doubt about that. He would be your boss. Don't care how much you—and I loaded cross ties and stuff like that, during that time, which was considered as a pretty good paying job. And I had real knowledge about cross ties, but it was always a White man, my boss. Never, a Black man didn't have no position like that. That's for sure.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, what were race relations like, in Fargo?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, it was bad. You accepted because it wasn't nothing you could do about it. I don't care how—if a guy come out, didn't have nothing, you might even had more, you had to honor him as Mr. So-and-So. You could even go to jail by going [indistinct 00:12:23], if you see a White guy and you called him by his first name. Now, if he wanted, he could have you arrested. Now, this is anybody, lived around in the South, during that time. You had to honor him as Mr. And Yes, Sir. And No, Sir. Now, this was demanded, because he had the law on his side, and the only thing he had to go, and said, "This here Black man or this nigger sassing me," and you're going to jail. Yeah, it was just like that. It was just that bad. Bad. Real bad.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, did you notice differences in race relations between St. Louis and Fargo?

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah. See, I was thirteen years old when we moved down here, like I said. Yeah, it was

there. The split is there. You still—Black man wasn't doing a good—he find a job and he was still—he didn't really was getting nowhere. He may have a better job to the other one. At least when you go there, you ride on a street cart or something like that. That was the transportation. Like a street bus, a street cart. Well, you didn't have to sit in the back in St. Louis, you could sit anywhere on the bus you wanted.

Ulysses Marshall: And it wasn't like it was in the South. Whenever in the South or something like that, if you was riding the bus, you had to sit in the back. You couldn't sit in the front. I don't care how many seats is up front, you sit in the back of the bus. And then if the bus was full, and there's the Blacks in the back, the White in the front, and a White would come in there and they need some room, well, the Black would have to get up out of they seat and stand up and let the White sit down. This was how it was. In fact, I experienced it. This is not secondhand. I experienced this myself.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, when was the first time that you began experiencing that kind of racism?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, I experienced this as soon as we come down South. Like when we used to say something, if we're going to [indistinct 00:14:31] I'll never forget that, it was in Brinkley [indistinct 00:14:34], I was pointing at this here White man. It was something I was pointing to, because I was trying to show my mother and father about it, and my daddy, he knows that could be an offense to point at the White man. That was a bad thing, because he may even think you was talking or making fun of him. He said, "Don't do that. Don't never do that. Don't point at that man," or something like that. "You could get us all in trouble." It was just that bad.

Ulysses Marshall: I remember one time, we was working and we was going on the back of a truck and one of the fellows out here now, and we was going on the back of the truck, we was going up there, Hunter, to load cross ties. And we was on the back of the truck, laughing and talking. We wasn't thinking about the fellow. This fellow stopped this truck, and he thought we was talking about him and he got mad. And if he had a gun, I think he would have shot it. And he got mad. He said, "Don't you ever do that again!" He said, "Don't you ever laugh and be talking about me!" And he got [indistinct 00:15:33], he got real [indistinct 00:15:33] and we tried to tell him.

Ulysses Marshall: We said, "Well, we wasn't talking about you," and being young at that time, or something like that, we didn't know how to explain ourself real well. But we wasn't even thinking about him. And he could've just taken us up there and had us arrested, and up there in Hunter, like some places that you couldn't even go up there at nighttime, you couldn't even be, this is only seven miles up the road here, North of Fargo, seven miles up the road, you couldn't even be up there after sundown. You'd have to leave, no Black man could go through there.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, were there cases of police brutality against Black people?

Ulysses Marshall: Brutalities were bad. Bad. Real bad. There was police to tell you. I know one time, this was a little later on after I got out of my teens or in my late teens or something like that, I remember a young kid up from Hunter, here, or same place. He come by, he ran in my car. He didn't do it intentionally, but I guess

he obviously was drinking or something. He lost control of his car and he didn't put it out of running commission but he just damaged that car. And so I determined I was going to catch this guy and go take him to the police station. And my car was still—it was still functional. And so I caught him and it was the couple of us in [indistinct 00:16:41] on him, and we caught him, we blocked him off and we told him, "You're going to the police station [indistinct 00:16:45]."

