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University of California
Berkeley, California

Joseph Marshall
Omega Boys Club-Alive & Free Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Neil Henry
in 2013

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Dr. Joseph Marshall

Joseph Marshall, originally a public middle school teacher, is the director and co-founder of Alive & Free. Originally formed in 1987 as the Omega Boys Club, the organization has grown to include education, outreach, and training components. Doctor Marshall also hosts a weekly radio program, Street Soldiers.

Table of Contents — Joseph Marshall

Interview 1: July 22, 2013

Audio File 1

1

Birth in Chicago to Joseph Marshall, Sr. and Odessa Marshall — early life in Chicago, sharing home with grandmother — move to Los Angeles at age eight — eight younger siblings, many employed in education — Catholic school education beginning at St. Alphonsus — parents’ work ethic, emphasis on education — parents’ long lives and marriage, renewing vows on 67th anniversary — Los Angeles childhood memories, nightly family suppers, mother’s night shift nursing work — mother’s roots in Tennessee, father’s in Mississippi — important presence of paternal grandmother Louise Pierce (“Goo Goo”), early love of music inspired by grandmother — early love of school — grandmother’s lasting influence: “The more you know, the more you owe.” — her pride over Omega Boys Club in 1987 and Essence Award — grandmother’s faith — Catholic church attendance with mother — grandmother’s roots in Saint Joe, Louisiana, young marriage and birth of son, single motherhood and nursing career — more on childhood in Los Angeles, the rude awakening of gang culture — father’s no-nonsense discipline and work ethic — first job as a pre-teen at the corner grocery store earning \$0.85 an hour, always staying on the right path, not wanting to disappoint parents — positive, nurturing community: “I was surrounded by people who wanted me to do well and they just wouldn’t let me not do well.” — childhood baseball fight, being jumped by gang members fostered a sense of black boys as a threat — learning to navigate as a black youngster — comparing inner city life then and now, very few guns and hard drugs then — the psychological damage of fear — growing awareness of being black in a white world, encountering racism as a Loyola High School student — disappointment at school administration for not punishing racist behavior — double gauntlet of racism at school and gang violence in the neighborhood — not analyzing until later the reasons black boys acted in the ways they did — setting a good example for the younger siblings: “All I knew was that there was a lot of us and we had a lot of chores.” — father’s running of household when mother was heavily pregnant or away — parents’ WWII service in Europe — watching parents run their big family with a united front, learning how to run an organization — enrolling at University of San Francisco in 1964 searching for a Jesuit education and a diverse student body — disappointment at finding few black students at USF — joining black fraternity Omega Psi Phi: “It blew my mind!” — pledging at San Jose State, meeting fraternity brothers from all the local colleges

Audio File 2

25

First impressions of, admiration for Omega Psi Phi men — the extreme brutality of pledging — Sunday night frat house “sessions” — hazing rituals, making paddles, psychological abuse/testing — analysis of hazing as a reflection of the brutality of black men’s experience in America — rights of passage, working

together in the fraternity: “It was black man at his best to me.” — disconnect between hazing and the uplifting goal of black fraternities — similarities to gang initiation — activism to eliminate violence in fraternities, institutional resistance to change — pervasive racism of USF schoolmates, being the “invisible man” — 1965 Watts riots during summer break — tanks rolling in front of the family house: “It was like Vietnam in my yard!” — introduction to Malcolm X’s writing — realization of a deep lack of knowledge of African American history — reading Malcolm X’s autobiography: “He opened the door to me to a past I knew nothing about.” — emerging consciousness of African American history and identity — discovery of black thinkers and writers — reading *Native Son* while on summer break — discussions with black college peers about black authors and thinkers — excitement of the 1960s era of social change, sense of community — decision to start a BSU at USF: “We were going to make this place home for us like it was home for everybody else.” — school resistance to BSU formation, 1966 dramatization of a black prom queen election to counter resistance — backlash from students — supportive faculty support in white English professor John King — forming the BSU, community involvement — inviting Eldridge Cleaver to speak: “Eldridge was crazy!” — the Black Panthers turn up at a Ron Karanga speaking engagement — black cultural nights — speakers Muhammad Ali and Angela Davis — Curtis Mayfield performance and the increasingly interracial attendees as social change took place — pushing to hire black professors and change curriculum — starting a USF ethnic studies program, the *Black Scholar* — difficulty sustaining student consciousness over the years since the activist 1960s — reflections on coming of age in the 1960s — learning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination — the volatile mood after the deaths of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — later learning of COINTELPRO — King’s legacy and influence: “King was the only man that didn’t fight back... He changed history without ever throwing a punch.”

Interview 2: July 29, 2013

Audio File 3

43

More on growing racial awareness at USF — McClymonds High School song girls booed at a USF basketball game — racially biased win in basketball game between BSU and a white fraternity — resulting action and brief occupation of student union — demands for the university, decision to disperse — facing disciplinary charges — university expulsion attempt, student teaching — offer of defense from two white law professors — testifying to the moot court, all eyes on the proceedings — dropped charges — a turning point for USF: Bill Russell room named, black studies program started — plans to attend law school, recruitment from Michigan — missing the LSAT in 1968 — falling in love with teaching at Woodrow Wilson High School — teaching US history, black history, civics — adapting civics curriculum to meet student needs — sponsoring a BSU, learning the Bayview neighborhood through teaching the local kids — close relationship with students — instigating peaceful student walkout, African festivals, BSU dances, racial awareness: “It was really something! I had to be a threat to the

establishment.” — one year teaching then “exile” assignment at Guidance Service Center — remaining close to Woodrow Wilson students — working with sparse resources to save “throwaway kids” — cynicism about the education system but never about the kids — developing interest in psychology, PhD at the Wright Institute — Aptos Middle School — troubled students Shirley Brown and Darnell Oliver — 1980 move to Potrero Hill Middle School to teach math — diverse and international student body — meeting Jack Jacqua — initial skepticism and then finding a partner in saving young peoples’ lives — learning the desperate living conditions of Potrero Hill students — emergence of crack cocaine — student Roy Nall — the difficulty avoiding gangster life — Peter Lee Carr — fraternity brother Philmore Graham and the Continentals of Omega Boys Club in Vallejo (founded 1966) — Graham’s blessing to institute a club in San Francisco — adapting Omega: focus on education, “family meetings,” college education and scholarships — early core group of kids — meetings at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House — students talking about their personal difficulties, finding common ground — providing a safe space, even for enemies — speaker Willie Brown — “Sinbad” Dave Stewart, Art Agnos

Audio File 4

63

“Sinbad” Dave Stewart’s speaking engagement at the Omega Boys Club, later wearing club t-shirt on the tv program *A Different World* — KGO Channel Seven news feature on the club — month-long visits from reporter Steve Davis showing tutoring and other activities — Anchor Russ Cogle solicits donations and over \$30,000 come in, providing funds for first college scholarships — early benefactors in the community, later grants and foundations — early focus on historically black colleges and universities [HBCUs] — first cohort: seven boys and one girl get scholarships — lessons learned about students’ lack of academic preparation — students encounter familiar difficulties at college: turf wars, guns — influence of Peter Lee’s death — increasing availability of firearms — difficulty keeping club members from backsliding — more lessons learned, taking the hood out of the boy, not just the boy out of the hood — Germaine King — years later Germaine brings a second generation of boys to Omega — humiliating encounter with Berkeley Police Department after driving Germaine home from a club meeting — impact on Marshall’s son, Malcolm, who witnessed the encounter — influence on later work with police — reflections on harassment of black men by law enforcement — Sam Robinson and Danny Boy Williams, keeping violence out of the club — Bernard Temple and Terrence Hanson — Temple’s shooting, apology, and later boxing career — one violent episode closes the club temporarily — Lamerle Johnson: kicked out of Morris Brown for fighting, attempts to involve club members in a robbery, life sentence — “one bad decision away”

Interview 3: August 5, 2013

Audio File 5

83

Meeting Andre Aikins at Castlemont High School — teenaged Aikins brought to Omega meeting by parole officer — home life, parents — surprise at club's warm welcome — dedication to the club — noticeable changes to Aikins, hopes to join the Army, tough transition to not selling drugs — GED, enrolling at Morris Brown — struggling and succeeding at college — becoming a math teacher and then principal — hiring Aikins as Alive & Free operations manager — the importance of mentoring, Marshall's PhD dissertation "The Effect of Significant Other Non-Parental Adults on Black Male Adolescents" — Enola Maxwell's support for Omega, meeting in the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House — outgrowing the house, incorporating as a non-profit in 1993-1994 — "I had to learn to save these young people the non-profit way." — 1994 move to current location — serving young people aged 13-23, Tuesday night meetings — instituting Thursday night academic boot camp for college-bound students — evolution of Omega's board from mom and pop to serious — fundraising — budget grows to \$1.5 million — partnering with the city of San Francisco — scholarship funding of about \$400,000 — helping students and families navigate paying for college — teaching students financial fluency — long-time board member and fundraiser Larry Solomon — outreach programs — school adoptions — Alive & Free Training Institute — school personnel turnover makes maintaining Alive & Free methodology difficult — local partnerships, national interest — forming a consortium, first national convention in 2006 in Birmingham, Alabama — KMEL radio program Street Soldiers begins in 1992 — work at Youth Guidance Center with Jack — trying to improve high recidivism rates — difficulty changing mentality of incarcerated youth — Jack's office at juvenile hall — friendship with Danny Glover dating back to college BSU days

Audio File 6

101

Rigorous Alive & Free college scholarship application — Demondre Harrison's radio bit inspires financial support from Clark alum — Demondre's family background, reconciliation with father on radio — Ms. Deborah Estelle, leader of the Leadership Academy and "mom" of the organization — previous academic director Margaret Norris — evolution of the academic prep classes — peer counseling at the Youth Guidance Center — the club's longevity and the importance of permanence for young people who have had few reliable adult relationships — Joe Thomas: first Omega member to go from jail to college — early recruits heavily attended Morris Brown — current numbers: 183 college grads, over 50 advanced degree seekers — marriages between club members, other success stories — the Kemba Smith story and risk factors for young women — "Coach" Wilber Jiggetts: the club grandfather — Coach's tough love, life wisdom, and "coachisms" — using a medical model, "inoculation" club members from the dangers in their lives outside the club — Coach's lasting influence — Coach walked the walk: gave up carrying a gun to be an example — Coach's

encounter in LA with a Crip — emotional funeral for Coach — his still-vibrant presence at the club — Martin Jacks — Corey Monroe and Omar Butler short while home from college, fears of retaliation

Interview 4: August 14, 2013

Audio File 7

123

Beginnings of KMEL radio program Street Soldiers in 1991 — evolution of the show, simulcast in Los Angeles — memorable moments: Tupac’s 1996 death and Jada Pinkett’s guest hosting, first-hand accounts of the Million Man March — on-air confessions, reconciliations — radio gave Marshall greater range, let him reach youngsters who could not physically get to the club — keeping Street Soldiers solution-oriented — meeting Marqux on the radio — Marqux’s transformation from good kid to bad kid and back — more on the medical model: “The medicine we give them is the Alive & Free prescription.” — the challenge of getting young people to trust the medicine — Otis Mims — recognition from national media, Oprah, the Bush White House — receiving the Essence Award, the thrill of the award ceremony — standing ovation, encounter with Denzel Washington — club members’ reaction to the award — watching a recording of the award ceremony with grandmother Goo Goo — watching *Menace to Society* with Margaret Norris, analyzing and identifying risk factors — the start of the medical model, codifying the methodology — identifying unavoidable risk factors, mitigating with avoidable ones — risk factors: family environment, drugs, guns, alcohol, valuing material goods over people — peer pressure, fearship relationships based on fear and control — teaching young people to identify and avoid fearship relationships — eliminating danger by eliminating fearship relationships, even family members — distinguishing dangerous from bad — supporting young people in the courageous, lonely work of eliminating dangerous fearship relationships — Nate Pique and the *Victory Over Violence* video — Little Disease — comparing drug dealers to slave masters — *Letters to Street Soldiers* — visiting a women’s prison and realizing how many inmates were there because of a relationship to a man

Audio File 8

142

The devastating impact of mandatory minimum sentencing for drug arrests — realization that the War on Drugs was aimed at criminalizing the black community — 1980 as a watershed year as crack cocaine emerged — the deliberate racism of crack and the War on Drugs — civil rights achievements undone by crack epidemic — Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarcerations in the Age of Colorblindness* — the rise of SWAT teams, increasingly militarized law enforcement, cycle of arrest-based and seizure-based police funding — teaching youngsters to avoid the landmines: “They collude in their own oppression.” — working on the San Francisco Police Department Commission — “The worst thing for a good officer is a bad officer.” — work in Los Angeles with Crips and Bloods — effects of the War on Drugs on gangs —

increasing availability of guns has changed the game, making it exponentially more deadly — on not carrying a gun: “The reason they listen to me is because I don’t have a gun.” — rules for living: life, friendship, change, respect — most difficult rule: respect comes from within, therefor disrespect is impossible — grandmother Goo Goo’s assault at age 83 — learning the power of self-respect from Goo Goo’s strength: “He did this to me but he can’t take my essence.” — teaching Goo Goo’s story — mid 1990s trip to the Middle East, observing the same disease of violence — testing the Alive & Free prescription in other countries — lasting effects of the crack epidemic, learning to restore the family and community structures — President Obama’s election highlights that the US is not post-racial — accusations of dividing the country when the President addresses race matters — Omega graduates today: many in education and community service, some in medicine — convincing kids not to feel bad about being good — rebranding to Alive & Free umbrella organization — Marshall’s three grown children — closing remarks on dedication to service, favorite musical artists

Interview #1 July 22, 2013
Audio File 1

01-00:00:06

Henry: Today is Monday, July 22, 2013. My name is Neil Henry and I'm sitting with Joseph Marshall in his office in San Francisco. Dr. Marshall is the founder of the Omega Boys Club, which is now known as Alive & Free, which last year celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The mission of Alive & Free has been to take disadvantaged and troubled inner city kids and guide them to college educations. It has been remarkably successful in this mission and it's become a national model as a social service and education program. This is the first of several conversations I hope to have with Dr. Marshall about his life and times. Why don't we start at the beginning. Where were you born?

01-00:00:50

Marshall: I was born in Saint Louis, Missouri. They call it the Show-Me State. That's all. Yeah, yeah.

01-00:00:57

Henry: And who were your parents?

01-00:00:58

Marshall: Parents. I'm a junior, so there's Joseph Earl, Senior, Joseph Earl Marshall, Senior, and my mom is Odessa Marshall.

01-00:01:05

Henry: Okay. And what did they do for a living?

01-00:01:08

Marshall: At that time, dad did just about everything. When I was born, he was actually driving a—and this will probably date him and me—a bread delivery truck. It was a Wonder Bread truck back in Saint Louis. As long as I can remember, and she may not have been—my mom has been a nurse. But my dad actually ended up working for Southern California Gas Company when we moved out here. So most of my life I can remember is that he was in the ground fixing pipes for gas and electric company.

01-00:01:46

Henry: And what neighborhood in Saint Louis? Do you remember the Ville?

01-00:01:50

Marshall: I remember the street, Cook Avenue. I remember King's Highway and Grand Avenue and the Rock Church, St. Alphonsus school that I went to. I was there until we moved out to Los Angeles. I was eight years old. But mostly I remember the backyard, which was a big yard. We lived in my grandmother's house. She lived downstairs, we lived upstairs. And I remember the snow.
[laughter]

01-00:02:18

Henry: Oh, in Saint Louis. Yeah.

01-00:02:21
Marshall:

Yeah. That's what I remember.

01-00:02:22
Henry:

What brought your parents from Saint Louis to Los Angeles?

