

Paul Ortiz: Colonel Johnson, can you tell me about where you were born, and a little bit about the area that you grew up in?

Colonel Johnson: Well, I was born down South Alabama with my people, moved to Birmingham when I was about four years old, and I've been here ever since. I grew up on Sixteenth Street out here, in the front of this building, along down the street, four blocks down, until about four—up to four, five years old, and then I move down, west of town, stay there the next fifteen, twenty years, until I move where I'm now. I like moving west every trip and I live in West [indistinct 00:01:05] now.

Paul Ortiz: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

Colonel Johnson: Well, my old man was [indistinct 00:01:13] finish here, and he represented the union, representative for the cement masons and plasterers, local sixty-two Birmingham and five outlying counties here out from Birmingham, Jefferson, Shelby, and Tuscaloosa and [indistinct 00:01:47] St. Clair, but I'm not sure where [indistinct 00:01:54] I'm not sure where—I know the county but he was a union representative.

Paul Ortiz: Did he talk a lot about his experiences as union rep?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, he talked a lot about it. His experience in going from town to town and he has been in sidewalks and streets in different little town. He was first a school teacher and it didn't pay enough money, thirty dollars a month, so that would made him stop teaching school and got him a job in a pipe shop down in—I believe it's [indistinct 00:02:49] Alabama, and he learned how to be a cement mason, and then he move to Birmingham and moved up to representative for the cement masons and plasterers.

Paul Ortiz: Was that a union that had Black and White workers in it?

Colonel Johnson: Well, it was supposed to be, but the power that be, the fella they put the head of the union. They would always have auxiliary, get the Black people in the head, there weren't really [indistinct 00:03:33] beginning, and the first beginning and it didn't have nothing but mostly Black in the cement business because it's real hard work. But now, White just about took it over because the money paid and demand that people need money, anybody working now. But back in the [indistinct 00:03:59] years, we could hardly get a White person to work that kind of work. But [indistinct 00:04:07] I label that with a lot of discrimination, more than even now.

Paul Ortiz: How about your mother? What was she doing?

Colonel Johnson: Housewife.

Paul Ortiz: And so, you grew up primarily in Birmingham?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: What was your time like in Birmingham?

Colonel Johnson: I don't understand you.

Paul Ortiz: What was it like growing up in—

Colonel Johnson: Oh, well, let me see. I understood it from way back that Jim Crow wasn't illegal [indistinct 00:04:49] your life. I went to Parker High School. It was industrialized school when I went in, and the principal was Parker, but after he died they named the school Parker High School. By that time I went in, it was the biggest high school in America. [Indistinct 00:05:14] thirty-four youngsters in one class but we learned.

Paul Ortiz: What was [indistinct 00:05:24]?

Colonel Johnson: Hmm?

Paul Ortiz: What [indistinct 00:05:27] Parker?

Colonel Johnson: No, you couldn't tell [indistinct 00:05:29] apart he's just come from the Black race. He is the boss but he was eighty-seven percent White to be able to be proud to have [indistinct 00:05:40] sensation for him to be light and come out the Black race.

Paul Ortiz: What do you think about him?

Colonel Johnson: Well, he's a pretty nice guy. He see color on me, nothing [indistinct 00:05:57] character [indistinct 00:05:59]. He had good character. But he was a discriminator too.

Paul Ortiz: [indistinct 00:06:11].

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, I can remember, when the government subsidies come along, they call it the YWA. YWA. It was the Youth—Young Workers Administration, [indistinct 00:06:42] come off from the WPA, Roosevelt put it into schools that you unprivileged people wasn't working. You could work, clean up around the school, they give us thirty dollars a month. And I had a friend named Maureen, but saying they had discrimination. His mother and dad [indistinct 00:07:10] they put him on it, and at that time my old man wasn't working with nobody in [indistinct 00:07:14] working [indistinct 00:07:16] sign up at the same time, and he got on it the first of the month and I never knew [indistinct 00:07:23].

Paul Ortiz: Why did he get it?

Colonel Johnson: He was real light. So, that was the pitch.

Paul Ortiz: Would that kind of thing happen in classrooms?