Ulysses Marshall: Because I wanted to get paid for my car at that time. Insurance was something, it—well, I know I didn't have any. Very few Black people had any, and probably very few Black people could get any. And so we're taking him up there to the police station, and the only thing this police did, he gave him a pep talk, and I told him, we came up [indistinct 00:17:06], and I said, "This here boy here run into my car. And he done already dent my car up," or something like that. And he gave him a little pep talk, he told him, "Be careful." He said, "Drive careful. Don't drive like that. You might hurt somebody." It was all of it. It was just like that.

Paul Ortiz: He just let him go?

Ulysses Marshall: Just let him go. Just like that. Nothing more to it. I never forget that. In fact, I was thinking about that last night, not because of this interview, but I was thinking about that last night, how time was, back then. Now, here's a fellow who tore up my car, and this was the pep talk. All he got was a pep talk. Didn't get nothing for my car, had no insurance. So I either had to go to the junk yard and find parts to replace it. This is where I have to get it fixed.

Paul Ortiz: And Mr. Marshall, what would happen if a Black person was brought to the police station for something like that, or—

Ulysses Marshall: You mean if he was brought to the—

Speaker 3: [indistinct 00:18:01].

Ulysses Marshall: If he was brought there for hitting a White man's car, or something like that?

Paul Ortiz: Sure.

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, well, he would go to jail. He would go to jail and he would be held liable, he would pay for that. He would get fined, big fine. Big fine. I never will forget that. I was caught speeding, once. This was the thing. You're talking about injustice, this was really injustice. I was going, coming down Brinkley, coming out to Fargo, had an old car. Old car that probably go to running about sixty miles an hour, going down here. And so they stopped me. They caught me out here, just about a mile out of Brinkley. And I was driving, I would say maybe that I was doing a little speeding.

Ulysses Marshall: And he picked me up, put me in the police car, take me back to the police station and had me booked for running eighty miles an hour. And when I went to court, he told this judge, he said, "Judge,"

he said, "This man come through Brinkley," he said, "he was running about eighty miles an hour." He said, "He would've killed me." He said I ran, this was right on the highway there, coming out of Fargo, he said I ran up and jumped in this drug store. He said if it hadn't been for that he would've killed me. And they charged me around nintey dollars. I never will forget that. Ninety dollars. That was, hey, at that time, that was probably about three months' work.

Paul Ortiz: What time was that, Mr. Marshall? What year?

Ulysses Marshall: Now, this would've been—see, the year. This would've been probably about the year 19—because I got out of service then. And so this must have been around 1947. I think this was about 1947 when this happened here. This was getting a little later up, and we come down here, we moved South in 1939 and this was 1947 or '48 or something like that. And I never forget the police, and I never will forget his name, and I never will forget that nintey dollar fine. And for that money, when you're working—at this time, top wages was three dollars a day. They charged me a nintey dollar fine. So my uncle, he bailed me out, and once you go—he bailed me out, or he arrested me, but I didn't have to stay in jail that night, because I got my uncle and he come up there and he bailed me out.

Ulysses Marshall: Yes, I did. I take that back. I did stay in jail. And so, next day I sent word to my uncle and he come up there and he bailed me out. But when you go to court, whatever you was bailed, you don't got no money back. You didn't beat nothing. If you was charged for speeding and it was ninety dollars for your bail, 100 dollars for your bail, when you go to court, it's going to be the same thing. You don't get no money back. You don't never beat. Just forget about beating the case. You don't beat no case. Yep. This is—

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, earlier you were talking about the incident when your father told you to beware of pointing.