01-00:02:25
Marshall:

Like a lot of black families, the opportunity that supposedly we believed existed out west. My family tree, mom's from Tennessee, dad is from Mississippi. They met in Saint Louis and started raising a family. The joke in my family is my parents are both only children. My mother didn't want any children, my father wanted a bunch. I'm the oldest of nine, so you can see who won. So yeah. Then they decided to strike out for Southern California, Los Angeles in particular, to raise their family.

01-00:03:04
Henry:

Yeah. You got eight siblings.

01-00:03:06
Marshall:

Mm-hmm. Oh, Lord. I better turn this off, huh. Because I can't talk now.

01-00:03:14
Henry:

Did they all go to college and what are they doing today?

01-00:03:16
Marshall:

Let me just turn this off completely, if you don't mind, because if not it's going to keep ringing. It never stops. Well, to sum it up, many of us are educators. One of my sisters is a community college counselor. My brother also works in the community college district as the athletic counselor up in Sacramento. The smart sister in the family, the smart one in the family, is a big time lawyer for a prestigious firm in Sacramento. I have a sister who—she just changed jobs but she works in the healthcare field. She has a degree in nursing. Let me keep going. Where am I going? Oh, I have a brother, the third in the family, James, who lives in Los Angeles. He runs his own business. He runs a janitorial service in Southern California. And, sadly, we've lost two siblings. I'm the oldest. The one right behind me, I call her the first girl that I ever knew, Debra died of cancer I think three years ago. And then Johnny, who was number—let me get this straight, he's number four, he got killed in the Iraq war three months after it started. Yeah. He was leading his men into battle and he was scheduled to come home. At that time he was the oldest soldier in Iraq and he got killed. So we're down to seven now and we're a pretty close family.

01-00:05:04
Henry:

Yeah. Well, that's an amazing story. Where did you go to school as a child and what was your early schooling like?

01-00:05:10
Marshall:

So in Saint Louis, I went to St. Alphonsus parochial school. By the way, my mom's a Catholic, my dad isn't. He won the battle of the kids, she won the

battle of where they go to school. So on a salary which neither one of them can afford, they decide to send all their kids to parochial school, to Catholic school. So I've been in Catholic school my whole life. In Saint Louis it was St. Alphonsus until the third grade. If I close my eyes, I see the nuns in their habits. In fact, I thought nuns slept in their habits. I always loved the nuns, right. Came out here to Los Angeles, went to St. Brigid elementary school in South Central Los Angeles. Stayed there and graduated, went to Loyola High School, a Jesuit school, and I'm going to University of San Francisco. So I'm Jesuit trained. Yeah.

01-00:06:14

Henry: Thoroughly.

01-00:06:15

Marshall: Thoroughly.

01-00:06:16

Henry: Where did your parents get their work ethic and was it unusual in your environment?

01-00:06:21

Marshall: That's a good question, because a lot of times—my parents worked all the time. Again, we had these jokes around the family is when they made the babies, because when they have time to have kids? Because my dad worked all day and my mom worked all night. She worked the midnight shift, 11:00 to 7:00 in the morning. She'd come home and he'd be gone because he like got up at 5:30, and went to put in pipes and dig ditches. I don't know where they got it but I'm not surprised. That generation of black folks, hard work was a big thing. Hard work. And limited education. I know they went to high school. I think they had some limited community college experience. But their big thing was their kids being educated. So a lot of times, when people talk to me about the influence, particularly my parents had on me, and my dad I talk about a lot, what he passed on to me was men work and men take care of the children. So yeah. And he talks about how hard his children worked. And we're pretty hard workers. But I tell them we got it from them. We watched them work all the time.

01-00:07:46

Henry: Yeah. How long did they live, your parents? I assume they are no longer with us.

01-00:07:50

Marshall: They just celebrated their ninetieth birthdays, both of them.

01-00:07:54

Henry: Oh, my goodness. Is that right? Oh, that's amazing.

01-00:07:57

Marshall: Yeah. They just celebrated their ninetieth birthdays. They're both here. I was just up there yesterday. You expect ninety years old to have—my father has

diabetes and my mother, she's had these bouts with cancer. But, no, they just celebrated their ninetieth birthday and their sixty-seventh wedding anniversary. Wait a minute. You think that's something. My father recommitted his vows to my mother on their sixty-seventh. Had a big ceremony out of the house. They jumped the broom again. I was like, "You guys are ridiculous." It's amazing. Really, really. It is a beautiful thing. And on her birthday, not his birthday, he bought her this ring and put it on her finger in front of—her little bitty finger. Her fingers are so small that I had to make sure he got the right size. So it's an amazing story of best friends and love and family and all of that's in there.

01-00:09:07

Henry: And devotion and dedication.

01-00:09:08

Marshall: Yeah, yeah.

01-00:09:08

Henry: Amazing. And do they live in Northern California now?

01-00:09:12

Marshall: Yes. We started this gradual exodus out of Los Angeles. Like I said, my family is close and clannish. Now, where is Diane on the list? Seven. She moved up here with her husband to Sacramento and we just tend to follow. Eventually my parents came. When they came, everybody else came. So only one lives in Southern California and I live in San Francisco, which is pretty close to them. So, yeah, everybody lives in Sacramento.

01-00:09:47

Henry: That's amazing. How many grandkids do they have?

01-00:09:49

Marshall: A lot. I can't even count.

01-00:09:50

Henry: You can't count them all.

01-00:09:52

Marshall: Yeah. I got three. My brother had four. So I haven't figured. But it's probably close to twenty.

01-00:10:01

Henry: What was a typical day like in your household when you were a kid in Los Angeles? Because it didn't sound like you had the parents there at one time like for family dinners and things like that. What was a typical day?

01-00:10:13

Marshall: No, I actually did have parents there. Because you get this intersection of my father coming home from work, my mother not yet going to work. So we had family dinners every day. There were nine people at the dining room table,

nine kids, dad sitting here, mom sitting there. My mother will not cook now because she said she cooked forty years. [laughter] And you can't get her to cook! "No, I ain't cooking no more. Joseph, I'm not cooking anymore." So, no, it was great. It was really great. And I tell the kids these stories because we all sat around the table. My father was the head. He was the dean of the clan. I would say, "Why does he get the most," right, because he got [laughter] as much as he wanted to eat. And he'd look at me and say, "When you get your own family, you get a beard, you can have it." No, it was just a great, great, great time. Raising nine kids in a two bedroom house is—but we had order. My father was the military way and my mom was the mom way. But there was a lot of comings and goings. Lot of kids. There's thirteen years between me and my younger sister. So the time I remember is when we were all there. We were all there. And I can remember my baby sister, one of my baby sisters sleeping next to me in the bed. It was just a house full of kids. They did a great job of raising us and managing.

Lot of things I remembered. I remembered one things, when my mother went to sleep in the evenings, because after she cooked, and got everything in order, we did the kitchen detail. I recall washing dishes. We did kitchen detail. Mom would go and try to get two or three hours of sleep before. My father would come out and say, "Your mother's sleeping. Be quiet. Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet. It's quiet time." And he was serious. "Your mother's sleeping." It was a great home.

01-00:12:38

Henry:

What kind of shift did she work? Like 9:00 to 3:00 in the morning or something?

01-00:12:41

Marshall:

No. Eleven to 7:00.

01-00:12:44

Henry:

Eleven to 7:00. The overnight shift.

01-00:12:45

Marshall:

Overnight shift. Overnight shift. Would come home, get our lunches together, send us off to school and I think she slept when we weren't home because when we got back she was awake and she was cleaning the house. But you know those old school black women. They could do it all. [laughter]

01-00:13:09

Henry:

Right, exactly. Exactly. And you say she was from Tennessee or Mississippi?.

01-00:13:13

Marshall:

She is from Memphis, Tennessee. Dad is from Vicksburg, Mississippi.

01-00:13:17

Henry:

Okay, all right. What activities did you engage in as a kid? Music, sports in the streets?

01-00:13:22

Marshall: Let's see. Well, I just want to say the other important person in my life, other than my parents, was my paternal grandmother.

01-00:14:36

Henry: Goo Goo.

01-00:14:36

Marshall: Yeah, my grandmother. She is really, really important. She got me in an early interest in music, piano, which I eventually gave up for a long time but came back to much later in life. So I had an early interest in music. Sports, was never really, really good at anything. Basketball was my favorite sport. I played in the park with all the other guys. You know how it is in the ghetto. You go out and play basketball all day, come home at night with your mother screaming at you to come in. But mainly I guess my big activity was school. I loved school. Loved school. Started early. Skipped kindergarten and went straight to first grade at five years old. School was always my thing. That was number one. Sports was fun, music and everything else, but school was number one with me.

01-00:14:37

Henry: Yeah. And this value was instilled by your father and mother? Taking school seriously?

01-00:14:42

Marshall: I think so. I'm assuming it came from them. I just liked it. I liked it. It's interesting because I think I liked it because they made such a big deal out of how well I did. And you get that glowing feeling when you bring home, elementary school you bring home the stars. And you like that. You want it for you and you don't want to disappoint them. And so I liked being smart.

01-00:15:12

Henry: You mentioned Goo Goo. She was an important influence on your life. Can you tell me a bit more about your grandmother? Her real name, what she was like.

01-00:15:20

Marshall: Her real name was Louise Pierce. Yeah. Well, here's the first thing. When we lived in this house in Saint Louis when we were kids, it was her house. She lived downstairs, we lived upstairs. One of these brick homes that they have back east. And in the middle of the night I would get out of the bed and go downstairs and get into bed with my grandmother. And then my sister, who is now deceased, would follow me down. Then my brother. There's three of us, my parents stopped for a while, and then there's six others. So there's really just two groups of kids. And so we would all three be in my grandmother—I'd be next to her and my brother would be at the foot and my sister would be on the other side. So we loved that grandmother. And she's the one that took me to school the first day because my parents couldn't do it. She is the one that taught me how to read. She would take me over to her home. After she moved

and we stayed in that house, she got her own home, I think she got married. And she'd take me over there. So she spent a lot of time with me. In fact, there's a picture of my grandmother and me and the first three of us right there. So yeah. She was a big influence. And she gave me my mission in life and I didn't know it was my mission in life. But she told me when I was six years old, "The more you know, the more you owe." So she said, "Just remember that, Junior." And eventually I figured out what she was talking about.

01-00:17:03

Henry: What did it mean to you and what has it meant to you, that the more you know, the more you owe?

01-00:17:06

Marshall: Well, then I didn't know what she was saying. She was almost telling me, "You have a special calling in life." I've taken that to mean the more you owe, the more you owe means as you grow and progress in life, so you must help others to do likewise. And as I got older, when I'd go over, she told me that what she really wanted to do with her life was in Mississippi to have a school for black boys. And she would say, "You did it for me." [laughter]

01-00:17:37

Henry: Did she live long enough to see you form the beginning of the Omega Boys Club?

01-00:17:42

Marshall: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I started the club in 1987. My grandmother died in '94.

01-00:17:51

Henry: Boy, you have long life in your family.

01-00:17:53

Marshall: That's why if I just keep exercising I should be okay for a while. [laughter] So yeah. Yeah. In fact, that's her picture up there, the one in the blue dress. And behind me is this library of African American works. Richard Wright has signed many of the books in there. There's a signed copy of Ralph Ellison's book. All the James Baldwin books are signed by James Ellison. It's a pretty impressive collection. Somebody actually outbid some big names for that collection and gave it to us. So we had a dedication of the library. We actually had Joe Sample perform the night before. And my grandmother came up and was part of the dedication. So she saw all the early years of the Boys Club. I think her proudest moment was when I won the Essence Award and it was on national television. Yeah. So yeah.

01-00:18:53

Henry: [laughter] That's fabulous.

01-00:18:53

Marshall: It was. Yeah.

01-00:18:54
Henry: And this book collection didn't belong to your grandmother?

01-00:18:58
Marshall: No, no. She just came up. I wanted her to be part of the ceremony when we dedicated and she spoke and it was pretty moving.

01-00:19:06
Henry: And at age three and four you were able to pick out record albums for your parents?

01-00:19:10
Marshall: Boy, you read this so good. That's what my parents—yeah, yeah. Yeah. Somehow I knew a Duke Ellington or a Louis Armstrong or Billie Holiday record. I don't know how I did it but I did. There's this lore around the Marshall family about some of the things I could do.

01-00:19:26
Henry: Yeah. And you say she helped you pursue your interest in piano? She got a piano for you?

01-00:19:33
Marshall: She got a piano for me.

01-00:19:34
Henry: This was in Saint Louis or LA?

01-00:19:35
Marshall: That's hard to remember. I think it was in Saint Louis. I'm assuming it was in Saint Louis. Yeah. But I wanted to go outside and play so I sort of left it alone and years later it came back.

01-00:19:52
Henry: She was also a very spiritual person, given to reciting biblical passages around the house, right?

01-00:19:58
Marshall: Mm-hmm.

01-00:19:59
Henry: What do you remember about that?

01-00:19:59
Marshall: Oh, before I knew my name I knew these Bible verses. John 3:16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Yeah. I knew that before I knew my name. That verse and her answering the telephone, she would say, "Jesus loves you. Louise speaking." And then every few days she'd come up to me and say, "Junior, you need to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior." [laughter] Yeah.

01-00:20:30
Henry: As a kid she said that to you?

01-00:20:31
Marshall: Oh, yeah. She said it to me as a grownup. [laughter]

01-00:20:35
Henry: Has her spiritual belief lived on in you?

01-00:20:38
Marshall: Oh, I think so. Yeah. And it's beyond religion. Religion is one thing but her spirituality is another thing. A lot of people have told me that what I do here, and she used to say—she would actually tell me, “Junior, you're doing the Lord's work.” She actually would say that to me as this thing got bigger and better and she would see the young people and changes they made in their lives. So I'm sure it's a spiritual mission that my grandmother's real proud of.

01-00:21:09
Henry: Were you a churchgoing family on Sundays?

01-00:21:13
Marshall: The kids were. My father said, “Okay, they can go to the Catholic school but I'm not going to Catholic church.” So my mother went as much as she could. And me, I was an altar boy. I was everything. I was an altar boy. I was completely in it. So I was always at church. I was either serving the mass or I was in the pew somewhere. Yeah.

01-00:21:42
Henry: Where did your grandmother hail from originally and how did she raise a son as a single mother?

01-00:21:47
Marshall: She's from Saint Joe, Louisiana, a place so small that I don't think it's on the map.

01-00:21:52
Henry: That's where my ancestors are from.

01-00:21:54
Marshall: Hmm?

01-00:21:55
Henry: Saint Joseph.

01-00:21:55
Marshall: No kidding?

01-00:21:57
Henry: Yeah.

01-00:21:56
Marshall: Really?

01-00:21:57
Henry: Tensas Parish, yeah.

01-00:21:58
Marshall: Wow, wow. Okay, well, we have a lot to talk about!

01-00:22:03
Henry: But she hailed from Saint Joseph's?

01-00:22:05
Marshall: Well, I think they're two different places. Because my brother's been. I haven't been there. He said Saint Joe's and she would say Saint Joe, Louisiana. So I don't know if maybe they're the same place or a different place. But I know that it's a very small place.

01-00:22:24
Henry: Very small town, right.

01-00:22:25
Marshall: Very small town. So maybe it's the same. That's eerie that you said that. That is really—

01-00:22:32
Henry: But she grew up there?

01-00:22:33
Marshall: She grew up there and I'm not sure how she got to Vicksburg, met my father's dad, Tom Marshall. They actually got married and she had a baby at fifteen or sixteen. Had a son. And then he moved on. She raised him by herself. How? She just did it. You just do it. Just do it. Took a bunch of jobs, odd jobs. For a while she had a restaurant. Because she moved to Saint Louis and took my dad there. So she had a restaurant there. And she told me the story of the time Duke Ellington came through and had dinner at her restaurant. [laughter]

01-00:23:26
Henry: Oh, wow.