Colonel Johnson: No. But any certain occasions where—advantage, people used it. Even on the football team, when I was in elementary school, I've seen them play, some of the light skin boys that really wasn't qualified [indistinct 00:08:04] big show, and whose son they were, [indistinct 00:08:13] who you are, well you get a chance to play on the team, I can remember. And I don't remember the team we were playing. I think we're playing Abraham High from Bessamer. We played high school, when I was in elementary school in Lincoln School.

Colonel Johnson: We played a lot of high school, and the principal wanted his son to play and he really wasn't qualified, but superintendent of school was going to be out there that day and he wanted the superintendent to see his son on the ball field, so they put him up quarterback. He saw them big guys coming and he made a [indistinct 00:08:56] back, he [indistinct 00:08:57].

Paul Ortiz: Oh, let it go.

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, we lost the game on account of that.

Paul Ortiz: He was lighter-skinned?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, he was real light, guy was named Albert Dobbins.

Paul Ortiz: Is there a lot of that kind of discrimination in the Black community [indistinct 00:09:26]?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah. Pretty much. It was a lot of it but not as much as from the White community but it was—you could tell.

Paul Ortiz: [indistinct 00:09:42].

Colonel Johnson: Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: [indistinct 00:09:47] your household?

Colonel Johnson: Well, it was myself my brother, and mother, and grandmother, grandfather, my father, and [indistinct 00:10:05], my dad had some brothers and one of those come in and stay with us. We always—lived through depression but we always never had to debate because we always had God at home, with God, every man that's drifting we [indistinct 00:10:35] hold [indistinct 00:10:36] and we'll never did have to think about getting out the house and then coming up paying rent or whatever, and we'd always had money to buy groceries.

Paul Ortiz: Do you have memories about your grandparents?

Colonel Johnson: Oh, yeah. My granddaddy was giant, he was a big man, and I can remember just like it was yesterday, I can remember in depression time, we lived across the street from A&P, the big sign up there, The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, that's what A&P meant, and [indistinct 00:11:32] age, seventy-five or eighty years old. They give him a job that's worth twelve dollars a week but you could get by on that. My old man wasn't working and he's glad that [indistinct 00:11:48].

Paul Ortiz: Do you ever remember [indistinct 00:12:00] kind of stories [indistinct 00:12:02] this time [indistinct 00:12:04]?

Colonel Johnson: Yes. He was a slave. He was eighteen years old and when the emancipation proclamation.

Paul Ortiz: Did he talk about slavery?

Colonel Johnson: Oh, yeah, he talked about it a lot. He talked about the—people would whip the slaves, different things like that to have a task, so much work they had to do per day. They didn't have—the slave master always had—what they would call field riders, and they'd have somebody to flog you. One of the other slaves, most of the time, the man—the slave master he just rolled around and give orders for other folks to do what they call flogging. But you got to use psychology—everybody liked him so he didn't hit nobody, he had it done.

Paul Ortiz: But you would talk about those [indistinct 00:13:27]?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah. And after slavery [indistinct 00:13:34] most people work just like they wanted to, with no union or nothing and no law to take. They got to work—pay you what he wanted to pay you. And they had a custom, they mostly went by custom instead of the law. If a Black man had children, the sheriff would have pick up some of the children and just take them to town—for the work—for the city or the town, whatever. Say you're paying your tax, road tax, for walking the road, that's what we had to do. But on up in life that people began to learn better, they balked against that, they wouldn't do it.

Colonel Johnson: It always been people that never was afraid that you couldn't make them do like you wanted them to do, after slavery. And he told me once upon a time, the guy he share-cropped for, give him a letter to give the sheriff, and before he got to the sheriff's office he stopped at the grocery store. They call it a [indistinct 00:15:17] store, but it's a grocery store. And the guy asked him—the store owner asked him, "What you got there, Bill?" He said, "I got a letter for the sheriff." He said "Let me see it." And he read it. He said "You throw that away. Your land owner, whatever you call him is saying, he's telling the sheriff to put you in jail." So, he threwed it away.

Paul Ortiz: What did you do when you're growing up in Birmingham in your spare time?

Colonel Johnson: Well, my first job in high school, I worked with the city ice delivery.

Paul Ortiz: And how did you do that?