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, yeah. Because that could have been an embarrassment. See, he might have thought you might have been talking about him. If you was pointing at him and was pointing—I don't remember what we were saying, but it wasn't that bad in St. Louis. And we was pointing and said, "That guy." Well, that was an insult, too. You didn't call no White man, "That guy." You said, if you could say, Mr. Because you really could go to jail about that. You could go to jail for—they call it sassing. Sassing a White man. And this is what they call it. And I don't care, he could have been just a skid row bum, anyway, his word was law. Whatever he said, it was over yours. President Brown, he experienced something like that up there in Brinkley, too.

Paul Ortiz: He did?

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah, up at the school. He went up there once, to get some gas, and he stopped at this service station—so they called him or they called him boy, and they addressed him as boy and uncle, and well, President Brown always, he was very intelligent, he always carried his self like that. He could always greet somebody politely, regardless who it was. And so he thought he should have been at least been called—everybody knew him. So he should have been at least called President Brown or Sir, something like

that. But Sir is going to be out of the question, during that time. But usually, the most of them, all the Blacks call him President Brown, and the most of White. But this particular service station here, right up here, before you get into Brinkley, I remember where the service station was, it's not there anymore.

Ulysses Marshall: And so he come back and he wrote a letter and to the manager of the service station and he said that he thought he deserved more respect because he was trying to live a life that deserved more respect than just, come out there and said, Hey boy, they could at least said—if they said, like I said, he could at least said Sir or either just said nothing, just talk with him without calling any kind of name like that. He wrote him a letter like that. And in fact, he told that over in the class once, and how it was so disrespectful of this kid here, that addressed him like that.

Ulysses Marshall: Because he was, if anybody [indistinct 00:23:07] this man, he was real intelligent. Real intelligent. He walked straight, he never did—if he talked, he was so polite with his words. He carefully selected his words. And when he'd talk, even in public, he held his hand down to his side, and he stood completely erect. And he was about the smoothest person that I've ever seen. And a unique dresser. Unique dresser.

Ulysses Marshall: But President Brown didn't have the money the way he dressed and stuff like that. It wasn't necessarily the money he had. I don't know how much he would have had, but they would donate him so much. Different organizations from all of Arkansas and you have these big anniversaries and stuff like that, he'd get all kind of clothes and stuff. In fact, he would give me some of his suits, sometimes, after he had wore them. He'd never give me none of his new suits. He wore them, but he would give me some of his suits. One of the best suits I ever had in my life, President Brown gave it to him. Never forget that. A blue suit. It was [indistinct 00:24:05] no light blue. Kind of a dark colored blue suit. And I really cherished that.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, when did you first meet President Brown and encounter the school?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, I knew him a long time before I started school down here. Because this used be the gymnasium. He had one of the largest gymnasiums for Blacks in the state of Arkansas. This is not the original gymnasium. The gymnasium, it was just a little farther over, and it was built, the boys at the school, they built this gymnasium and this was donated. All the lumber and stuff was donated to him. He was an excellent talker. Because the state didn't provide much money for this school. And so he ran this school strictly on donation, and the most of his donation come back from East and back up towards Chicago, Michigan and all that. And he'd go up there and make lectures and people was concerned about Black education and lots of peoples give generous to it. So this is where he received all his money.

Ulysses Marshall: So when I first met him, it's kind hard to say it, because I've known President Brown, if you lived in Fargo, you had to know President Brown, see? Because he was [indistinct 00:25:15] Fargo itself. We would go to church at that time, we would go to church every Sunday. He would come to church here. I understand that he was an ordained minister, well, I knew that before last night, but I don't know if he was an ordained before, when he had this school or after he had sold his school to the state. I would like to find out that. But I knew that he was an ordained minister, later on. But I always thought it was later on, after he

had retired from school.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, did you attend the school here?

Ulysses Marshall: Yes. I attended here, yeah.

Paul Ortiz: And can you tell me how you decided or why you decided to go to school here, and then [indistinct 00:25:59]?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, now I tell you, when I first finished grade school, I knew that education was important, but at that time, you couldn't see the benefit of it, especially if you was Black, because even if you finished school, high school, it wasn't no jobs out here. Say, a Black, the only job that really, a person could accomplish. He could have been a school teacher. Well, in this area here, you could be a school teacher. That was high as you could go, or something like that. But I decided—

Ulysses Marshall: Well, I tell you, really reason why I went to school, because I went on this G.I. Bill of Rights and well, it was money, too. And then after, since I was going to school, I just went on and I benefit from two things. I benefit from the money to take take care of my needs and stuff like that.