01-00:23:27
Marshall: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

01-00:23:31
Henry: So she was an entrepreneur?

01-00:23:33
Marshall: She was a black woman trying to raise a single son and trying to make—and eventually became a nurse.

01-00:23:40
Henry: So she became a nurse like your mother?

- 01-00:23:42
Marshall: In fact, I thought she was a nurse her entire life until she told me. But no, she went in nursing. Nursing, it's funny. My grandmother was a nurse, my mom's a nurse, and my youngest sister is into nursing also. So education and nurses seem to be the fields that the family has thrived in.
- 01-00:24:05
Henry: Yeah. Your introduction to Los Angeles as a kid was eye opening. When you went to a playground across the street from your house and ran into another kid who asked you a simple question, do you recall that incident?
- 01-00:24:14
Marshall: He said, "Where are you from?"
- 01-00:24:15
Henry: "Where are you from?" And you answered?
- 01-00:24:17
Marshall: "Saint Louis." And then he hit me. [laughter]
- 01-00:24:20
Henry: Then he hit you because he thought you were being smart.
- 01-00:24:21
Marshall: He thought I was being smart. Right. Yeah. Yeah. That was a new question for me. That didn't happen in Saint Louis. He meant, "What gang was I from?" But I was very naïve and very green. But you learn quick in LA. You learn quick in LA. Yeah.
- 01-00:24:39
Henry: Yeah. Your father had a strong sense of right and wrong. Was he a strict disciplinarian?
- 01-00:24:44
Marshall: He definitely believed spare the rod, spoil the child. I know this will resonate with a lot of people. My dad did not like disciplining us. There was nine of us, right. So if my mother had a problem she said, typically, "Wait til your father comes home." And he'd come home happy to see us and then she'd get there and he'd have to turn into this ogre and go in the room, pull out the belt. He never hit me a lot though. I got it pretty quickly. But he was also pretty good at explaining both sides. But mostly he was like, "Obey your mother, we won't have a problem," that sort of thing. It took me a while to realize what a big job he had. More and more kids, because as I'm getting older, I'm saying, "Dad, you got a huge job here. There's a bunch of us and we don't have a lot of money." You don't appreciate those things when you're young. But my dad, I thought he was superman. There would be a noise in the middle of the night and I'm saying, "He's going to get up and investigate this." And I never worried about anything, really, because I could tell my mom and my dad. So it was a great sense of comfort to have both of them. And I always tell people I

was way more afraid of my dad than I was the homies. So I had no problem with the boys on the block because my dad, he wasn't having it.

01-00:26:34

Henry: He taught you the work ethic by example, right?

01-00:26:36

Marshall: Mm-hmm.

01-00:26:37

Henry: And you got a job as a kid doing what?

01-00:26:39

Marshall: At the age of eleven, twelve, thirteen, corner of Normandy and Sixty-Second Street, there was a little corner grocery store. So I got a job as a box boy, putting stuff up. Good job. I think I made eighty-five cents an hour. And when I got a check it was like \$22. So I would buy my mother this porterhouse steak and I'd take it home and give it to her. I don't know where the rest of the money went but that was something, I always bought her something and took it home to her. Yeah. It was a great job. And I always tell the young people, I got into the legal work ethic right away, and I just started climbing. That eighty-five cents went to a dollar fifty, to two dollars an hour. But I never got off the wrong track. That early, early job helped me see hard work pays and you got to do it the right way.

01-00:27:43

Henry: Yeah. You write in your autobiography that you were one of few of your friends who realized that money could be made legally.

01-00:27:50

Marshall: Yeah.

01-00:27:51

Henry: Why was that?

01-00:27:53

Marshall: I just was never interested in doing anything wrong anyway. For money, for anything. I just didn't want to do anything wrong. What am I going to do? I'm going to disappoint my parents, my dad will kill me. I just never got into that and I was lucky that I had parents—and beyond that, I had a community that was more positive than negative. There wasn't a lot of drug sales that I remember. But there were people who were robbing and stealing and committing crimes. I just never thought to do anything wrong. I just thought it was wrong, number one, and I didn't want my parents to kill me or disappoint one or the other. It was a nice sort of balance. And then the larger community sort of—again, you're familiar with this. They sort of looked out. Even in South Central, we sort of looked out for each other and the adults looked out for the kids. So I got disciplined by all the other adults just like I did my parents. And so I was sort of surrounded by people who wanted me to do well and they just wouldn't let me not do well.

01-00:29:10

Henry:

Yeah, yeah. You played little league and sandlot baseball and one game in particular reverberates in your memory that involved a fight with another team called the Baby Businessmen. What do you recall about that incidence and what did you learn from it?

01-00:29:23

Marshall:

I recall getting the hit, stretching it into a double, sliding into second, being safe. They called me out. Kid's going, "Oh, you think you're getting smart, huh?" I said, "No, I'm safe." And then four gang members jumped me. Not one gang member, four gang members jumped me. This happened to a lot of black boys. When you get jumped it's devastating. Where you're from is one thing. That's not touching you. But when they just jump you for nothing. And I was right. I was safe. But I guess they felt it was an exercise of power for them. And it didn't make any sense to me because we were always sort of poor nappy headed black kids so why would we treat each other that way? It didn't make sense to me then. It was pretty ugly. And I remember during the fight, they're jumping me, they sort of separated and let one go at me. As I got the best of him, they jumped on me again. That incident probably, as much as any other, but there were others, too, because young people are just sort of cruel to each other anyway, and this is a good word to use, colored my view of black boys. For me, my view of black boys is that they weren't interested in being serious students and they were a threat, period.

01-00:31:19

Henry:

To you?

01-00:31:20

Marshall:

To just each other.

01-00:31:20

Henry:

To each other.

01-00:31:22

Marshall:

To me, but to each other. I had the lowest opinion. I despised them, which means, of course, you despise yourself.

01-00:31:32

Henry:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

01-00:31:34

Marshall:

And I think the good thing for me is, probably because of my family, but I also realized—because what happens, usually when that happens, something like that happens, is you want to go get your boys and you start. Because that's how gangs start. That's how turf starts. You get jumped. You fear. You're going to get them, so you posse up and go get them. I just said, "This is crazy." I mean, I don't know, maybe my grandmother's in my head. And that never really entered my mind except to avoid it as best I could. But I just lived in dread of anybody that I didn't know that was a black male. I used to make friends with people strategically just so that they could give me a pass

when something—I could remember walking through the playground and here comes four or five guys and I’m like, “Oh, man.” And I got my Catholic school uniform on and I’m a mark. They’re going to get me. This is a real incidence. I walk up and I look at a guy sympathetically and I knew the guy. One of the guys I knew, Reggie. I must have looked pitiful. He said, I remember, “Leave him alone. Give him a pass.” And you would make friends just for that reason. Not because you liked them or they liked you. Because when those moments came you wanted to be able to say, “Not this time.” Because it, oh, man, it was a threat every time you left the house. It was like running the gauntlet. Just getting to school, getting home from school. So yeah.

Now, the difference between then and today, and this is a significant difference, is that we have a lot of the risk factors. Now, I don’t remember a lot of drugs. Marijuana but I don’t remember any serious drugs going through the neighborhood. But we didn’t have any guns. If we had guns we’d all have been dead. So that’s the only reason I didn’t go to a lot of funerals of my peers. And not because we weren’t trying to arm each other but we didn’t have any guns. And in many ways we considered it unmanly. Knuckle up. But if we had guns like the kids have today, I’m sure I’d have been dead because they’d have shot me.

01-00:34:14

Henry:

The sandlot incident, the baseball incident. The thing that was most devastating, or the thing that was most moving in your book, was that your teammates didn’t come to your assistance.

01-00:34:23

Marshall:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So I quickly learned every friend isn’t a friend. And when I look back on that one, the other guy, he was probably scared, too. This is a gang. This is a gang. They had everybody. So like yeah. Yeah. So I ran home crying, told my father. We had a conversation about it but I learned just keep your head on the swivel. Watch who you’re with. That’s just growing up in the neighborhood. I can’t underscore the fact that the best thing—that’s why with kids today I know what they experience and you magnify that when everybody’s got a gun. Can you imagine the gauntlet they’re running? With me it was whether or not you won the fight. With them it was whether or not they live or die. So it’s rough.

01-00:35:19

Henry:

Which is rougher do you think? Try to put yourself back in your shoes as a kid. The feeling of anger and the despise you felt for black boys or the self loathing you dealt with as a result because of the color of your skin and you were a black boy.

01-00:35:36

Marshall:

The fear was probably bigger. You don’t know how that’s working on your psyche. You really don’t. That’s an intellectual thing. Later you realize and

see how much of an effect that has on you. The use of the N word, the way you talk about black people, the whole denigration. The worst thing you can say is somebody's black. Tar baby and all of these things we're calling each other. You do that as a psychic defense. But the greater thing is the fear. Literally. And so you're fearful of the guys that you see. Then you got to deal with the police. You're scared all the time. You are scared all the time. But, no, the fear was worse. Yeah.

01-00:36:28

Henry:

You first came to grips with what it means to be black in a white world in high school, at Loyola High School in LA. Do you remember an incident during a basketball game when your opponents tried to get under your skin by calling you a nigger?

01-00:36:40

Marshall:

Yeah, yeah. The stars of the football team, one of the big stars of the football team at intramural basketball game. I'm a nobody and I got three nobodies and we're winning. And they're being embarrassed in front of the rest of the school by losing to these non-jocks and we're winning the game. So he blurts out, "Don't let that N beat you," right. "Don't let that N something." And I don't know how I kept playing. I don't even know if I kept playing. It was visibly, visibly—I was upset. And not only was I upset about that—

01-00:37:17

Henry:

And you were the only black guy on the court?

01-00:37:19

Marshall:

Oh, yeah. There was like eight of us in the school. So I was definitely the only black guy on the court. And I think what hurt me more was that the priests who were watching didn't say anything. I said, "I knew they were going to say something to this kid." And we ended up losing the game, I think. I don't remember. Well, it didn't matter at that point. And I went to tell the vice principal and he didn't care.

01-00:37:50

Henry:

He didn't care?

01-00:37:52

Marshall:

Well, to me he didn't care. But I don't remember what he said. But now I'm like, "You got to do something to him." And he was like, "Ah." I said, "Well, I'm going to get my boys from the ghetto and we coming up here to this school," right. Then he tells me, "If you do that you're not graduating." So I'm not graduating then! [laughter] It was a total lack of regard in that sense. I don't know if he ever said anything to the athlete. It was terrible. It was really bad. It was really, really bad. And then little things would happen. And, see, these things, it was different. That's why being black, a black male in this society is so tough because you deal with one set of issues in your own neighborhood and then you deal with another set of issues in a different neighborhood and none of them are affirming. [laughter] None of them are

affirming. So they would mimic my speech. It is horrible little racist stuff. And it was bad. It was bad, man.

01-00:39:14

Henry: And the nuns and the priests didn't stand up for you or protect you at all?

01-00:39:16

Marshall: No. No, no. No. No, not really. A lot didn't happen. Now, in my elementary school, for one thing, it was more racially and ethnically diverse. There were a lot of black kids there at the school. And it was smaller.

01-00:39:37

Henry: You mean at elementary school?

01-00:39:38

Marshall: Elementary school at St. Brigid before I went to high school. The real slights came in my high school experience, the real racial slights when we were in the minority. I'm not sure if they really wanted us at the school anyway. And black males have a value to this society, that if you're in a certain category, if you're an athlete or an entertainer, you have a value. It's not that they won't say those things to you but they need you. [laughter] And I wasn't either one. So I wasn't worth anything to them. Yeah. And the only way you can sort of beat that, for me, was to just be smarter than they were or as smart. Prove yourself in the classroom and not let it—so that's where I made my statement, my answer. In many ways Obama's done the same thing, right? That's the arena you beat them in. So I just kept moving. My high school was tough. I remember a couple of teachers that I liked and affirmed me, and particularly I had an English teacher. And I don't think he was doing it for me but I remember I wrote a paper in my junior year in high school, in his English class, and he singled it out as one of the best papers that was written. And that was the first sort of confidence booster I got from my experience. My high school experience, when I look back on it, it was educationally sound and socially bereft. Especially culturally bereft. So I was pretty ripe for what happened after that.

01-00:41:43

Henry: Why was the high school not as diverse as the elementary school?

01-00:41:47

Marshall: Well, Loyola's a pretty exclusive school and you had to test to get in there.

01-00:41:50

Henry: Oh, you had to test to get into. Oh, I didn't know that.

01-00:41:52

Marshall: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. You had to test.

01-00:41:53

Henry: Oh, okay.

- 01-00:41:54
Marshall: They only took the top whatever percent. And yeah. I tested in. And it was one of those schools that—it was a white school and there were a few blacks there. Yeah. So yeah. And I was one of the few that got in and we sort of—and I think in my class, up to that point, if I’m looking back on it, when I was a senior that was the smallest group, and that group was the smallest group of black students. And so you had a few more the junior class and the sophomore class had more. So when I first got there it was like—
- 01-00:42:40
Henry: You.
- 01-00:42:41
Marshall: I looked around and it was me and like five people. Yeah. Yeah.
- 01-00:42:47
Henry: Did you ever discuss your racial issues with your parents and what advice did they have?
- 01-00:42:53
Marshall: No, no. No. They were like, “Just keep going to school, Junior. You’re doing well. Get good grades.” And the racial issues were probably second place to the neighborhood issues. While I experienced racial indignities and slights at school, nobody was jumping me and beating me up. [laughter] They just like mimicking and mocking you and talking—making black people like you are nothing. But they didn’t physically do anything to you.
- 01-00:43:36
Henry: Threaten you.
- 01-00:43:37
Marshall: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Like I said, the gauntlet was—soon as I left school, that was behind. Getting home and getting through the gang territory and watching out for this brother and—
- 01-00:43:48
Henry: At that young age did you try to piece together in your mind why black boys behaved that way?
- 01-00:43:55
Marshall: No. I just knew that it was all bad. I didn’t know why.
- 01-00:44:03
Henry: Did you realize your household was different in that sense? You had people who were role models, you had a father in the house. Your mother was hard working.
- 01-00:44:11
Marshall: No, no, you don’t think about things like that. Again, that’s intellectual things. So you don’t think about that. You’re just glad you’re in a safe place. You can get home, everything’s going to be okay, right, and you have brothers and

sisters. You don't think how valuable they are. I'm going to tell you how simple it is. At that age, your biggest thing is being able to go to the park and play basketball or go to the park and play football and somebody not coming and taking your ball and messing up your game and jumping you. You just want to go. You just want to be safe and just do your thing and then leave without any kind of incident. And I used to say that what black kids did to other black kids was like just because you were, you existed. There was no reason. I couldn't see any reason. I didn't do anything. Why you want to come bust up my game and take my ball?

There's a scene in *Boyz n the hood*, I don't know if that's repeated later, where the little kids, Ricky and Doughboy, when they're little, they're on the way to playing, just playing football with each other. They pass a dead body. They pass all this stuff. One boy says, "Trey's father blasted at somebody last night." Other boy talks about how his brother went to jail and for his birthday he gave him a gun. [laughter] So they get out there and they're just waiting to play football and then the boys come take their ball. That's Los Angeles. Why? Just because they can. Now, I'm assuming they did that because when they were little somebody did it to them. So you do what's been done to you. But no, I couldn't rationalize it. I didn't know why. I just knew it wasn't right.

01-00:46:14

Henry: It's a learned pathology.

