

Paul Ortiz: Do White farmers have more access to, say, governmental assistance?

Ulysses Marshall: Oh sure, for sure. I imagine they had some kind of government loans they could get. It might have been something like—I think maybe something like the FAA, if I'm not mistaken; it so long ago. I think that was some kind of government loan, but you still didn't get no money for the Blacks for stuff like that. I mean, this was a policy of the State of Arkansas as far as I can understand. I understand there were some well-off farmers down in the eastern part of Arkansas. I don't know, but I heard there was some well-off farmers there, but it certainly wasn't none in this area, just only just a handful of them where they own little farm, forty acres or so. That was considered as a well-to-do farmer at that particular time.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, during those years, what were the most important institutions or organizations for Black people in this area?

Ulysses Marshall: It wasn't nothing. As far as I know, the Black folk, they go to church and that was it. I mean church, that was a religious thing, and I think lots of Blacks, they always say that they'll prevail. Through religious, God will take care of them, but that wasn't—Martin Luther King, he had a different policy that. You had to get out and do something for yourself and protest these things, and so this was pretty much the Black thing then, especially the older Blacks at that time like that. And things I've heard, so I heard once that one of their Blacks asked a White guy—want to know why was it so hard for a Black man to get anything or something like that. This White man told him, "Oh, you'll get yours up in heaven."

Ulysses Marshall: And I heard that, I think—well see, I don't think there is—maybe the Blacks believe that, but I didn't believe that because I wanted some of this here paradise here on earth, and this is—I heard this not too long ago where somebody was telling me with this here, this is what the White man told him, "Blacks going to get their reward in heaven." Well, he going to have his paradise on earth and Black will have to wait heaven to get his. So I don't think that I thought they going to get any kind of—[indistinct 00:02:22] paradise available for Black anywhere because they had an opportunity, and so this is why you see so many White folk got set up.

Ulysses Marshall: This was probably pretty much the trend all over United States, and while they are set up good where so many rich White folks and so many poor Black folk because opportunity was there for them and it certainly wasn't there for no Black, not only here, even where I am now, and it was the same thing when I went there. It wasn't much different. It was only just only a hidden thing. To me, it was just as bad as it was in Arkansas. It was bad, and now things made—it has been a lots of changes made, there's no doubt about it; I mean, lots of changes.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, when did you get married?

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, I got married in 1940—I think it was 1947. [indistinct 00:03:04]. I got married 1948. I got married in 1948. In fact, I got married while I was going to school down here.

Paul Ortiz: Oh, okay. So you met your wife at the school.

Ulysses Marshall: No, I didn't meet her at the school. I met her in the community, but I did get married when I was going to school. Yeah. Yeah, because our first kid was born in 1949.

Paul Ortiz: And did she also want to move out of the area?

Ulysses Marshall: Well, she never did have a strong feeling because she didn't—when I first left, I was first here, so I left here going to California, and that was a long ways from home. It was a long ways from her people, something like that, and she didn't insist on going. She didn't say nothing about not going, and I went out there, and went out there and people wasn't doing no better out there, especially Blacks, no better than I was doing here in Fargo, and I was trying to better myself. So I come back—I stayed out of California three or four months, and things wasn't good. I couldn't find the work I was looking for. I was looking for factory work and something that had job security to it. I said, "Well, I'm not going to stay here," and I come back here; had an old car. I never forget it; paid seventy-five dollars for it.

Ulysses Marshall: At that time, I was a fairly good mechanic. I overhauled this car at the time. Rings, I put the piston rings, gaskets; cost me four dollars something.

Paul Ortiz: Hmm.

Ulysses Marshall: That's what it cost me. I left here going to California with seventy-five dollars in my pocket, and went out there, and I drove 2,100 miles out Barstow, California to live with some my in-laws. They weren't there. I got there on the weekend, so I decided to come back. My daddy gave me address of some more in-law, live out from Los Angeles. I come back there across Death Valley, and by the time I arrived at from Barstow back to Indio, California, I didn't have but about ten or fifteen dollars in my pocket, but it wasn't no good up there. Peoples out there, they was scuffing making end meet doing construction work. I wasn't looking for no construction work. And I left here, come back, picked up my wife. We went to Gary, Indiana, and I kind of liked that.