Ulysses Marshall: And then I got myself a little education on top of it. So that was the main reason that I decided to go to school. And I'm certainly glad of that. Because if it hadn't been for the GI bill of rights, I may not have even went to high school. So I was getting paid a little money from the government to go, and enough to supply my needs, more than people was making out in the community, that's for sure. At the time, I think it was 100-something dollars a month with us getting from the GI bill of rights. Well, that was good money at that time, compared to three dollars a day, which is top wages, out here, If you're there chopping cotton.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, when you left the service and came back here, was there a change in race relations here? And then also, were you thinking more in terms of changes yourself?

Ulysses Marshall: No, I'm glad you asked that. When I come out of service, and I come from overseas, it was overseas and I come from overseas, at that time when you come out of service, you was eligible to draw unemployment. Well, Black couldn't draw it. See, I went up there and the lady was nice, the lady was real nice, and I—well, this was her job and she impressed me that she did regret that. And so she went up there and she can't sign up for Blacks. And I wrote, I come back, I wrote a letter and she complimented me on the letter. I wrote a letter and I went back up there and talked with her again, and she said, "Well, we still won't be able to sign you up." She sent me on a job. Well, she wanted to send me on a job. Well, she did send me. But she is going to send me on a job to Missouri. Wasn't no jobs here.

Ulysses Marshall: And what she did, I think she really regretted that because White was coming in there, they were signing up, no problem at all, and a Black come—and she sent me on a job, working for the extra gang. This is called the extra gang. I don't know if you know what the extra gang is. It's a railroad. It's a working on

railroad, you stay in the box cars up in Missouri. And this is what they did, and Blacks couldn't draw, they couldn't draw their unemployment, and well, I could go up there and draw, no worry at all, just go up there and sign up and they draw. And so, went up there and worked on the extra gang. And that was tough. Just come from overseas. I've been away from home now, a year or so, like that. And I was eligible to draw. I was eligible. I don't know how in the world they ever got away with what they did. Blacks couldn't draw it.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, is that an office in Brinkley?

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah, it was in Brinkley. Right there in Brinkley, where it was—I'll never forget the location of it. I don't know if the same old building's there, but it's right there in Brinkley. It made me more angrier than it embarrassed me, because if you go there and you spend time in the war, fighting for your country, then come back and seeing—now that was—I had never experienced that kind of prejudice even before I went in service. Now that was, to me, I thought that was down right, low down. But that's the way it was.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, where did you serve in the military?

Ulysses Marshall: I was in the Navy. So I spent the most of my times on ships. I was over on the islands, like Saipan, Okinawa, Guam, Iwo Jima and all that. I was over, most of my time was just going from one island to another one, in the South Pacific theater.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, so you were in the Marines?

Ulysses Marshall: No, I was in the Navy.

Paul Ortiz: In the Navy.

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah. I was among some of the first that went into the Steward branch. See, the Navy had two branches they had around. The Steward branch and they had this—the Seaman branch and the Steward branch. And I was in the Seaman branch, but that was kind of new and I met up on some bad experience there, too. I seen about as much prejudice in the Navy as I seen anywhere in the world. I seen Navy prejudice.

Paul Ortiz: What kinds of prejudice?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, same theater they had on this base, where, I'll never forget this base here, this base here was in Virginia, Williamsburg, Virginia, right after Richmond, Virginia. On the base, the White had the real nice theater. Well, the Blacks couldn't go to the same theater. We had a [indistinct 00:30:45] theater. And we went to the [indistinct 00:30:48] and the White, it wasn't in the same company area. You had your Black company, and you had the White company. And so they go to the nice theater and we went to this [indistinct 00:30:55]. You know what a [indistinct 00:30:57] that's what it was. And that's the kind of prejudice you get.