Colonel Johnson: Well, I went around, and stood around, and asked for a job. They give me a job, a helper, they had—we had— it wasn't old refrigerators, they had ice boxes, and if a guy was a driver on an ice wagon and he made about twelve dollars a week at that time and the helper, the first helper, made about six dollars, second helper made about four, and the third helper made about two dollars and twenty-five cents, something like that, thirty-five cents a day, five or six days. And my next job, I had a job working for Wood Drug Company, riding a bicycle delivery. At the drug store I was a delivery boy and that job paid thirteen dollars for two weeks, six fifty a week. But it's more than I was making the first time, it was hard to get a job back in those days, a real job.

Paul Ortiz: When do you start to see [indistinct 00:16:53]?

Colonel Johnson: Oh, by '36.

Paul Ortiz: You were there [indistinct 00:16:53]?

Colonel Johnson: About a couple of years.

Paul Ortiz: And this was—were you still in high school when you were working?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, I was going to high school and working. I worked at the [indistinct 00:18:12]—Birmingham?

Paul Ortiz: No.

Colonel Johnson: I worked at the [indistinct 00:18:15] apartment while I was going to high school and the [indistinct 00:18:20] lunchroom. They have a lunchroom and a drugstore combined, lunch [indistinct 00:18:26]. They didn't pay the [indistinct 00:18:29]. They had it well-organized and I worked there awhile. I had a little accident, I fell—it was raining and I fell and broke a gallon of Coca-Cola syrup. I lost that job. Then I started working for [indistinct 00:19:04] packing company.

Paul Ortiz: [indistinct 00:19:04] packing?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah. [indistinct 00:19:09] dollar day and worked on up to 1943—March '43 but I got a raise, I was making a dollar and a half a day when I quit. I went to the railroad in '43, March thirty-one.

Paul Ortiz: And you had graduated from high school by then?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah. I was out of high school.

Paul Ortiz: [Indistinct 00:19:37]?

Colonel Johnson: [Indistinct 00:19:37].

Paul Ortiz: [Indistinct 00:19:57] come to go to the railroads.

Colonel Johnson: Well I was looking for a better security, and the guy I was working for, I was a good worker and he give me a week vacation. I went to a whole lot of different plants hunting jobs. Finally, my wife worked for the [indistinct 00:20:30], the [indistinct 00:20:32] mechanic for everyone [indistinct 00:20:34].

Paul Ortiz: Which railroad?

Colonel Johnson: The L&N Railroad Company. The L is for Louisville and the N is for Nashville, Louisville and National Railroad, but it's not anymore, it's CSX now. And my wife was telling [indistinct 00:21:06] about the long hours I working for a dollar and a half a day. Sometime I would go to work at five o'clock in the morning, get back nine at night, driving all out of town, everywhere, and she said, "Your husband is a good worker, I get him a job with the railroad, I tell my husband [indistinct 00:21:17]." So, my wife told me, if I were to work for the railroad, I could go out through the shop. And that week I was off.

Colonel Johnson: I always didn't want to work in the steel mill. I wanted the roller mill out in Bessemer and they pay four dollars and a half an hour. But the railroad didn't pay but two dollars and forty-five cents an hour, no. But they at that time, so—they didn't hire me up in Bessamer at the roller mill, would come back, the same buddy of mine I was telling you about in high school that they put on the [indistinct 00:22:09]. They deny either one of us, but after I saw how hard it was, I wasn't tickled by it, had two ambulances sitting at the gate.

Colonel Johnson: When you fall out, the ambulance, they take you to the hospital, that's how hard you was working. So then I come to TCI, and they wasn't hiring that day, from that we went to two or three different [indistinct 00:22:36]. So, I thought about what my wife told me about this [indistinct 00:22:40] would hire me. So, that next day was Tuesday, I went to the [indistinct 00:22:47] railroad shop and the men was standing out, they look like two or three hundred at the gate, and the man come out there, the employment officers, "We ain't hiring nobody today." So, everybody went to scattering and I still stood there, and it was five other guys standing out at the—police commissioners sent out there, and they told him, said "Mr. Eugene Connor sent us out here, you done hired." And he asked me, he said, "Who sent you out here?"