Ulysses Marshall: At that time, I worked at a steel mill; was good paying job; considered it was a good paying job there. Worked there six or seven months and got laid off and couldn't find a job nowhere, day and night, and this is where I winded back up at Fargo again for a few months, so kind of recuperate myself. Picked a little cotton; got a little money in my pocket and I left again; went back to Gary. Things was just as bad, and I had a brother living in Kansas, and I called him up. I had a mother living in Missouri and a brother living in Kansas. So I called my brother up and I said, "Was there any jobs out there?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "There's jobs out there." He said, "They don't pay me like they do back east," but he said there's jobs. And sure enough, I got—

Paul Ortiz: [indistinct 00:06:08]

Ulysses Marshall: So that's where I wind up in Kansas. Sure enough, there's jobs in Kansas. Like I said, it was jobs there, but it wasn't no opportunities at that time. And after a while, things began to better in Kansas like that, and factories began to move in. In fact, one of the first factories moved there was an airplane factory, and this is where I started working. This is where I retired at, an airplane factory.

Paul Ortiz: Boeing or—

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah, no, Beeches.

Paul Ortiz: Beechcraft.

Ulysses Marshall: Yeah. It was right there at Beech, Born. Born is number one, and Beech is number two. It got Born, they had. It's a super giant, and the factory I worked had about twelve thousand, and so I started working at Beech's, and this is where I retired from.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, during the years that you were in Kansas, did you ever think back in your experiences in Fargo and about—well, let me rephrase that. Throughout your life, what have been the things you've noticed that have changed within the Black community and also in terms of race relations? What are the things that have changed?

Ulysses Marshall: Oh, I think it changed. We come back down here; we always made lots of trip, four and five trips a year, back down here to see my parents, and I could see the change made as we be coming along because I remember when you go to the place like that, when you see your Jim Crow sign where Black and White, you go to the places to eat. I never would care for stopping and eating because I didn't want to get embarrassed, and so we used to take our food in our car, but you began to see they taking the signs down, and when you stop maybe to gas up, maybe in a Arkansas, there was a lot of Blacks in Arkansas, you may see a Black going in the cafe there, and maybe—said this may be a change. I mean, it wasn't the fear of going there; just didn't want to be embarrassed.

Ulysses Marshall: So then we started maybe just going in there, and first, they real skeptical, keeping being embarrassed, and they started serving you, and then they started getting polite. Now, they just about as polite around here. You go there now, it's amazing that things have changed. They treat you courtesy, they address you properly, and it's just all together different. It changed. I mean, it changed. South for one made the change here. Kansas called itself a neutral state, and it's okay there now, too, but they had more of a sneaky prejudice; didn't have no signs or something like that, but you couldn't even eat in the same place. When I went, there was only one place, and the town I went is forty thousand. And when I first went there, you couldn't eat but one place there you could eat in that town. That was at a bus station.

Paul Ortiz: Wow. Even though they didn't have signs?

Ulysses Marshall: They didn't have no sign. They went to the same school, they went to the same theater. But when it come to eating, they would just tell you. I mean, I've been told that personally; "We don't serve Black in here." So I always have hard to go there because that's kind of embarrassing, but see, that all changed, but the south the one really made the change.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, throughout your life, what have been the things that have kept you going and striving through all the difficult.

Ulysses Marshall: I don't know. I got a lot of inspiration from President Brown. Like he said, like his motto used, "work will win," and to me, I'm a stronger believer in that. I think if a person wants something bad enough and go ahead to work and pursue it, I think he can accomplish. I think a man could reach about any goal that he strive for if he go—you got to put something into it because nothing going to come there and fall in your lap. I mean, if somebody think that, they just fooling theyself. So I kind of like that motto, "work will win."

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Marshall, are there other things that you'd like to share that we haven't touched on?

Ulysses Marshall: No. I think probably lots of things I haven't touched on, but right now, that's about all I can come up with.