Ulysses Marshall: They had the first opportunity at everything. And I never did see but one Black officer that was a commission officer, the whole time I was in the Navy. And well, the Seaman branch, it was kind of a new thing in the Navy. They just started accepting Black Seamen in the Navy at that time. There was lots of Stewards, but Steward was coming under [indistinct 00:31:26], they were coming under the line, just cooks or waiting on the officers or shining the officers' shoes or something like that. So this is what the Steward did.

Ulysses Marshall: And when the Seaman branch come in, they functioned just as any other kind of soldier. You went out there and you soldier, but Stewards didn't. Seaman, the branch, it was a much better thing to be in, but it was a bad experience by just opening up the doors for the Blacks to get in, and that prejudice was everywhere. Everywhere.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, which branch were you in?

Ulysses Marshall: I was in the Navy logistics support, it called a support for the Marine. That was our duty. Support the Marines in their combat or something. And that was the function of it.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, would Black sailors during those days talk about the indignities?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, yeah, they would about the prejudices, the hatred, and stuff like that. And this is one reason I couldn't make a career out of it. Some of them made a career out of it. I said it wasn't much freedom back here, but it wasn't no freedom at all, back there, because to me, it was just you're confined in a prison or something like that. It was just completely, totally discrimination, during that time. So that's why I got out, and I could never see—well, they tell me the Army was a little better, but it was bad, because my brother, he retired from the Army and he was telling me some of the experiences that he went through, something like that. But they was bad, real bad.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, when you came back to Fargo after leaving the service, did you notice any changes within the Black community in Fargo?

Ulysses Marshall: Mm-mm. The things hadn't changed. You'd have the same stuff that you went through, before I went in service, it was, come back here and I rebelled a little more but you couldn't go too far, because if you did, you go to jail. Because you couldn't, even after I come out of service, the city park here in Brinkley, Blacks couldn't even sit in the city park there in Brinkley. You'd go there, you'd be ushered out. You didn't go out, you'd be arrested. Now, this is the city park. And for the schools, the schools totally was outrageous because here come all the Whites, they had this big, nice White school. I think the school's there now. They go to that school.

Ulysses Marshall: The school that I went to, where I started going to high school, it was a two-room school from first through eighth grade. They had two teachers and they taught first through eighth grade and those two teachers. And you walked all the way. I don't care where you lived in this area, I don't care how far it was. If it was three or four miles, you walked. The bus, they were bus. It's right by you, going to this big, nice

school. I think it's the same school down there in Brinkley now. So it is.

Ulysses Marshall: But the most thing there that bugs me, is sitting in the park. Now, you go there, there's a park. And all those benches out there in this park, and you couldn't sit in the park. You sit in the park, you'd be told to leave. If you didn't leave, you was going to jail. And at that time, even after I got out of service, I've known guys that went to jail and they charged you vagrancy. You go up there and you sat around, maybe it was a bus station [indistinct 00:34:42], you sat around the bus station, if somebody come down here, come a White guy on the rice farm wants you to work, if you refuse, they charge you with vagrancy, and you go to jail. I've known guys who went to jail.

Ulysses Marshall: And so, after I knew what was going on, when I'd go to town, I never would hang around that area, because you was going to jail. If they asked you to work, if a White guy asked you to work, if you didn't work, you were going to jail. [indistinct 00:35:06] charge me for? For vagrancy. And that was the whole way of putting people behind bars, that they said existed for a long time. But that's what it was. I didn't never go to jail myself, because after I knew some of the guys that did go, and after I heard that's what they were doing, so I avoided going to this place here. That was at the bus station right there in Brinkley.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, this is something that the rice farmers were behind?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, yeah, they were. See, if you was a big enough farmer, you control the city, because nobody here is a big, wealthy farmer, nobody's going to protest what he does, or something like that. And so he come there and this could have been a pay-off. I don't know if it was a pay-off or not, but it could have been a pay-off. But anyway, he come there and they—even not on the farmers, if [indistinct 00:35:55] little stores come there, like a few furniture stores and they come here and they want you to work, if you didn't work, you'd go to jail. It was just that simple. You went to work whether you wanted to, or get charged for vagrancy and go to jail. So they could use this to throw you in jail, vagrancy.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, how would Black people now confront, and now you said you yourself would try to stay away from that area.