Colonel Johnson: I said, "Ms. Kramer told me to see Mr. Kramer," he said "We ain't hiring, but that's Mr. Kramer driving in the gate now. You can go see him but I ain't hiring nobody." [indistinct 00:23:39] Kramer is his boss too. So, we went on in and [indistinct 00:23:44] upstairs in a wooden building, and we went up there and stood in the [indistinct 00:23:50], with no place to sit down. They have [indistinct 00:23:55]. Mr. Kramer was [indistinct 00:23:59] Mr. Connor sent these five men, he answered, "This fella here claim your wife sent him."

Colonel Johnson: He hadn't knew my name. Said "[indistinct 00:24:10]" and I said "Yeah." He said "Write him up." He wrote me up and then he told them [indistinct 00:24:19] all six of us up, and we all went. Got a [indistinct 00:24:26] slip we went to the doctor. Next day, I come to work. That would be March the thirty-first, 1942, and I worked out there until January I believe—not January, November, a day before Thanksgiving. And I believe about the twenty-seventh of November, 1979.

Paul Ortiz: How long [indistinct 00:25:00]?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah. And now, retired sixteen years come and make it Thanksgiving. But I started over the labor, and I went from a labor to warehouse man, from the warehouse man to truck driver, from truck driver to this Black foreman, and then from foreman to assistant supervisor, and when I retired out of here, supervisor of my department. And could've stayed longer but I was through, well I promised the Lord if I could make a pension that I would be satisfied, when that time come I got out.

Paul Ortiz: How do you feel about the working conditions [indistinct 00:25:53]?

Colonel Johnson: Well, people [indistinct 00:25:55] everywhere else in the South, discrimination plus they were all White guys, and when you live in country town, about a truckload, some [indistinct 00:26:06] keep rank with the men in high school, because of the World War II. And you could be that way ten or twelve years and promotion time come you wouldn't get more but they would. They didn't go by—they supposed to went by seniority but they went by skin color. Other words, he was told to provide a qualification and seniority but they didn't go by it. If somebody didn't really vouch for you, you didn't get no promotion, up until in the late 40s and the early 50s. They went to promoting them because they were federal injunctions against the company.

Paul Ortiz: Who file that injunction?

Colonel Johnson: Well different people. One guy used to be county commissioner. He a Black guy named Ruben Davis. He filed one injunction. And before he filed here back in the 50s, we had a guy named D.W. Steel. Was a fireman, he filed an injunction, put a [indistinct 00:27:40] against it, railroad, for not [indistinct 00:27:44] violence, and that started the ball rolling. And then Ruben Davis was comes behind him for the shop men.

Paul Ortiz: Was that a—is that a union shop?

Colonel Johnson: Well, union was in the shop. But see when you say union shop, you got to be a member of the union to work there. They never did really get a union shop because they come in [indistinct 00:28:23]. Because of discrimination, if you make a man join the union, if you join on your own, you got to be union-minded, to really be a union man. Anyway, but they really, the union got strong enough for them to treat people like they should. That's when they went to cutting off, automation come along.

Paul Ortiz: About what time—what year was that?

Colonel Johnson: Automation come along in 1957, '58, and they cut off a lot of men, the strike come along the 1955 and the company retaliated about the strike, they cut off many men as possible. The railroad fight the union but they're over now. They don't call their organization a union, they call it the Melvin Railroad Association and they hold each other at a cut rate, if you would have a strike [indistinct 00:29:40] he's good, that company still survive.

Paul Ortiz: You mention that the union is getting stronger or the world [indistinct 00:29:50]—

Colonel Johnson: Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Can you explain that?

Colonel Johnson: Well, you still—after, up in the 50s, they cut out [indistinct 00:30:03], and everybody [indistinct 00:30:06] they make everybody being the same union, the Federal Railway Labor Administration so you couldn't have separate union. In fact, they outlawed schools separate but equal, and it couldn't be separate and equal because now they were separate, the Black union didn't have the authoritative White head, wouldn't recognize it, [indistinct 00:30:39]. And then when they, "Oh, got it in one union."

Colonel Johnson: You still didn't have that one hundred percent representation that you should have had because they had more White people working [indistinct 00:30:56] Black. And that made it hard for a Black man to be a union representative, just like you voted in Oakland, if you don't have enough vote, you don't get in. A lot of White folks will tell you, when they merged, said "You a better union man than [indistinct 00:31:22], we want you." But when it come down to vote, and they wouldn't vote for you [indistinct 00:31:28]. If they was telling you they were going to vote for you, you did and most Black voted for you even [indistinct 00:31:36].