01-00:46:14

Marshall: I knew it wasn't right.

01-00:46:15

Henry: Yeah.

01-00:46:16

Marshall: Yeah.

01-00:46:17

Henry: What was it like to be the oldest of nine kids? Did they look up to you? Were you a role model? Did you have to discipline them?

01-00:46:24

Marshall: I don't remember disciplining them. My parents tell me that I set the standard for everybody else. They'd tell you that right now. Like I never missed a day of school. The only time I missed school was when I had the measles or something like that. I was always in school. I was going to be in school every day. My grades were high. So they will tell you that this family of educators that we had, high achievers, started with your big brother. Everybody says. My parents have always said that.

I just know there was a lot of us. So if you had something, you couldn't really keep it for yourself. I remember going to the store to get a candy bar. Well, you can't come home with a candy bar with eight brothers and sisters.

[laughter] Because by the time they want some, you don't have anything. So I remember I'm eating this before I get home. [laughter]

We all pitched in. We didn't have a washing machine so we had to go to the laundromat and literally there was this red wagon and there are pictures of us—

01-00:47:46

Henry: Pulling the red wagon down the sidewalk.

01-00:47:47

Marshall: —pulling a red wagon down the street, going with our mother to the laundromat. And there are great memories of us piling in the car. The best day was Saturday because my father would go pick my mother up. But he'd take us to pick her up. So we had a station wagon with one of those panels. I guess they would call them woodies back—it was a panel station wagon and we'd all pile in. We'd go pick up my mom. And my father would then take us to get either donuts or chili cheese burgers. I'm going to tell you, it was great.

01-00:48:22

Henry: Like Christmas day.

01-00:48:22

Marshall: Oh, man. All I knew was that there was a lot of us and we had a lot of chores. And probably the worst time was when—my mother, it seemed like she was pregnant all—she was pregnant all the time. So whenever she left to go to the hospital my father would take over the house and then it was like, “Oh, my God.” Then it was like military. My father had this thing. And one time my mother left for two weeks to go—she said, “I'm out of here.” So she went to Paris on her own, just got on a plane. Oh, yeah, my mother was undaunted. She was like, “I'm out of here. You take care of them.”

01-00:49:02

Henry: [laughter] She went to Paris?

01-00:49:03

Marshall: She just went to Paris by herself! Yeah. You meet my mother, you'd get it. She's like, “I'm tired, I'm going, I'll be back.” So my father ran the house. Oh, my God. I'm asleep, 5:30 in the morning, my father opens all the windows and all the doors in the house. Fresh air. “Everybody up, everybody up, everybody up, everybody up!” Look, look. We lived across the street from the playground. He took us across the street, he had us doing calisthenics at 5:30 in the morning. Get the blood circulating! Oh. And he cooked differently, right. So my father sliced everything up and then he'd have us—it was just like the Army. We ran everything. We'd all have to pitch in. Because my mom was there, she did the cooking. My father was like, “We all doing this.” We couldn't wait till my mother got home. “Oh, my God—

01-00:49:56

Henry: How long was—

01-00:49:57

Marshall: —“Mama, hurry up and have the baby.” Well, it was two weeks when she went away.

01-00:50:02

Henry: Oh, yes.

01-00:50:02

Marshall: But when it was the babies, she'd come home with a new baby and things would get back to normal. We sit around, tell these stories of dad and my dad is like, “Yeah, that's what I did. That's right.” But when you're sleeping, he'd open the windows. Cold air would blow in. [laughter] Oh, man. We have more stories. We get together and we tell all these stories of my father and my mother.

01-00:50:27

Henry: Was he a military background?

01-00:50:29

Marshall: Yeah, they were both in the war. They were both in World War II. In fact, my mother is one of the original WACs.

01-00:50:35

Henry: Is that right?

01-00:50:36

Marshall: Oh, my mother, it's a big thing with her. It's a big thing. Somebody wrote a book and my mother's name is in a book. It was one of the—

01-00:50:43

Henry: I didn't know they had black WACs.

01-00:50:44

Marshall: Yeah, yeah. My mother is one of the originals. So they have these WAC conventions and my mother like can't even walk but she's going to the conventions, right, and a lot of them, most of them are dead, but the few that are still alive, they get together and they celebrate each other. My mother wears her uniform all the time. She's really proud of that uniform. Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, she got her uniform on. She marches in parades.

01-00:51:14

Henry: She serve stateside or overseas?

01-00:51:16

Marshall: They were both in Europe. I'm pretty sure they were both in Europe. I know my dad was in Japan. It's a big joke because he almost married a Japanese girl. So he'd tell us, “You would look a lot different if we had married her.” [laughter] And he actually has a picture of her. So my mother says, “I don't

want to see a picture.” But I think my dad was in Europe also and I know my mother was in Europe. Yeah. I don’t know if she was in Italy—I think it was in France because that’s one reason she went back to France. Yeah, yeah.

01-00:51:57

Henry: And your dad was a ground troop or was he support services?

01-00:51:59

Marshall: Ground troop. No, he was in the Army. I think he was in the cavalry. So, yeah, he was ground. He didn’t see any action. Didn’t see any action. But, no, they were both in.

01-00:52:11

Henry: But he went to Japan at the end of the war?

01-00:52:13

Marshall: I know he was in Japan and he was in Europe. He was in both.

01-00:52:17

Henry: Oh, okay. That’s why you were up at 5:30 doing calisthenics in the playground across the street.

01-00:52:20

Marshall: Oh, man, I’m telling you. “Mama, come home, please. This man driving us crazy.” My father taught us, Saturday night, and I told you these are great memories, right? We had poker games and my father would sit us around the table and we’d start playing poker, right. And the money for the poker—they used to have these candies called Good ‘N Plenty. I remember Good ‘N Plenty, right. And that were our chips, right. [laughter] I would always lose. My father would just rake in the chips, right, he’d have all this candy. I said, “Daddy, can I have some candy?” He goes, “No.” Organized poker games. And then my father, because he’s a welder, so he would put together barbeque pits. It was great.

01-00:53:16

Henry: So your parents enjoyed having a big family it sounds like.

01-00:53:17

Marshall: Oh, yeah. And my father, if you talk to him, he’ll say, “Oh, it was great, we had fun, we had this. There was never any problems.”

01-00:53:26

Henry: [laughter] So you see it from my eyes!

01-00:53:27

Marshall: You didn’t, yeah, that’s right. And we always tell him that. Oh, my father loved it, man. My father loved it. And my mom, yeah. Yeah. In many ways, the way I run this organization is the way they did because when there was a problem they would always go behind closed doors and discuss it. My father had a lock on his door, probably so we wouldn’t bust in in the middle of them

doing something. But they had a lock. And they would discuss stuff behind closed doors. And so they would out as a united front. So if we were broke, we never knew it, and we were probably broke all the time. We were probably a paycheck away from having the lights turned out. We knew we weren't rich but we never knew the state of things because that's adult work and they let us be kids and that's the way I've always done the club. You guys are the kids, I'm going to take care of this, the adults here. And so that was a lesson I learned from them about how to run this organization.

01-00:54:29

Henry:

Right. In '64 you enrolled at the University of San Francisco. Why did you come up here?

01-00:54:36

Marshall:

Okay. He's going to laugh at this story. So after four years of being in a white environment I'm like, "Okay, enough of that." And after seventeen years of being in a house with nine kids it's time for me to go. And I think I started washing dishes at ten, which is really kitchen detail. When you wash dishes for eleven people and clean countertops and do this and all that stuff, I'm like—and I got a chance to get out of here. So I say, "Where am I going to go?" I knew nothing about black colleges back east and down south. If I had, I probably would have given them a look. But I didn't want to go too far away. I did like the Jesuit education. So I thought about Loyola University in Los Angeles but I'm still at home. So I said, "What's this USF?" San Francisco. It's 500 miles away not too far away. But what got me was USF had a great basketball team in those days. Very, very good team. The problem is UCLA had the best team in the country for like fifteen years in a row, right. They won ten out of the twelve championships, something like that. And USF always played UCLA in the regional finals. So this was after Bill Russell and Casey Jones and that group. So they always lose. But when I looked on TV, USF's whole team was black. I said, "Oh, man, I'm going to that school. I can be around some black kids, I can get the Jesuit thing, too. That's where I'm going." So I got in. My father and my sister and my mom, we drove up here, up highway one. That was a great ride, real fun. I get to—

01-00:56:30

Henry:

In the wood paneled station wagon?

01-00:56:31

Marshall:

Well, this was a different car. This was a Ford Falcon. Yeah.

01-00:56:34

Henry:

But they drove you up.

01-00:56:36

Marshall:

I think they had a couple cars. But we came up. I remember we drove through the fog. I had never seen fog on the highway. And we got here and on our first trip to Lombard Street, went over there. And then I finally get to school and then I'm looking and then school starts. They leave and school starts. I'm

saying, “Where’s all the black kids?” The only black kids were the basketball team.

01-00:56:59

Henry: So the basketball team you saw on TV was the entire student body?

01-00:57:03

Marshall: That was the entire student body. I’m like, “Oh, Lord, here we go again.” I’m like, “God.” I never thought to look at the school population. I just thought the school population was represented by the basketball team. So here I’m back again at a Jesuit—the only good thing about it was that I was on my own in San Francisco, away from home. So I escaped one thing but I was back in the same educational environment.

01-00:57:33

Henry: Where else did you apply to college? Or it was just USF?

01-00:57:35

Marshall: Loyola. I think those were the only two I was going. I was either going to Loyola University in Los Angeles or USF. I didn’t apply to Santa Clara. But I really loved the education. I did. When you take Latin and Greek in high school, real Latin—I took four years of Latin, which makes no sense to anybody. I would have taken Spanish or something other than that. But the grounding in those languages just is unbelievable.

01-00:58:03

Henry: Phenomenal.

01-00:58:03

Marshall: Phenomenal. You can’t explain it to somebody unless you’ve done it and you read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Greek. I wouldn’t trade that for anything. I loved the education. So yeah, that’s why I was going to go to a Jesuit school.

01-00:58:20

Henry: Yeah. And did you get scholarship or were your parents supporting you? How were you putting yourself through?

01-00:58:25

Marshall: That’s a good question. It wasn’t a lot then. You’re talking about 1960. I don’t know if I got scholarships. I probably got some financial aid. I’m pretty sure I got aid. I don’t remember them. I don’t know how it happened. I really don’t. I never discussed finances with them. They’d fill out the forms and we went in and I don’t know how much they were putting in or wasn’t putting in. But, yeah, we made it work. We made it work. I would get part-time jobs and I’m sure some of that money went toward the education but also just expenses for me to live on myself. I didn’t get a lot of money from home. Remember, there’s eight of them behind me.

01-00:59:05

Henry: Were you working while you were in college?

- 01-00:59:08
Marshall: Yeah. I don't remember working my freshman year but there were odd jobs. Working in stores, department stores, in drug stores. Yeah. I always had something I could find, just to get me some money in my pocket.
- 01-00:59:27
Henry: You joined a black fraternity called Omega Psi Phi. What do you recall about your indoctrination in the fraternity and what role did the fraternity play in your coming of age?
- 01-00:59:36
Marshall: Well, the fraternity was great because—I tell everybody all the time. Well, to come was a lot of criticism of black Greek organizations because they felt they weren't part of the revolution, right. But for me I remember being exposed to black fraternities and Alpha Phi was the first one I was exposed to. And the one for me was Omega Psi Phi. And I remember the first time I went to a meeting, an informational meeting about them and seeing all of them. And I didn't believe they were black. They were learned and erudite and collegiate and had aspirations and goals. They weren't threatening. [laughter] Because I'm going to say, "I'm going to hang with all these brothers, right, that I don't know." Just blew my mind. It really blew my mind. I had never seen guys like that.
- 01-01:00:53
Henry: And where was this that you first encountered it?
- 01-01:00:55
Marshall: We did not have a fraternity chapter at USF.
- 01-01:00:58
Henry: USF—
- 01-01:00:59
Marshall: It was at San Jose State.
- 01-01:00:59
Henry: San Jose State.
- 01-01:01:02
Marshall: If you wanted to become an Omega, Santa Clara, whatever school you're at, you had to pledge at San Jose State. So in that room there were literally guys from all over the Bay Area, UC Berkeley, at the fraternity house in San Jose.
- 01-01:01:21
Henry: I'm sorry. We're just about out of time on this tape.
- 01-01:01:22
Marshall: Oh, okay.
- 01-01:01:22
Henry: Sorry, let me change tape. Hold the thought. Hold the thought.

01-01:01:26
Marshall:

Oh, okay.

01-01:01:27
Henry:

Sorry about that.

Audio File 2

02-00:00:02
Marshall:

—my God, that man takes more garbage. Okay, let me get back to me. I forget what I was saying. I really did. I couldn't hold a thought.

02-00:00:10
Henry:

We were talking about the Omegas. And I wanted to ask you about your indoctrination in the Omegas and how difficult that was and what it meant in your coming of age.

02-00:00:21
Marshall:

Well, I was very impressed by these men. These men. I'm nineteen, they're twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. Just serious students. They're on their way to being doctors and lawyers. They just blew me away. The way they carry themselves. And all the women loved them. I'm like, "Let me in, let me in. How do I get in here? Sign me up." Little did I know what I was signing up for. [laughter] Pledging was a—wow. Sometimes it bordered on brutal. The hazing that we went through was—

02-00:01:03
Henry:

It sounded sadistic in your book.

02-00:01:04
Marshall:

It was bad. It was bad. The way I explained it is there's an African element and an American element in pledging. So the African element is sort of you got these big brothers in a rites of passage sort of mode teaching you the morays and the cultures and the customs of the fraternity. It's very, very African. And then you're working together as a team to try to—it's wonderful. And that's the first time I'd ever worked with brothers on something positive. We ain't planning to jump somebody, right? Get somebody or steal something. I get in conversation with them, they talk about pulling a lick, right. So here we are trying to do something good. And the way I explained it, we're also a product of our experience in America. We only know that brutality experience. So we're half here and half there and we try to fuse the two in this process. So this whole thing of it's got to be hard, you got to prove it, I can't tell you, it's like you got to show blood, you got to show that you really want it. It's brutal, man. It was brutal. It was brutal. But the African side is so—I don't want to say seductive in a bad way. It's good that we're all working together to get into this group that we think is great and we got these men teaching us. They challenge you. In fact, I always say, and I said this before, we have four cardinal principles: manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift. In many ways they use manhood and perseverance against you

because they challenge you to be a man. Right? If you're going to be a man you can take it and if you really want it you're going to persevere. And I'm saying this, in all honesty, because it's a huge problem. And also when you get hazed like that, you think it's the right—so I became more sadistic. You don't realize it's wrong. You're going to do it to somebody. I got affected. That's the way I put it. That's the way I'm going to put it. So now I'm worse than anybody ever did it to me.

02-00:03:43

Henry: You were beaten, you were whipped, you were—

02-00:03:46

Marshall: Paddled.

02-00:03:47

Henry: Paddled.

02-00:03:47

Marshall: Paddled, yeah. Mostly paddled. But there were some other things. There were some other things. One time this big brother got me and took out a coat hanger called Silent Sam. And man got me in a room and tore my ass up. But he's thinking in his mind, the way he thinks, it shows you really want it. Show you really want it. We're going to make it hard for you. You can't just walk in. I know all of it. We sang songs about, "So hard, so hard to make Omega." It's all psychological, right? You got to run the gauntlet. Let me tell you, it's really no different when you look at it from being jumped into a gang. You got to prove yourself, how much you can take. And it has very little to do, if anything to do, with the rituals, the principles and all of that. You don't even think about it. You just want to be in. And we have this song, "Ain't going to let nobody turn you around," which becomes an anthem for a whole bunch of things. But then the fraternity says, "Don't quit." And then you got this seductive thing. We're all in this together. And that's the good part. "Don't quit everybody. We're going to make it together. We started together." Woo!