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah, I did. Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Would other Black people be like that?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, I assume some of them did. And I don't know anybody of Fargo that went to jail, but I knew several guys in Brinkley. I knew them. I knew them. They wasn't close friends, but they were friends and they went to jail and that's where I got onto it. The words kind of get around, so-and-so went to jail. Between Brinkley and Fargo, is not that far. So-and-so went to jail because he wouldn't go to work, or something like that. And it would get all over town, something like that. So it wasn't much you could do about it.

Ulysses Marshall: If you tried to protest against it, you couldn't protest against nothing, then. Because you're

going to jail then. But if you did try to protest, you're definitely going to jail. And when they send you to jail, they send you to the jail, and just a little offensive thing you do something, they'd send you to the pea farm. It was somewhere down here on the southern part of Arkansas. They had a pea farm down there. They'd send you to the pea farm.

Paul Ortiz: And pea farm was—

Ulysses Marshall: Well, pea farm was kind of—it was like a little penitentiary. That's what it was. You go out there and you work. They didn't send hard criminals there. But this was for minor offenses, they send you to the pea farm. And when they said pea farm, it was just like that. You go there and you did farm labor like pick peas and did other kind of farm labor. I knew two boys went there once, because they picked up two White girls going there. What is it?

Speaker 3: [indistinct 00:37:47].

Ulysses Marshall: You can back it out. Can't you?

Speaker 3: [indistinct 00:37:52].

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, no. And those boys, they picked them boys out, and some guy come along and caught them. It wasn't none. They just picked them up. I guess they were walking, the girl's hitch-hiking, they picked them up and they take them to Brinkley. Some guys caught along and that was a no-no. They go out to the bars—I know the young men, too. They lived in Brinkley. They caught them, put them in jail, and they're taking those boys onto the pea farm. And when I left here, those boys were still down there on the pea farm. Yeah, that was bad. Yeah, it was bad. See, it wasn't also limited to the South but that was police corruption, because you didn't have no justice at all. That was the worst part about living in the South, as far as I'm concerned. That ain't justice you got.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, what kind of involvement did Black people in Fargo and Brinkley have in politics here, during the 40s and 50s?

Ulysses Marshall: None. None. As far as I can remember, you could vote, and that's one thing I always exercise, my right to vote. And I think everybody should vote, Black and White, but I think every Black should vote. And I always exercised my right to vote. No, it wasn't no Blacks involved in politics. It wasn't no Black—nowhere, it had anything to do with the operation of the city, as far as I know. I understand one this here undertake, he was considered as maybe one of the well off Blacks here in Brinkley. And so he invests, takes out some stocks, he had this shirt factory that moved in Brinkley.

Ulysses Marshall: And so he'd taken out some stocks in this shirt factory, but when they built this shirt factory. It's Van Houston shirt factory, there in Brinkley, I think it closed down and—not one Black, did the they hire not one Black to work in their shirt factory. They were clear to Des Arc, it's about fifteen or sixteen miles. They bustles the White from Des Arc, do work in their shirt factory. Not one Black. So he withdrew his

shares or something like that. And that's how bad it was.

Paul Ortiz: And what time period was that, Mr. Marshall?

Ulysses Marshall: Now, this was, because this was a little before I left here then, this must have been about 1957. It was somewhere in that period with that. Now this was getting up pretty close to the civil rights movement. Eventually they started. I understand they started to work, because I had a cousin that worked in there, later on. But this is when it first—see, I was living it when it first started and it was no Black. They didn't have no Black. No Black janitor, no nothing. And busing those people from Des Arc, and that was the only factory that was in Brinkley, the Van Houston Shirt Factory, and that was somewhere about 1957. Because I left here, I started drifting away from here in the latter part of 1957. That's what it was like. It was bad.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, now after you left the service, to the time you moved away from here, you were here for about, what? Seven or eight years?