Paul Ortiz: So, if a Black worker has a [indistinct 00:31:36] and for the union [indistinct 00:31:46], how is the [indistinct 00:31:48]?

Colonel Johnson: Well, just the [indistinct 00:31:49] and the White guy would file it the same way, so you'd write up agreement and ask for investigation in the company with internal right [indistinct 00:32:03] back in the investigation will be more time, to [indistinct 00:32:16] just ready. [indistinct 00:32:16] involve [indistinct 00:32:17] too. And they pretty well called who the president is, [indistinct 00:32:28] mean to be right whether he's Black or White. You'd get a fair shake but if a matter of segregation, you can't work—how much stronger the union was, you wouldn't get a fair break.

Paul Ortiz: [indistinct 00:32:47] are you referring to the union representative?

Colonel Johnson: Huh?

Paul Ortiz: Are you referring to the White union representative [indistinct 00:32:52]?

Colonel Johnson: Black and White. I've seen—to see when a man take the power in his office and then abuse it. Finally, he'll deal with me that way to start with, but finally he'd turned around and do the White man the same way, cause he didn't get by with the Black man, and he just cut it, he didn't have a ego. Once a fella got an ego, he tried it on the White man. We had a fella, his name was R. E. MacWilliam, Richard MacWilliam, we called him Dick MacWilliam, toughest man I've ever seen in my life, [indistinct 00:33:34], little White fella. About five foot, two or three, had a heavy voice, roared like a lion, and he was hell on White folks and double hell on Black ones, and you [indistinct 00:33:54] office, he abused his authority [indistinct 00:33:57], I've seen him curse men.

Colonel Johnson: I was—before he come to the shop in 1948, stayed 'til '53 and the things he talked about that he didn't like, he would fire a man about, he says "I'll fire you for stealing, [indistinct 00:34:21], and drinking, them were three things he'd fire you about and he had to resign for stealing. He got caught and in other words, I believe you he would have gotten by if he hadn't been doing so bad, see when you don't have no friends at all, he even abused some of the women and [indistinct 00:34:52] but White women. And [indistinct 00:34:57] segregation, the [indistinct 00:35:00] segregation, now he wasn't—I wouldn't call him a segregationist. He was just a man who abused his power, and he had had his way so long, he thought anything he done was—that was the law, and one of the segregationists [indistinct 00:35:29] a job, man working under the chief of police wrote him up and got him a job. But he was the wolf [laughs].

Paul Ortiz: You mention that the meetings at some point seemed to respond [indistinct 00:35:52]?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, it got better.

Paul Ortiz: How is that?

Colonel Johnson: Well, after, [indistinct 00:35:57] the same union, and have better training and better treatment, God took a fear out of a lot of fellas. Folks like Reuben Davis comes along, Martin Luther King, [indistinct 00:36:15] Walker. See God sent them folks along to redeem the soul of America and they enlightened folks, see a lot of folks don't know right and don't know their left hand from their right. Even the folks in the city you going in, then the pride of education and education is like polished shoes, you dressed all up, got all looking for a shoe. It don't look good, [indistinct 00:36:55] a man can't even explain hisself well if he not educated.

Paul Ortiz: What was Birmingham like in the 40s or the 50s?

Colonel Johnson: Well in the 40s and 50s Birmingham progress was, up until 1937, the thing really got shook up. They had segregation with the [indistinct 00:37:34] all the time but in '37, they got a police commissioner in Birmingham, his name is Eugene Connor, and his nickname was Bull Connor, and he really spilled it up that he was already a disk jockey, radio announcer, and he was famous for calling ball games and when you run for commissioner, you [indistinct 00:38:01] like that, and he wasn't been there that much

in education, he wasn't even a college man. But he was talking the talk that the Southern White man wanted to hear. Lot of rich folks wanted to hear because when you keep folks there [indistinct 00:38:21] and you can work folks like you want to at a disadvantaged price. So, the rich man agreed with the powers that be, that if they don't agree to a thing, it don't happen [indistinct 00:38:42].