02-00:05:05

Henry: So if you were at USF on your own, if you were probably the only pledge at USF—

02-00:05:10

Marshall: There were two of us. Me and my roommate. Me and my roommate.

02-00:05:11

Henry: So who was hazing you at USF or would they haze when you got together with the larger group?

02-00:05:20

Marshall: The worst night of the week was Sunday. Sunday when we had to go down to the frat house. Oh, man.

02-00:05:26

Henry: In San Jose?

02-00:05:27

Marshall: Oh. Oh.

02-00:05:30

Henry: That's when the punishment happened.

02-00:05:31

Marshall: Oh, they call them sessions. Sessions. They'd give you assignments during the week. And when you're a pledge, when you're right, you're wrong. When you're wrong, you're wrong, and when you're right, you're wrong. You're never right. There is no right answer. And when they say you're wrong—you could say two plus two is four. You have to learn the Greek alphabet, right. They have all these things. And they said, "Say the Greek alphabet backwards," right. So I'm thinking, let's see, omega, alpha, beta, gamma, delta, zeta. How's that? So I'm trying to do it backwards. I said, "Okay." So I turned around backwards, I started saying the Greek alphabet. [laughter] "Oh, you're a smart little brother, right." You can't be right, no matter if I had actually said it. But you can't. And then you have to do everything as a unit, right. Okay. And they were just cruel. It was always testing you. But one of the things is they make fraternity paraphernalia. So you make these paddles. Big brother wants this paddle. And half these paddles they're going to use on you, right, but some of them are just these beautiful symbols. You're making me spend all this time, and you walk in and you show them your handiwork and they look at it, "I don't like this," and they break it in front of you. But, again, it's for them. They're testing you to see how much you want it. My way of looking at it is that's just that American experience of us being beaten and brutalized and so on that we carry into the way we do stuff. That's just my thing on it. I've been told later on that hazing really started during World War II, a lot of practices happen in World War II, and people came home and they started doing that. They started doing freshmen hazing when they came into schools. And it's not just black fraternities that do it. White fraternities do it all the time. So it's something that crept in fraternity life as early as probably late 1800s when they started fraternities.

02-00:08:02

Henry: But the beatings and whippings, that harkens back to slavery time.

02-00:08:05

Marshall: Well, to me. That's me saying that. I don't know if they did a lot of that in white fraternities. But me, yeah, I think—and I can't prove it but that's our experience.

02-00:08:17

Henry: But there were certainly good things that attracted you about the fraternity. You write in our autobiography, "Until I saw the fraternity in action, I really

didn't believe that young black men had the means or the wherewithal to come together for positive purposes."

02-00:08:28

Marshall:

That was it. That's the rites of passage. We're working together. The big brothers are with the little brothers. It was black man at his best to me. And if we could have eliminated the other stuff, it truly would have been a black man at his best. There's almost no relationship, and I will say this for having been a member now for, what—I got in in '67. So, what, almost fifty years. There's no relationship between being a good fraternity member and the hazing that you endure. None.

02-00:09:00

Henry:

There's no tie.

02-00:09:01

Marshall:

No.

02-00:09:01

Henry:

No tie at all?

02-00:09:02

Marshall:

No, no, no. No, no. And it has nothing to do with the ideals that the fraternity was founded upon. Nothing. Nothing at all. You look at Alpha Kappa Sigma, Omega, AKA, Delta, I know them all, right, none of them—they were all aspiring for high ideals for black men and women. And they didn't haze anybody. They selected people. So it had nothing to do with that. It's just something that grew up. And it's gotten worse. You wouldn't even believe some of the things they do. They have like fight clubs in the fraternity. Yeah, literally. You can go from one place to another. See, they tried to stop it, and cut down on it, so now the thing is if you don't get pledged the old way you're not real. You're paper. They just let you walk in. So they challenge you and if you're not real they'll just beat you up. You'd be surprised how many gang members have told me, "You're all just like a gang." They said, "You jump people in. You're always beating up people. You got colors just like we do." And I have to answer those questions and say, "I could see how you would say that." I get it. It's funny because I have now—it's like anything else. Once you become enlightened then they're like, "Oh." You look at all the people that you brought in and you did it too. I am now the Stop the Violence co-chair in the fraternity. I'm national. That's my job now is to stop this stuff. But all of our Greek organizations. Lawsuits. You wouldn't believe this stuff. We're one lawsuit away from—

02-00:10:54

Henry:

From disbanding.

02-00:10:56

Marshall:

Yeah, all of us are. Even though it's in the best interests of the fraternity and it's against all Greek law, black and white fraternities, that shows you how

much they care about the organization when they say, “I don’t care. I’m going to do it anyway,” which they don’t care. Yeah.

02-00:11:16

Henry: What’s the significance of the nickname Bloody Joe Marshall?

02-00:11:18

Marshall: Because I wanted to see some blood.

02-00:11:22

Henry: When it was your turn to do the hazing?

02-00:11:23

Marshall: Look, when I was paddling people I wanted to draw blood. I could have killed somebody. Literally. I could have killed them. And I’m a little guy, it’s a good thing I’m not a big guy. I was little. It’s like being jumped in. You get jumped in, you want them to be jumped in like you because that’s part of being an Omega. That’s terrible, man. I’ll tell anybody in a minute. I needed enlightenment. But we all thought the same way, so who can enlighten you?

02-00:12:00

Henry: Yeah. You went to school during the turbulent sixties, a time of growing political and racial consciousness. What was the significance of the 1966 NCAA championship game between Kentucky and Texas Western?

02-00:12:13

Marshall: I’ll get to that in a minute but let me just go back to the fraternity thing. That positive experience of working together helped me a lot, because I will talk about it in a minute. That was half of it, being able to work together. Forget the hazing part. That’s all in there. But that, fused with my growing consciousness allowed me to create the things that have happened because of an incident like this. So this was my high school incident now coming to college.

02-00:12:45

Henry: To college.

02-00:12:47

Marshall: So the big game was a huge game at that time. Texas El Paso it was called at that time, Don Haskins was the coach, against the University of Kentucky. All black team, all white team, NCAA championship, never happened before. And I’m sitting in the dormitory in I guess the rec room. One television. And this is before we had a million TVs and flat screens and all that. Everybody’s in there watching the game. I’m pulling for Texas El Paso. I said, “I have heard this before. Don’t let them Ns beat. Don’t let them Ns beat you.” This is my classmates, right, saying stuff. You don’t know how people really think about you until you hear this stuff. And I’m like, “Aw, hell, no.” And then I didn’t have any Jesuits around, anybody I could turn to. That was hard. That was rough. Even I think about both those experiences, that Loyola experience,

the high school experience, and that USF experience, I just didn't believe those things would happen in a Catholic Jesuit institution.

02-00:14:07

Henry: Yeah. And these were your classmates, your dorm mates.

02-00:14:10

Marshall: Yeah, yeah.

02-00:14:10

Henry: Yeah.

02-00:14:11

Marshall: But that's how they viewed black people.

02-00:14:15

Henry: You were invisible man there, huh?

02-00:14:17

Marshall: Absolutely. They never even thought about me. That's good. Where I felt I was the invisible man.

02-00:14:28

Henry: You were also in college during the Watts riots in 1965. What do you recall about that time and what effect did it have on your political and racial consciousness?

02-00:14:38

Marshall: Summer after I started, went back home. I was between freshmen and sophomore year. Didn't know how it started but later on learned that there was a police encounter with a gentleman named Reginald Denny which sparked that first riot. I was actually working at a gas station on Manchester and Central when all this started to happen. We had gas, right, so we were a place with Molotov cocktails and stuff like that. [laughter] I remember these guys shutting down their gas station. In those days it was full service. You may not remember but you go over and clean the windshields and do all that. There's no self service. You do the service. Nobody pumped their gas in those days. Yeah. And I would do things like change fan belts, do oil changes, that kind of—I wasn't really good at doing a whole lot of stuff but basic stuff. But, man, it was scary. It was scary. And I remember being back home when they closed the gas station and then the National Guard coming right in front of my house, rolling tanks right down the street. Camouflage, tanks, the whole bit right in front of your house.

02-00:16:19

Henry: It was real.

02-00:16:18

Marshall: It was crazy. It was really, really crazy. Was there a Rams game? I think there was a football game and I went to the football game, me and my boy. I

remember Henry Harris, my best friend from high school. And we were leaving and somehow we had an encounter with the cops. I played baseball so I had bats in the back of the car, right. And I remember them pulling us over and searching the car and finding these bats and put guns to our head and I'm praying they don't kill us. Look, it was crazy. It was crazy because anybody black was suspect because you didn't know if you were one of them. I'm just like, "I'm a college student. I'm not with this." Oh, man, it was something. The unrest was bad and I stayed away from it, I stayed away from the house. They had blockades. So I'm trying to go around the blockades. Because most of it was localized to the Vermont area, that side of town, so I'm trying to stay on the other side of town, even going out of places I usually go. You drove around all the barricades. But I just never forget those tanks. I'll never forget. Literally it was Vietnam in my yard! [laughter]

02-00:17:56

Henry: Geez.

02-00:17:57

Marshall: In my front yard. I said, "Oh, they brought the war right here." Because the other stuff I saw on the news. But the tanks I saw roll in front of my house. Yeah, man, it was something. Yeah, it was.

02-00:18:09

Henry: And up here in the Bay Area during the sixties you had the Black Panthers in Oakland, you had all the stuff going on at Berkeley. And that was also the time when you discovered Malcolm X. What can you recall about your introduction to Malcolm and the role he has played in your life?

02-00:18:22

Marshall: Yeah. So first it was the fraternity. They sort of were at the same time. But the first book I read, I don't know how I got the book, it was *Malcolm X Speaks*. *Malcolm X Speaks* is a small book and it's speeches of Malcolm X. It's a small book. And I read that. Because Malcolm died in '65 but you would see these news clips of this, supposedly, guy hated white people, right. So my image of him was like, "These white people are devils." He just went around saying all this stuff. So I read the book, read a little more. Then I got my hands on *Malcolm X on Afro-American History*, which is eighty-eight pages, small black book. And between those two books, I was like—I can't think. Let's put it like this. I knew no African American history at all. None. Zero. I can't think at that time if I even—I may have known who Booker T. Washington was. George Washington Carver, right. We all knew George Washington Carver.

02-00:19:41

Henry: Because he was the peanuts.

02-00:19:42

Marshall: But I knew nothing. And that's when I realized how much my high school education, as educationally sound as it was, culturally, for me, it was totally

bereft of any of that. And then I read the autobiography and then it was like, “Oh, man.” There’s a door over there. So just looking. We open that door, you open the door to a whole new world and that man, man, he was like—he opened the door to me to a past I knew nothing about. And it was glorious. It was just glorious. The word we use is conscious, becoming conscious. I just can’t say enough about that. I always say Malcolm, read Malcolm. I’m just a carefree college kid probably trying to figure out—go to as many parties, have a good time. I’m not obsessed with money or anything like that. But honing my life’s mission, that came from Malcolm, yeah.

02-00:20:50

Henry:

You write, “If you’re a young black person in this country, you know that something’s wrong but you don’t know exactly what. Malcolm showed me what it is.” Can you elaborate?

02-00:21:00

Marshall:

Remember you asked me about explaining why I got jumped by other young men and why we did the things we did to each other and I had no historical context. I had the conditions we lived in in our neighborhoods. They called them ghettos in those days. I had nothing about why I got treated a certain way by the white kids and this way by the black kids. It was just there. But I didn’t know how it was created, why it was created. I knew nothing about slavery, and I certainly knew nothing about African Americans before slavery. No, nothing. I knew nothing about oppression, I knew nothing. Nothing. And it was Malcolm. So this is what created this. Man, I’m telling you, that book, because it was his discovery. So as he’s discovering he’s sharing the discovery with me, right. And I’m going, “Oh, wow!” And I couldn’t get enough. The next book I read was the Bible. To this day I {inaudible} the Bible {inaudible} before the Mayflower, right around then. I read that book and that’s one of the few history books that’s not written like a history book. It’s written like a story, a saga. And so nobody wants to read a history book because it’s boring. This was like here’s where you were born and these are the chapters in your cultural life. I couldn’t put that book down. I could not put that book down. And it took me back to before slavery because for us everything begins at slavery, right. So we think we’re born in sin. You’re like the stock market. You were up here, you came over here, went down, and then you were trying to climb up, climb back up, right. So yeah. Before the Mayflower, I never heard of Samuel B. Russworm and Henry Highland Garnet I mean, who are these people? Henry Garnet and all these names. You kind of heard the name Frederick Douglass. But it’s the background people. Richard Allen. I remember the chapter that got me the most was the chapter on the whole abolitionist movement and all the people that played a part. That was a chapter that blew my mind. All of these names that were in there ending slavery. Maybe I knew about Douglass and Garrison but all these other people. Martin Delany. God. Richard. That chapter blew my mind more than any of the others. Because it gave this whole context to me. It was great.

- 02-00:23:57
Henry: And these weren't books found in any class at USF?
- 02-00:23:58
Marshall: Oh, no.
- 02-00:23:59
Henry: This was your own self learning, your own reaching out.
- 02-00:24:01
Marshall: No, no. No. That was Marcus Bookstore. I was in Marcus Bookstore so much. No, no, I had to search this out myself. Absolutely. None of this was at the school.
- 02-00:24:11
Henry: And you had no black thinkers or thought leaders, black biographies in high school?
- 02-00:24:15
Marshall: No. I did. I think I read in high school *Native Son*. I didn't know a black author existed. Oh, you know what happened? Okay, I'll tell you how it happened. Catholic school is a serious kind of school. They were so serious about education that they assigned you books to read in the summer. It was a summer read. I read two books that summer and they were both very good. One was *Wuthering Heights*, which I thought was the longest book I ever read in my life. Heathcliff. That book was great, right? But it was a great book. It was a classic. And then I read *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas. And I said, "These are the guys in my neighborhood." These angry brothers. But because it was a summer read we didn't discuss it at school.
- 02-00:25:19
Henry: Oh, you didn't?
- 02-00:25:20
Marshall: No.
- 02-00:25:21
Henry: No.
- 02-00:25:21
Marshall: No, no, no. They just had to check off a list.
- 02-00:25:23
Henry: I was wondering what the discussion might have been with your white schoolmates.
- 02-00:25:26
Marshall: It was a summer read. But yeah. So I knew at least black people could write books. But I didn't read another one until—I could have read black more, I could have gone and read. But that just blew my mind. So, yeah, that was probably an early plant. But it wasn't nurtured until I got in an environment, a

cultural environment that nursed it. You remember the sixties brought out—it was okay. Wasn't just a book. There were a lot of books. Yeah, it was great.

02-00:26:00

Henry: And these readings, including *Manchild in the Promised Land*—

02-00:26:04

Marshall: Yeah, Claude Brown, yeah.

02-00:26:04

Henry: —*Invisible Man*, *Native Son*. These were—

02-00:26:07

Marshall: *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon. Oh, now I got really deep.

02-00:26:10

Henry: These were fruit for discussions with your paternity brothers because they were reading the same things, right?

02-00:26:15

Marshall: They were fruit for discussion with my classmates at school and with my fraternity brothers but probably more so with my classmates.

02-00:26:24

Henry: With your white classmates?

02-00:26:25

Marshall: No, with the black kids at school. Not the white.

02-00:26:28

Henry: At USF?

02-00:26:28

Marshall: Yeah, USF.