Ulysses Marshall: You mean before I moved to [indistinct 00:41:00]?

Paul Ortiz: Yes.

Ulysses Marshall: Okay. That was a good question. Let me see. Let's see, I was dischared—when I went to school and I left here, I was discharged from service in 1946. And I left here, I think it was in 1957. It was somewhere in that timeframe when I left here, 1957. That's by the time that shirt factory was here. And that's when I left here. And I left here for good, I think it was in 1958. I left once and I come back because, laid off and couldn't find a job, and come back. And I left here for good, 19-, around '58.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, during the time that you were here, after you left the service, were you thinking of trying to set up a farm here, or—

Ulysses Marshall: Mm-mm. No, because I know what my dad had experienced on farming, which I tried a little myself, and like I said, 200 dollars was all I could borrow and out of my pay that I was getting for my GI bill of right, we messed around, me and my dad, we bought a tractor together, a little tractor, stuff like that.

Ulysses Marshall: The first thing about it, I didn't own no land, and so my daddy didn't own no land. So what you have to do, you have to rent your land. And you couldn't borrow no money to fertilize your crop or something like that, to where you—because, poor land, the soil was wore up and it needed fertilizer. You couldn't borrow no money—200 dollars. You couldn't borrow no money or nothing. Couldn't buy nothing on 200 dollars. And so I didn't make anything.

Ulysses Marshall: The first year I farmed [indistinct 00:42:40] never will forget that. And that was my uncle, he did own a little land. The soil was poor, but he didn't have no money to let me handle, and this is when I borrowed that 200 dollars, and borrowed that 200 dollars, and we worked out there and we thought we had

a good crop. We looked out there at the cotton, we thought it was pretty good. And me and my wife, we laugh about that now. And I was an exceptionally good cotton picker. Probably one of the best, among the best there was around. And I went out there and we picked our crop in one day. At that time, they determined how much you make by the bale, and cotton, I think cotton then, was a 100 dollar bale.

Ulysses Marshall: And we made about a half a bail of cotton out of a year's work, and that was about fifty-something dollar. And I had borrowed 200 dollar. And so I had to take the money out of my pocket too, what I was getting out of the G.I. Bill of Rights, and paid my part of the money, what I borrowed, because I didn't make enough money to even pay what I borrowed. And so I let my mules out [indistinct 00:43:37] and I had two mules and I let them out, opened the gate and I had a [indistinct 00:43:41], I hit those mules with my brow and opened the gate and gave them their freedom. And I've never seen them since. And we always wondered what happened to those mules.

Ulysses Marshall: And so then the next year, we decided, we tried with a tractor with my daddy. And so we tried to got this tractor and it wasn't much better. And so I think I did that one year. And I knew then farming wasn't for me, because we would've been somewhere you could've borrowed enough money to really get set up in farming, it'd been good, but you couldn't do it. So, that's when I gave it farming for good. I said, well, I'm through with farming.

Paul Ortiz: But originally, Mr. Marshall, you really wanted to farm, or—

Ulysses Marshall: I didn't—well, if I could have gotten much money to [indistinct 00:44:20] independent living and made it get a real comfortable living, off farming , I think I would've loved farming. But I don't know. Say, it was one or two Blacks. I knew of two or three Blacks [indistinct 00:44:32] Fargo made an independent living. Not get rich, but they made an independent living. They didn't have to go out and work by the day. All but this one farmer I was talking about long ago, I thought he was doing real well, and he went out to work for two dollars a day.

Ulysses Marshall: And other than that, there wasn't too many farmers made an independent living, or Black farmers made an independent living around here. There was lots of White farmers. They'd go out there and they could borrow the money they need to make that crop. They had the big old tractors and they could go out there and they'd depend upon mules or something like that. If they had mules, they had some extra good mules. And it was tough. Real tough.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, during those days, did the larger White farmers—