Colonel Johnson: So, a lot of folks had a mind that go along with Bull Connor. He was representing a lot of folks, and he—the first I can remember, the first year he was in office, lot of rich folk had chauffers. Twelve, fifteen dollars a week, but at that time a man can [indistinct 00:39:07] because he advocated. Already, TV wasn't out then. Automobile is too simple to drive for the hiring man paying to see that [indistinct 00:39:25] your wife and you're gone. He says, "We rub two rocks together," oh, he had what I'm saying with the man, what he had thought and the way he speak, the man can sell favors to you, and he was selling segregation and a lot of folks bought it. They fired a lot, just lay them off, "Man, come in, we'll pay you or sell [indistinct 00:39:58]." My wife [indistinct 00:40:01] hard to drive, said "We don't need you no more." You [indistinct 00:40:07] twenty, twenty-five years.

Colonel Johnson: Other jobs, a lot of jobs, they wouldn't hire Black owned. [indistinct 00:40:17] you see Black owned now. They go White folk job, White man job. Didn't many White women work back in yesteryear, they was housewives. But they had the White man mastered all the job, and second class and third class job, they get it. Most of uneducated White would get the second class job, but on the third class job, Blacks got them. It was rough work like coal mine, [indistinct 00:40:54] mine, most of the Black got those jobs.

Paul Ortiz: Do you remember the Black business district [indistinct 00:41:04] at this time?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah. Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Where would you go?

Colonel Johnson: Hmm?

Paul Ortiz: What would you go in the Black business district?

Colonel Johnson: Oh, they had a lot of restaurants, barbershop, beauty shop, Mr. [indistinct 00:41:24] had a Brown Bear [indistinct 00:41:26] Company two blocks over. And up until here lately, the system that the Black did, when you discriminate on folks, and don't give no work in [indistinct 00:41:46]. When you don't give a man no work. But the man from another city come in, folks drive to Birmingham, fifty, fifty miles—White—to work in Birmingham. They don't give young Black men job so that is making me assume he's going to nag at home when [indistinct 00:42:09]. They'll hire a man off the farm, he's got a big farm, he bring his vegetables to town, four thirty in the morning to sell them. He doe earn his money, then he goes to the factory and works, and then you got folks in your own town ain't working. That's happening right now only it happened back [indistinct 00:42:36], but it's happening now. It ain't enough job for all you educated folks.

Paul Ortiz: In those days that [indistinct 00:42:48] driving the Black business district, did you go, say to the movies, to the theater?

Colonel Johnson: Yeah, yeah. I used to go to movies.

Paul Ortiz: What kind of movies do you watch?

Colonel Johnson: Oh, all kind of movies, but mostly quiet actors. That's what programmed a lot of folks, when you see all the gangster pictures, young fellas think that's the way of life, they go out and get them a gun and rob, see, until the federal government make Hollywood straighten up. You've gone always have folk killing each other. That's what you're teaching. That we are laughing, it look like it's okay. You look on television, you see fella shoot a lot of folks fall down, and it really show you how to program, most all your pictures you see now. You see a cowboy pictured a White man, kill all the Indians. You're programming that one man, one White man, can have everything, and that makes the other fella program inferiority. But the young folks coming up, you can't fool them, so they go the other route, they won't give me no work, I'll take what I want.

Colonel Johnson: Most any time [indistinct 00:44:33], not just in South, no, East, West. See a lot of folks don't want the truth, that's why the Bible come in it. "Where is thy brother?" We're moving out any White community now. Everybody leave and take the money and leave your town desolate. One day, you [indistinct 00:45:06] giving [indistinct 00:45:08] and the law says, "Where are you brother?" "I live in downtown [indistinct 00:45:13]. Took all the job from me. Look around here and see all the [indistinct 00:45:19] in downtown." And they move out. A town have a Black mayor, business [indistinct 00:45:31] the shopping center, they build a neighborhood, to get out from where they were living. Lot of folks had give up their home and all to run away from their own neighborhood.

Paul Ortiz: In the 1950s, before the Civil Rights Movement started, were Black people in Brimingham challenging [indistinct 00:45:56]?

Colonel Johnson: Did they what?

Paul Ortiz: Were they challenging the [indistinct 00:46:00]?

Colonel Johnson: Well, a few, not as many, there's always been somebody to stand up. Like Frederick Douglass and folks like Benjamin Hook, Thurgood Marshall, Sojourner Truth, I guess you read your history, Tubman and Bethune. All—life has always been a struggle—freedom is a struggle—