02-00:26:29

Henry: The few black kids at USF, I see.

02-00:26:30

Marshall: Yeah, yeah. By now the number was starting to grow and now we had girls at the school, too, because at first we had—the year I was there was the first year USF ever had a girl. So yeah. We probably had more discussions at school than we had with the fraternity because the fraternity, that's not their purpose. Although you have social actions, so it becomes a part of it. But the big thing is what the fraternity does, and partying and small part of that. But it's not a social action group by definition. But at school, oh, man, that's all we did, was talk about this stuff. Oh, it was great.

02-00:27:11

Henry: Must have been an exciting time.

02-00:27:13
Marshall:

Oh, I'm telling you, it was great. It was great. And I can't describe the kid—because the kids are telling me, it's funny, because the kids are going, "Dr. Marshall, Dr. Marshall, you're different, you're different, you're different. There's nobody like you." I said, "But in my time everybody was like me. Everybody was like me." And I tell them, "We were so we. It was all about community." We were doing it different ways and some were crazier than others. But I never came out of my mouth. It was about the people, the people, the community. That's all we talked about, man, you know. Especially, you know, you got the Panthers over here, you got Ron Karanga. You got student sit-ins everywhere. And then BSUs. Yeah, it was we everyday. It was great.

02-00:28:05
Henry:

What prompted you to form a BSU at USF and what was that experience like?

02-00:28:10
Marshall:

What prompted me to form the BSU was everybody had the issues and I said, "We need to have one at our school." And by this time, man, my reading is there. It's all kicked in now. I'm in it. I never really had an afro but it's trying to grow. Got a couple of dashikis. [laughter] Got a couple of medallions. Really what I decided after I read this was, in looking back, I said, "We going to make this place home." This place, especially as I was experiencing USF, I want to make this place home. And so everything from food in the cafeteria to history and classes, to black professors—I realize all I was missing now but I was still there. I said, "So, no, we going to make this place home for us, like it's home for everybody else." And one of the ways to do that was we going to have our black student union like everybody's going to have theirs. And it was really hard to do because the school was against it. But we dramatized our plight as black students.

The first time we dramatized it had to be '66, two years after I got there. So we staged this mock homecoming queen contest. Our hope was that we were going to have a black homecoming queen. [laughter] But we staged it out in the forum in front of all the white students because we were going to stir up something. So we had a homecoming ceremony. We crowned a black queen. We just felt like this will never happen at USF. So we came up with these ways to engage people in what we were trying to do. And I remember that was a big, big deal. And, boy, we took a lot of hell from that.

02-00:30:06
Henry:

From the administration or your white classmates?

02-00:30:09
Marshall:

Both. Yeah. Mostly the classmates. They were like, "What are you doing?" Because to them this was an ideal campus, this was a wonderful place, right. It was almost like saying, "If you don't like it, you can leave." But they never said that to us. But that's the feeling you got. They didn't want to hear that any more than these folks wanted to hear what President Obama said about

Trayvon. They don't want to hear it because it's not their experience. "How could you feel this way? We gave you a chance to go to university. Some of you are here are EOP." But no. We knew, we knew. So I remember that. I remember it. We staged that.

Then we decided we were going to have this BSU. And they resisted it so much but we had an English teacher who was an ally. John King, this white English teacher. And he's like, "I'm going to help you. I'm going to help you." And he helped me. We just kept moving forward, moving forward. And he had to be a great guy because we were some angry little—we was just angry. Now, we have read the books, we knew about slavery. We were just angry, right. And I give him a lot of credit for doing what was right with these angry black students. We weren't mad at him because we knew he was a good white boy. But we just had all this anger. And eventually they gave us our BSU and it was great. And I've always been practical. So now we got this thing, what do we want to do? So I put this ambitious agenda together about tutoring kids and doing canned foods drives.

02-00:31:46

Henry: Being active in the community.

02-00:31:47

Marshall: Oh, being active in the community and get some professors, black professors up here, and put in a black studies program together. The whole bit. It was just a wonderful time. And being a good student at the same time. It was never boring.

02-00:32:04

Henry: You were in a hurry. It sounds like you were in a hurry to change things.

02-00:32:09

Marshall: Yeah. And I know we pushed the university faster than it wanted to go, I know it did, because they didn't want to go at all. [laughter]

02-00:32:18

Henry: At one point you invited Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, and Muhammad Ali to speak on campus. What were those experiences like?

02-00:32:25

Marshall: Eldridge was crazy. It was Huey, Bobby, and Eldridge and I didn't know Eldridge was the craziest of the three. But he's Eldridge Cleaver. I didn't know how demagogic Eldridge was. So we get Eldridge Cleaver to come speak at the school. We put him in, I think it was Gill Theater at that time. I think it's Kalmanovitz Hall now but then it was Gill Theater. And all the students came into Gill Theater. And this guy gets up there. And I expected the Black Panther rhetoric. But he starts cussing everybody out. He's saying, "Fuck the Pope, fuck Ronald Reagan." But Eldridge was such a demagogue he's got all the white kids standing up, "Fuck the Pope, fuck Ronald Reagan." I was like this guy, he's going to get us killed!" The president's going to shut

the BSU down tomorrow because now you got the white kids saying this. [laughter] I said, “This guy is crazy. I ain’t saying this stuff,” right.

We instituted black cultural night. The first time I invited Ron Karenga to speak. That was my first event. Ron Karenga. And I knew kind of a little bit then. I knew that in Los Angeles Ron Karenga was at odds with the Black Panthers. {inaudible} organization with the Black Panthers. So I invited Karenga to speak. We had a little budget so we were going to pay him something. And I’m in charge of this whole thing. I’m twenty years old, nineteen, twenty years old. I’m in charge of this whole thing. The university put this trust in me. Meanwhile, David Hilliard and all the Black Panthers from Oakland. And I’m like, “Aw, hell, no. They ain’t tearing up this school. Oh, no.” I’m just a little kid and I’m in charge of all this. I said, “Look, look.” And they come in like they’re going to get Karenga. So I remember some community people came up to me, {Tomatra?} Scott. I remember him. A lot of people in the Bay Area who’ve been around for a while back in the day know Scott. Scotty was a community organizer. And he came up to me and he said, “We ain’t going to let them tear up your thing.” I’m a youngster, I’m nineteen. I guess Scotty’s maybe thirty or something like that. And I felt so good that the community came to me. Well, fortunately Karenga didn’t show up so the Panthers left. You don’t know. You’re trying to do something good and these people got all this other stuff going on.

The night we invited Angela Davis and Muhammad Ali to speak, they were actually on the same dais. It was in the gym. Angela was the first speaker and Ali was the second speaker. Now, before I go into that, what happened, at least—Ali was just unbelievable, man. He’s so personable. He came in and he met us all. He was just supposed to come and speak. We set up a lunch for him. He came in, he sat with all the black student union. We’re sitting with the champ! And this is after he had renounced his title because he wasn’t going to war. So this had to be—

02-00:36:07

Henry:

Sixty-six?

02-00:36:09

Marshall:

No, it was later than that. It was later than that. It was maybe ’69, ’70. But he came in, he sat there. Look, remember those old cell phones, the big prototype cell phones, the huge ones. So he’s on the phone. “Joe Frazier, you’re a gorilla. I’m going to get you.” And he’s entertaining us with the Joe Frazier stuff. “You’re a gorilla, Joe Frazier.” We’re just cracking up, man. And Ali was talking to every girl in there. He’s hitting on every girl. My girlfriend, he’s telling her—and I come up, he says, “Is that your girlfriend?” Said, “Yes.” “Well, I’m going to leave her alone.” [laughter] He was so personable. He was unbelievable. I’m looking back at that and I’m like what a wonderful treat we had with this guy. He was just great. Just to talk. Just to sit with us and talk about his stories and just to have lunch with us.

So that night Angela's first and Ali's second. Well, Angela is totally different than Ali. Ali's funny, Angela's shrill. Ali's, he's a capitalist. Angela's a socialist comm. So you couldn't have two more different points of view. So Angela is taking too long, right, because Angela, she's going on. So Ali slips us this note and says, "Will you get that woman off the stage so I can talk?" [laughter] So finally Angela finishes. Angela's content be good but she's not nearly—she's not funny. So Ali gets up there and he charms. It was like I'm glad you were second because if you had been first people would have started leaving. He was just great. I'll never forget that. We had Curtis Mayfield.

02-00:38:11

Henry: You had Curtis Mayfield?

02-00:38:11

Marshall: We had Curtis Mayfield.

02-00:38:13

Henry: Did he perform?

02-00:38:13

Marshall: Yes, we had him in performance. We had some great people there. It was great.

02-00:38:18

Henry: And were these interracial audiences or was—

02-00:38:19

Marshall: Oh, no, no, everybody came.

02-00:38:20

Henry: Everybody came.

02-00:38:21

Marshall: Now we had turned the corner. First we were this outlier group and now, because Kent State's going on and the war is going on, so everybody's into what we're doing. So everybody is at least trying to figure out—it was just a time of the women's movement and all that stuff. The anti-war movement. So we had everybody. Oh, man, we packed the place. I'm telling you, we were the hottest thing at USF. But those were nice things. But for me the practical stuff was the more important stuff. This was style. I wanted substance.

02-00:38:54

Henry: The community food drives and such?

02-00:38:55

Marshall: I wanted those courses and I wanted professors. That was a big thing to me because what would happen in the classroom—I wanted them kids to read what I read and I didn't want to have to go to Marcus Bookstore to find it out.

02-00:39:08

Henry: And were you effective in changing the curriculum? Were any black professors hired?

02-00:39:10

Marshall: Yes, yes. I don't know if any were there while I was there. Although I was always connected. I always say the university outlives the students. So you get something going and you graduated and so they say, "He's gone," right. But we were able to sustain stuff with the next generation for a good ten year period there. Were a lot of stuff going on. So we did hire professors.

02-00:39:42

Henry: You laid the groundwork.

02-00:39:43

Marshall: We definitely laid the ground. And the kids that followed me, and I was still in touch with them. So, yeah, we got professors, we got courses, we started the ethnic studies program. We had the *Black Scholar*, came out of USF with the people that we got there.

02-00:40:01

Henry: The journal?

02-00:40:02

Marshall: Yeah, the journal.

02-00:40:02

Henry: That's right.

02-00:40:03

Marshall: With the people that we brought.

02-00:40:03

Henry: They came from USF.

02-00:40:04

Marshall: That's right. All that started with Lenneal Henderson and Pat Hill and Professor {Jasani?}. We had all those people up there and then we started getting connections with Price Cobbs and Bill Greer over black rage. All of that was right here. And USF was a big part of that because we started getting those people in there. So no, no. It's just hard to sustain it. A problem with black students, it's like kids now. Their consciousness isn't what ours was. So the group that came after that were less conscious and less conscious and less conscious and less conscious. Since the impetus came from the students, it's hard to sustain something like that. You read a *Black Scholar*. That was a great periodical and we laid the groundwork for all of those efforts.

02-00:40:56

Henry: Yeah, I was published in it.

02-00:40:57
Marshall:

Yeah. Yeah. It was all of that. We laid the groundwork for all of that. It was really great.

02-00:41:02
Henry:

So it's clear that your education in college was inseparable from the tenor of the times. You were very much in touch with what was going on in the country and the world, right?

02-00:41:12
Marshall:

Yeah. Yes. Yeah, yeah. I couldn't have been raised, to me, at a better time. I couldn't. If I had picked another time, to myself, it would have been the Harlem Renaissance. That's the only two times.

02-00:41:26
Henry:

Exactly.

02-00:41:28
Marshall:

I'd have gone right back and been there with Claude McKay and Jean Toomer and Langston Hughes. I would have been there. That's the only other time. The Jazz Age and Louis Armstrong and the Cotton Club. I'd have been in New York. But second to that I'm definitely a product of my time. The movement was wonderful when I was born.

02-00:41:52
Henry:

Well, we're scheduled to meet again next Monday for a continuing of this conversation. But I'll leave with one final question. Where were you and what were you doing when you heard that Martin Luther King had been killed and what was the reaction of white people you encountered?

02-00:42:07
Marshall:

When Dr. King was killed I had a job at a drugstore in the financial district in San Francisco. And I remember part of my job was stocking but also delivery. And I was out on a delivery and I was driving a company truck and over I guess the radio I heard Dr. King had been assassinated and I broke down. I remember getting back to work and I told the owner of the store, "Martin Luther King has just been killed." And I remember what he said. He said, "Well, he shouldn't have been down there doing what he was doing anyway." He deserved it. I don't know if he said he deserved it but I know he said he shouldn't have been down there.

02-00:42:57
Henry:

Trying to change.

02-00:42:58
Marshall:

Yeah, doing what he was doing. And I just couldn't believe somebody would say that. I could not believe it. I left work. I couldn't do it. I said, "I got to do." I got back to school and all of the BSU got together and we cried. Man, we cried. We cried. We said, "How you going to kill Martin Luther King?" This man's about peace. And at that moment I knew it was going to be all bad.

And it was. Towns went up. But I knew. Because a lot of people were holding back. Stokely was holding back. CORE was holding back. SNCC was holding back. But after that—

02-00:43:43

Henry: It was a powder keg all around the country.

02-00:43:44

Marshall: And that really gave rise to the Panthers because the Panthers, coupled with Malcolm's by any means necessary, when they killed Malcolm, Malcolm was killed and Martin was killed. If you're going to kill Martin Luther King, a man of peace, we're just going to have to take—we're going to have to use force and that's a whole other thing because that wasn't the brightest idea either. But the worst thing they could do was kill King. So yeah. No, it devastated us. So it was funny. The two days I've cried over a political figure. And it's funny. Later when I found out, I said, "Why are you crying about him?" But as a kid, John Kennedy was our hero, right. We didn't know the back story, right. We didn't know the political thing about Kennedy didn't want to get involved in this stuff. But to us Kennedy was our—

02-00:44:38

Henry: He was a hero.

02-00:44:40

Marshall: He was a shining armor. So when Kennedy died, assassinated in '63, I was in high school, right. I'm crying. Kennedy gone, black people's friend is gone. But was nothing like when King died. Oh, man. That was horrible. I feel it to this day. I still don't believe—how you going to kill Martin Luther King? And then you read—later on I read the Freedom of Information Act, I'm reading about COINTELPRO and how this man was followed. He's a communist. I said, "You people are crazy. Absolutely crazy." J. Edgar Hoover is the craziest man that ever lived. So yeah. Yeah, King. That's funny. King is the only man that didn't fight back. Let me tell you the effect that King has even on—in the ghetto, in the 'hood, if you don't fight back, you're weak, you're soft, you're a punk. King is the only man that didn't fight back that the homies don't think was a punk. Isn't that something?

02-00:45:53

Henry: Is amazing.

02-00:45:54

Marshall: So I use King all the time and they say I was a bad brother. And he was being criticized by Malcolm. Malcolm was at him. But to this day King will live on way past everybody else because—and it's not to denigrate anybody else. Because he changed history without ever throwing a punch. The man was amazing. Really, he was amazing. So yeah. This is why this year is such a big deal. Fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King. Yeah. King, he had the right name. [laughter]

2-00:46:33

Henry: Well, this has been a wonderful conversation. I look forward to next week.
Thanks.

02-00:46:36

Marshall: Thank you very much.

02-00:46:38

Henry: Okay.

[End of Interview]

Interview #2 July 29, 2013

Audio File 3

03-00:00:00

Henry: I'm with Joseph Marshall. Okay, sorry about that. Today is Monday, July 29th. My name is Neil Henry and I'm sitting with Joseph Marshall in his office in San Francisco. Dr. Marshall is the founder of the Omega Boys Club, recently renamed Alive & Free, and which last year celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The mission of the Boys Club has been to take disadvantaged and troubled inner city kids and guide them to college educations. It has been remarkably successful in this mission and has become a national model as a social service and education program. This is the second of several conversations I am having with Dr. Marshall about his life and times. Last time we discussed your childhood years and your coming of age in Saint Louis, Los Angeles, and your college years at USF. Today I'd like to continue that discussion and lead into your professional life as an educator and pioneering founder of the Omega Club. In your last year at college a couple of incidents punctuated your racial awareness, including a visit by the McClymonds High School Drill Team and a basketball ball between the BSU and a white fraternity. Can you recall those incidents and why they were so memorable?

03-00:01:10

Marshall: Oh, I can recall them. We invited the McClymonds High School song girls to perform at USF during half-time. I thought they were great. We thought they were great. It was wonderful. I guess some of the crowd figured they went on too long, so they started booing.

03-00:01:38

Henry: It's a largely white crowd at USF?

03-00:01:39

Marshall: Very largely white crowd booing the girls. I don't know if somebody threw anything at them but we were really, really, really upset. We thought it was totally inconsiderate and rude, offensive behavior. And these are just young high school girls. And so we were, if I can use the word, we were pissed. And we apologized to the girls for the behavior of the university. We sort of let it go but it stayed with us. It really stayed with us. It rankled all of the BSU at that time, yeah.

03-00:02:21

Henry: Right. And the reason you invited them is because you wanted black culture in the public schools represented at USF?

03-00:02:31

Marshall: Well, not only that, almost all of the players on the team were black. So we thought it would be good. There weren't very many of us at the school and we thought it would be good to have them perform and entertain and we wanted them to come to the campus and see the campus. Part of the thing we were

doing at that time, in an effort to get more black students to school, we were actually recruiting students. We'd go out ourselves and go to various schools and say, "Come here." We got the EOP involved. This was a gesture symbolic of the things we were doing, inviting African Americans onto the campus.

03-00:03:07

Henry: So it sounded like a pretty disrespectful thing that the audience did.

03-00:03:13

Marshall: Very, very. It hurt us. We were embarrassed for the young women, we were embarrassed for ourselves, and, quite frankly, we were embarrassed for the university.

03-00:03:24

Henry: Yeah. And this was followed by an intramural basketball game between the BSU and a white fraternity. What happened with that?

03-00:03:33

Marshall: It was one of those hotly contested basketball games. I was playing. And it ended in one of those tie games in overtime and it tied again at the end of overtime. So I've never seen this happen in a basketball game. It ended up being, at the end of the first overtime, they decided the first team that scored would win. And I don't know. It was a jump ball. They were the first team that scored and I've never seen a basketball game end like that. You play until you win overtime. You don't have the first team that scores win. And we were very, very upset. And the basketball game, we realized later, was a symbol of all the injustice we had faced at the school. Particularly for me, I guess the slights that I had experienced at the university up till then, all came to fruition over something seemingly innocuous, a basketball game. But we had our own little mini-campus riot. We shut down the gym, kicked everybody out. Probably destroyed a few windows. Went over to the student union, the green and gold room, and sort of hunkered down there. Talked about just everything. We had been working really hard with the university to try and improve things for black students and we kept getting the door slammed in our face. Probably the ultimate piece was what happened to those young women from McClymonds and this basketball game, which was nothing to get upset, because it's just a game, but it was more than a game to us. It just seemed like we kept getting slapped in the face and we erupted. Probably, since I'm sort of the level headed practical one, I'm the one that keeps everybody back, so when I went with everybody else went. [laughter] Yeah. Yeah. I remembered them calling the university president and us realizing what we had actually done now. So we scattered and escaped and went home. It was quite a night. Quite a night. Yeah, it was something.

03-00:06:08

Henry: But you took over that room in the green and gold place. And how long did you hold it?

- 03-00:06:11
Marshall: We were there probably two or three hours. We were talking about marching down to the president's office and the whole bit. But we didn't let anybody in. We secured the room. And, believe me, this was something that happened on a lot of campuses during that time to a much larger scale. Colgate and Kent State and a whole bunch of other places. But we asked to see the president. Father Johnson, that was his name. I don't know if he was actually on his way or if we heard that he wasn't coming. I don't know if they sent the campus police or whatever. But at some point we made a decision to leave and go on home and live for another day.
- 03-00:07:00
Henry: Right. But you made certain demands on the university, didn't you? What were they?
- 03-00:07:05
Marshall: I actually don't remember what they were. We did have a list of demands. God, I can't remember what they were.
- 03-00:07:13
Henry: Black faculty, hire black faculty?
- 03-00:07:14
Marshall: Were probably in line with faculty, with courses.
- 03-00:07:18
Henry: Having a room named for Bill Russell in the green and gold center?
- 03-00:07:20
Marshall: You remember better than I do. I can't remember what I said. Let me tell you. Actually, we wanted the gym named after Bill Russell. That's what we wanted. But it was a memorial gym in honor of those who had fallen in previous wars. So we did settle for having a room named after him. Those were some of the things we wanted. But the critical things were the faculty and the coursework. That was the biggest thing. And we were really working actively to bring—can you imagine a bunch of nineteen, twenty year old students taking résumés and finding people and sending them off to proper departments for hiring? We were really working hard and we just kept getting—no, so we did have a list of demands. Yeah. We were doing our best.
- 03-00:08:13
Henry: Did you and your compatriots face disciplinary charges from the university and what happened with that?
- 03-00:08:18
Marshall: We definitely faced disciplinary charges. Definitely. And at that time I was not the president of the BSU anymore. I had gone on to my first year of student teaching and it was a very unique situation. I was actually a student intern. I was earning my credentials so I was still there every day but I was earning my credential. I was still enrolled in university getting my teaching

credential but during the day I was at the high school. I was twenty-two years old teaching high school seniors. And, believe me, I looked younger than all the kids I had.

03-00:09:04

Henry:

The university was trying to expel you, weren't they?

03-00:09:07

Marshall:

I remember very clearly when I heard the charges and I remember the dean of students, Father Sunderland, he said he was going to get all of us for this and the one he was going to get first was me, because I was the ringleader. You get Joe Marshall and then the rest will fall. Get him. So I remember thinking, "Oh, my God, I'm about to get expelled from the university. My teaching career isn't even going to get off the ground." Everything. I'm twenty-two years old. Everything is flashing in front of my eyes. So we went to the moot court at the law school and they read charges. Maybe two days before the trial was actually supposed to happen, a couple of university professors, law professors, two white university professors came to me and said, "We want to defend you because we don't think this is right." And I said, "Thank you." [laughter] "Thank you, thank you, thank you." And I can't remember their names now. I really can't.

And they sat down. They put me on the witness stand and had me just talk about my years at USF. And virtually, basically, why I acted the way I acted. What led up to this explosion? What filled my balloon and why it eventually burst over a seemingly innocuous thing, a basketball, intramural basketball game. They recounted everything I'd been through. The incident, sitting in, being at the basketball game, the Texas Western Kentucky basketball game, being called the N, that social isolation that I felt, forming the BSU and all the insults and rebuffs that we took, trying to do all the things with the university and them constantly just sort of laughing in our faces. And then most recently what happened with the young women, the dance team from McClymonds.

And the other thing I remember that day is virtually the whole campus shut down and everybody—seemed like every student at USF was at the moot court. That place was packed. And I just basically told my story. Father Sunderland read all the charges. So we recessed for the day. I went home thinking about my future. I wasn't going to tell my parents unless it was definitely going to be it, because they would have just died. Came back the next day, everybody walked in. The place was packed again. I don't know if anybody had any classes. I'm sure they did. The place was packed again. And the dean then announced that all charges were being dropped and we were all free to go. And the place erupted. I mean erupted. I mean students were coming up, slapping me on the back, shaking my hand. I was shocked. I was relieved. I was more relieved to get off but I was shocked at the reaction of the students. It was like I was this hero. And so I thanked God and said, "Thank

you for everything.” Yeah, and then we went back to the BSU office and that night we had the biggest party we’d had. [laughter]

03-00:12:58

Henry: Well, that’s quite an illustrious memorable time during your college years.

03-00:13:01

Marshall: Oh, man. That was something. That was something. And, again, to those who were at larger universities having much bigger probably eruptions on their campuses and making the headlines and being in newspapers and having probably some real violence and storming. Sitting in the president’s office and being chained together, all that. It might seem not much of a big deal but for us it was a lot. This was ours. This was ours and it was really important to us. It’s taking a stand and paying for it if necessary.

03-00:13:42

Henry: And isn’t it true that it was something of a turning point at USF because the university did institute some changes? They did name a room or a court after Bill Russell and they did move forward in hiring black faculty after you left.

03-00:13:54

Marshall: Looking back, probably so. I don’t know that that was—like these people are serious and they’re willing to risk their student status. But yeah. Things then began to fall eventually. It took a while but the Bill Russell room was named. More importantly for us, the institution of ethnic studies and black studies and getting faculty on campus—two or three years later I would come back to the school and we actually had a black studies program. Lenneal Henderson and Pat Hill and all the folks that came in. It was just glorious. The biggest thing for me was the instruction. Marcus Bookstore was now at the school. Everything I had to learn was being taught in the classes. I mentioned last week we had the black scholar at the school and it sort of became the West Coast version of a black think tank. A black scholarly think tank. So, yeah, it was great. And if that had something to do with it, so be it.

03-00:15:10

Henry: So by the time you finished you were headed for law school but fate played a hand in changing your direction. Can you elaborate on that?

03-00:15:20

Marshall: Well, if I wasn’t known beforehand around the campus, then I was after that trial. Everybody knew me, including all the Jesuits. My father always said, “Be a lawyer, be a lawyer, be a lawyer,” and I was actually thinking about being a lawyer. Seriously. A group of folks came out from the University of Michigan Law School and recruited me for law school.

03-00:15:51

Henry: And this was what year?

03-00:15:52
Marshall:

I'm getting my sequence wrong because this recruitment for law school actually happened before the trial. Because I guess I was known even before the trial. When I was a senior, this was when I was a senior, this is before I entered the teaching credential program. That's when they came to recruit me. I was out the night before at a party. I had to show up five minutes late for the LSAT, the law school exam. And I remember getting there and they said, "You can't come in." I said, "I'm five minutes late." "You can't come in, you can't come in." So word got around that I had missed the LSAT. I don't know how it got around. And I did see the dean of the school of education and he says, "Well, I heard you missed the law school exams." I said, "Yeah." He says, "Why don't you get in this credential program." He said, "You can go to law school at any time." I said, "Okay. I'll do it, I'll do it." And that's how I became a teacher. That's how I became a teacher. So I got to get that sequence right. And a year later is when everything else happened around the trial and so on.

03-00:17:12
Henry:

Yeah. And this was what year that you didn't take the LSAT?

03-00:17:16
Marshall:

It had to be—

03-00:17:17
Henry:

Around '70?

03-00:17:19
Marshall:

No. Well, let's see. It had to be 1968. December of 1968. Maybe spring. Or probably spring of '68. Because I went into the credential program during the summer of '68 and started teaching in the fall of 1969.

03-00:17:41
Henry:

What did a future in teaching symbolize to you versus being a lawyer?

03-00:17:48
Marshall:

I think I had every intention. I said, "You can teach for a while and then go to law school." But when I went in the classroom with those kids, I fell in love.

03-00:18:01
Henry:

Oh, yeah?

03-00:18:02
Marshall:

Oh, yeah. Oh, man, it was great. I had a dashiki, a briefcase, the autobiography of Malcolm X. There was this book at this time called *Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness*. Had that in my briefcase. And I actually had a briefcase. Carry it in. An afro that didn't look like much. And walked in there and I said, "I'm going to change these kids' lives." And it was wonderful. It was glorious. And I was lucky. Most of the time when you're a student teacher you have one class and you have a master teacher. I was in a special

program. I had three classes. Now, a regular teacher has five classes. Three classes and no master teacher.

03-00:18:55

Henry: So you were out there on your own?

03-00:18:57

Marshall: I was completely on my own. I walked in there. And I had a civics class, I had a world history class. Either world history or US history. One or the other. And I had a black history class. Oh, my God, for me to teach those kids black history. It was wonderful. It was glorious. And I remember the civics class. It was a requirement but I just didn't like the way they do it and I knew these kids needed help with pressing issues. They're seventeen, eighteen years old, they need to know how to walk in the world if they're going to get married. All this stuff. So I actually changed the course and adopted it to what I wanted to do to make it practical for them and wove some civics into it. It was great. It was great. I used to go home. You can tape things on your cell phone, right? In those days, believe it or not, we still had reel to reel. So I would go home. I had the reel to reel. This is before cassette tapes even. And reel to reel. And I would sit down and I would read whole passages of books into my tape recorder and just so the next day the kids could hear my voice reading books I thought were important. It was great. I became the BSU sponsor at the school. Looking back on it, I probably scared the hell out of the administration. I had to because I was just fired up. And last thing they needed at the school was this militant young teacher. [laughter]

03-00:20:41

Henry: And this was Woodrow Wilson High School in San Francisco.

03-00:20:44

Marshall: Woodrow Wilson High School.

03-00:20:46

Henry: What were the demographics of Woodrow Wilson?

03-00:20:48

Marshall: You know, that's a good question because I never looked at the—

03-00:20:58

Henry: Was it predominantly black?

03-00:20:58

Marshall: I don't know if it was predominantly black but there was a large population, black population there, because Woodrow Wilson was located in the Bayview. In fact, it was my introduction to the Bayview. Every school I went to I learned the neighborhood. But it had a large black population and I was immediately popular with the kids. The kids loved me. They did. I loved them, they loved me. I'm this young guy. Just amazing things would happen. Because I was so close to them, any problems that they had they would tell me.

One time, I had, this girl ran away from home and ran over to my apartment. A sixteen year old girl running away from home and she comes to my—I'm twenty-two. She runs over to my apartment. "Regina," I said, "what are you doing?" "I ran away from home. I'm coming to stay with you." I said, "Oh, no, you can't stay with me." [laughter] I called her mother. I said, "You come get your daughter." I said, "I'm your teacher." I remember the basketball team. The guys on the basketball team, they would come by my apartment on Saturdays and say, "Mr. Marshall, Mr. Marshall, how you doing? How you doing? How you doing?" I was really, really, really close to those kids. And this all happened in one year's time, now, mind you.

03-00:22:28

Henry: Yeah, yeah.

03-00:22:30

Marshall: There was a student walkout, a peaceful walkout, and I didn't walk with them but everybody knew who it was behind it. I didn't walk out. Because they were protesting conditions they felt needed to be—problems at the high school. And everybody knew I was behind it. Everybody knew that Mr. Marshall was behind it.

I would organize these activities. One time we organized, to dramatize the plight of what was going on with the kids, we organized these series of plays with the kids and they came in and they sort of acted out things right in the classrooms. And I bought every girl in the school, or at least the ones I could get a hold of, a black balloon to symbolize their plight. And I remember I was going—

03-00:23:30

Henry: Every girl?

03-00:23:31

Marshall: Every girl. Every girl. And I remember I was going out in the yard after school and releasing all those black helium balloons into the sky.

03-00:23:38

Henry: Very dramatic.

03-00:23:41

Marshall: Oh, oh. Well, we put on an African festival and we built these huts right on the schoolyard. We did all this stuff. This all happened in one year. Like school dances. And I was a sponsor of all the BSU dances. It was really, really, really something. I had to have been a threat to these—

03-00:24:06

Henry: To the establishment.

03-00:24:07

Marshall: Oh, my God, I had to be. So when the year ended, because I was actually taking somebody else's place who was on sabbatical, it was easy for them to

say, “We had enough of you. You got to go.” [laughter] But I’ll tell you, that first class, my group of seniors were really, really special to me. That first class. And I still see a lot of them today. It’s funny. We’re not that much age difference but they all call me Mr. Marshall.

03-00:24:39

Henry: That’s cool.

03-00:24:40

Marshall: We are really, really close. This has got to be, what, forty years later?

03-00:24:46

Henry: Yeah.

03-00:24:46

Marshall: Yeah, yeah.

03-00:24:48

Henry: After Wilson where did you go?

03-00:24:51

Marshall: Well, the district punished me. They exiled me. They said, “We’re going to send you to Siberia.” So they sent me to this place called the Guidance Service Center, which was a—it wasn’t even a school. It was in a YMCA building. I went from a high school to a YMCA building over in the Fillmore District. Buchanan YMCA, which is still there today. And this school was for junior high—it was junior high in those days. Junior high school and high school kids who got kicked out of school. And they sent them there before they sent them to juvenile hall.

03-00:25:34

Henry: But it was also a chance to rehabilitate them and possibly get them back into the mainstream, right?

03-00:25:38

Marshall: Theoretically.

03-00:25:40

Henry: In theory.

03-00:25:40

Marshall: But they gave us nothing.

03-00:25:41

Henry: They gave you nothing to work with.

03-00:25:42

Marshall: They gave us no books, no curriculum, no funding. Not even a decent place for them to be. It was like throwaway kids. It was horrible. We had to make up our own everything. And I did a lot of making up in those days. So yeah. I said, “Oh, they’re trying to punish me, they’re trying to get me.” The bigger

thing for me was I had never seen so many troubled young people. Because they were all there together in one place and they were a mess. I had pimps and arsonists and purse snatchers. Every kind of wayward teenager you could have was sent there. Huge problems that these kids had. And we were supposed to “rehabilitate” them and get them back into the regular public school. So I had to be twenty-three, twenty-four, and I ended up taking charge of the whole place, writing curriculum, sort of organizing the faculty. We had two or three teachers and some paraprofessionals. We banded together against the kids because they were just—it was a crazy place. But it was great for me. It really was great for me because if you’re going to cut your teeth on troubled kids, that’s the place to do it.

03-00:27:22

Henry: That was the place to be.

03-00:27:22

Marshall: Oh, yeah.

03-00:27:23

Henry: So you were an administrator, a teacher, a counselor, a disciplinarian, and sometimes a cop in that job.

03-00:27:28

Marshall: Everything.

03-00:27:29

Henry: Did you ever have to get rough with the kids?

03-00:27:31

Marshall: Well, mothers would come in and tell me, “He doesn’t have a man in his life so you do what a man would do to him.” So every time we’d go in the gym and we’d sort of discuss it. Yeah. I was really young. I remember the kids names. Philip, Allen, and Leonard, and Milo Wings. I remember all those kids. I remember all the kids. It was a tough place to be but that’s where I really honed my skills. And it was totally different from Woodrow, which was a structured place and had textbooks. I got really adept there at making up lesson plans. I had to. I remember one of the things I used to do, was one of my favorite ones, the kids liked it. Any big artist, one of the big artists. Stevie Wonder’s always been my favorite artist. So in order to teach spelling and writing, and today I would probably do this with hip hop lyrics, I would take an entire song and then omit words and passages in the song and the kids had to fill them in. So they had to fill them. They learned how to spell the word correctly. But they loved the lesson, right. They would sit down at these things, oh, here’s words, fill it in. We had a lot of fun. We got very creative in places like that because you had no textbooks.

03-00:29:09

Henry: Yeah. If the center’s mission was to rehabilitate these kids who were obviously going the wrong path and try to return them to the mainstream, but

it was obviously failing on so many different levels, how did you not become cynical about the educational system—

03-00:29:23
Marshall:

Oh, I did.

03-00:29:24
Henry:

—and the establishment?

03-00:29:25
Marshall:

I became cynical about the educational system and establishment but I never became cynical about the kids. That's the two different things. I never became cynical about them. I just had to figure out a way to help them when I could clearly see that the district and the system wasn't interested in that happening.

03-00:29:44
Henry:

Right. You write in your autobiography, "The Guidance Center was my entrée to the universe of the troubled black teenager." What did you learn about that universe that carried you forward?

03-00:29:55
Marshall:

I learned that I didn't have all the answers and I wanted more answers. And the real question for me was, and I saw these young people. I said, "Is this just a stage or phase they're going through and they're going to grow out of or is there something really going on here that's troubling and could be permanent?" I worked with teenagers before or even just teenagers around me, and even myself. You go through stages and then you grow out of it. But I wasn't sure that these kids were going to grow out of this stuff. I had a master's in education but that drove me to get this PhD in psychology, because I really wanted to know is this a stage or is this permanent? I really wanted to know more. Yeah. Pacific Psychotherapy Associates. I don't know if you remember *Black Rage*, the book *Black Rage*, Price Cobbs and Bill Grier. They actually started to do psychotherapy with our kids and that's how I began to learn more about the mind and cognitive behavior and growth and developmental stages and all those things, dealing with emotional residue and that sort of thing. Sort of watching them and listening to them. And I said, "I got it. This is something I need to do." So that led me to enter into the Wright Institute, which is where I eventually end up getting my doctorate.

03-00:31:35
Henry:

In psychology?

03-00:31:36
Marshall:

In psychology.

03-00:31:37
Henry:

Educational psychology or psychology?

03-00:31:39
Marshall:

Clinical psychology.

03-00:31:39

Henry: Clinical psychology.

03-00:31:40

Marshall: Clinical. Yeah, clinical, yeah.

03-00:31:42

Henry: Okay, good. After the Guidance Center you were appointed to Aptos Middle School, where you again encountered troubled and disadvantaged kids struggling with day to day life. Two of them were Darnell Oliver and Shirley Brown. What was memorable and compelling about their life stories?

03-00:31:56

Marshall: And those are not their real names. I had to make them up. Shirley. Shirley had a sister, a younger sister, and sweetest girls in the world, great in my class, but they would come up missing. And one day I said, "Where are they?" I almost said their real names. And it turns out, I find out, the kids are telling me they're prostitutes. I said, "What do you mean they're prostitutes? They're fourteen and twelve years old," and they're prostitutes. And they said, "They're over on so and so in Oakland and they got a pimp." And I'm saying, "Ah, hell, no, and I got to go find them." And they kids said, "Oh, no, you can't do that. You can't do that." And I stayed at Guidance Service Center for five years. I'm twenty-seven now and these kids are thirteen and fourteen. I said, "I'm going to find my girls." They said, "No, no, no, no. You can't do that." And they actually stopped me from doing it, the other kids did. Said, "You can't. No, no, no."

Darnell Oliver, I'm thinking of his real name, was another really good young man. Just kids going through stuff. And he'd always be asleep in my class. So one day I said, "You can't come in here to sleep. Why don't you sleep at night?" And he said, "I work at night." Now, this is ninth grade, fourteen years old. "I'm working at night." I said, "Why are you working at night?" "Because I don't have any money. I got to work." "Who do you live with?" "Well, I don't have any parents. I'm living with my aunt," and he sleeps in her basement. So he's working all night. He comes to school in the morning and he sleeps. So I was like, "Wow, wow." And we're talking about young kids. So yeah. So once again I plunged into everything. I did so much at that school they should have put my name on the school. I did so much for those kids.

Student activities. I ran all the student activities for the kids. I gave dances, I gave talent shows. I was the student advisor. I ran all the student elections. I did everything. If the kids had a problem with the dean they would come talk to me. I was so immersed into those young people in that school in the years I spent at Aptos. Yeah. It was a great time again.

03-00:34:33

Henry:

And you took your learning then to become a math teacher at Potrero Hill Middle School in 1980 where you first met Jack Jacqua. Who was he and what was he doing at Potrero Hill?

03-00:34:44

Marshall:

Moved from Aptos, I was there for about eight years, to Potrero Hill. That's where I met Jack. I will say something. Aptos was primarily a black and white school. Potrero Hill was like the UN. I had Hawaiians, Samoans and Vietnamese, and Filipinos, in addition to white and black students. It was really, really great to have all those cultures in my classroom. And there I met Jack and I thought Jack was nuts. Crazy. This long bearded, long haired white man would be screaming all the time about the system, the system, the system. Systems. It's like, "Jack, man, will you stop talking about the system?" He would just drive me crazy. He had this interest in black kids. I said, "Who is this white guy who's interested in all these black kids?". Right. So I just said, "Jack." But we kept talking about kids, talking about kids, talking about kids. And I began to realize is beyond the system itself, and beyond the look—Jack and I look a lot different, not just black and white but the way we dress and everything—he was genuinely interested in the kids. He would bring kids to me, bring students to me. He's not going to be able to get back in because the door is locked, I think.

03-00:36:22

Henry:

I'll get it.

03-00:36:25

Marshall:

Yeah. He would bring students to me and talk about he's going through this problem, he's going through that problem. He put kids in my class. He felt, "You need to be in Mr. Marshall's class, you'll be in Mr. Marshall's class." After our initial very, very rough start, and my own suspicion about him, we started to click really, really around young people. We'd sit at basketball games. He'd talk to the kids. We did everything with the kids, though. So, yeah, Jack became sort of my partner in saving young people's lives.

03-00:37:01

Henry:

And what sort of topics would you guys discuss over your many luncheons and classroom get togethers? Specific students, specific problems that sort of —

03-00:37:10

Marshall:

Everything. Everything. The kids, the issues they were facing. I think more so than before I really got into the homes that these young people lived in. Woodrow Wilson and Aptos both were sort of more middle class. The kids didn't come from the projects. Aptos is in Ingleside and Woodrow Wilson Bayview. And at those times those were thriving neighborhoods. Potrero Hill the kids lived in the projects. And I would end up visiting the kids' homes with Jack and I would just see, woo, these kids are really, really, really living in some tough circumstances.

- 03-00:38:10
Henry: Tough circumstances physically, emotionally, psychologically?
- 03-00:38:13
Marshall: Yeah.
- 03-00:38:14
Henry: Broken homes? The kind of—
- 03-00:38:15
Marshall: All of that. I would go into homes and visit parents in the Bayview district and it was a home. What's the song by Luther Vandross? *This House Is Not a Home*. I would go into the homes of the kids from Potrero Hill Middle School and it was a house. And unbeknownst to me, you figure I got to Potrero Hill in 1980, that's when the crack era and crack epidemic was beginning. So I was right at the tip of that. And later on I was realizing what I was seeing. The homes were now being devastated by this new drug called crack cocaine.
- 03-00:39:06
Henry: Jack went to many funerals during those years but you avoided them. Why?
- 03-00:39:13
Marshall: I went to a couple. Couldn't take it. Couldn't take it. It's tough to give a kid an A in math and then go to his funeral a couple, two, three years later. I just couldn't do it. I remember one funeral I didn't go to, this young man that was sort of special to me. And it turns out they had a shootout at the funeral so I'm glad I didn't go to that one. But emotionally I couldn't take it. I just couldn't do it.
- 03-00:39:43
Henry: Yeah. The kids had similar stories to tell about their lives the more you got to know them. People like {Macio Dickerson?}, {Marcel Evans?}, Joe Thomas, {Jody Daggs?} and Peter Lee {Carr?}. And they all seemed to share a common hardship, the lack of adult attention in their personal lives. Can you elaborate on this point?
- 03-00:40:02
Marshall: Yeah. A lot of those kids end up being the first kids in the start of the Omega Boys Club. Yeah. Well, everything you just said. And maybe a common theme in all of them was they just didn't have—no fathers, forget that. No fathers. That was probably 90 percent of the kids that I dealt with. Once again, be getting mothers on drugs. That was very different from what I experienced before. And then not a lot of positive other people in their lives. I would ask them about aunts and uncles and so forth and there just weren't many positive people at all in their lives. Yeah. I should have told him about that.
- 03-00:40:59
Henry: Continue. Then a turning point in your life came one day when Jack appeared in your classroom and said to you, "Dr. Marshall, do you remember Roy {Nall

McCraig??} Who was Roy Nall and how did his experience effect the direction of your life?

03-00:41:11

Marshall:

Jack did come into my room one day and told me about this young man named Roy Nall, asked me did I remember him. I said, "Sure." I had a seventh grade algebra class and two black males in particular were in there. Roy Nall was one of them. Preppy looking kid, good looking boy. He had actually been voted, later on that next year he was going to be voted—they had this king and king contest, a sweetheart contest, and he ended up being voted the king of the school. But more importantly for me, he was a very bright young man. And I said, "This kid's going to college. This kid's going to college." You could just see it. He looked preppy. Next thing I knew, Jack comes in and tells me he's selling drugs in Oakland. And I went, "Wow. I got to go get him. I got to go find Roy Nall. I was discouraged. Jack said, "No, you can't go over there. He's selling dope. You can't go."

03-00:42:25

Henry:

He was worried about your safety?

03-00:42:28

Marshall:

I guess so. I think they were both like, "You don't know what you're walking into. You're a nice guy but you can't be going over there just telling—" Yeah. Yeah.

03-00:42:42

Henry:

So he ended up selling drugs?

03-00:42:43

Marshall:

Yeah. Later on he went to jail. Yeah. Actually got a letter from him one time. He wrote to me from prison. Yeah. And later on I actually went to San Quentin to give a talk to the inmates there and who walks in but Roy Nall.

03-00:43:09

Henry:

Right, yes. He was in San Quentin.

03-00:43:10

Marshall:

He was in San Quentin. And he said to me, "That's me you wrote about in the book, huh?" I said, "Yeah, man, that's you." He said, "I'm dumb. I'm sorry, Mr. Marshall. I'm sorry, man. I'm sorry I disappointed you." I said, "No." Every one of them right there. God, it did not work out the way he or I wanted it to work out.

03-00:43:33

Henry:

Gee whiz. You mentioned the rise of crack and the violence that accompanied it in the eighties in the inner city. How easy was it for kids to fall prey to the gangster life?

03-00:43:44
Marshall:

Real easy. Real easy. Real easy. Real easy. Probably the film that symbolizes that whole time is the film *New Jack City*. Very popular film. Everybody wanted to be Nino Brown. Everybody wanted to be Nino Brown. You mentioned the name earlier Peter Lee Carr. Peter Lee was the one that just—a lot of these kids crushed me but when you know a student's real name and you know Edric is his real name.

03-00:44:22
Henry:

Edric?

03-00:44:21
Marshall:

Edric Carr. But Peter Lee was the name he went by. Peter Lee was always—when he was there, he was great. I had him in sixth grade. He disappeared. I saw him a couple of years later. Must have been fifteen, sixteen years old, looking like Nino Brown, driving a Suzuki, flashy jewelry. They wore sweat suits in those days. That's the way drug dealers look. And I knew what was going on. And he came up to me, he said, "Hi, Mr. Marshall." Oh, man. And I had his sister, Connie Carr. I had his cousin, Passion, and after I saw Peter Lee, it had to have been two months go by where he was murdered. And it was a big murder in the city of San Francisco. It basically started a turf war between Sunnydale and Hunter's Point. So yeah. Easy to fall prey.

And it's funny. I've talked to a lot of guys that got caught up in that. It's fast money. It was the money. It was all about the money. And it looked like gold, it was fool's gold. And a lot of them got caught up in the system. A lot of them end up dead. A lot of families were completely, completely destroyed by that drug.

03-00:45:52
Henry:

Yeah. Who was Philmore Graham and how did his experience play a role in your professional evolution?

03-00:45:58
Marshall:

Philmore Graham is a fraternity brother of mine, about eight years older than me. Real close to him. We did a lot of work together. He had established a club in Vallejo called the Continentals of Omega Boys Club. I used to go over there and work with him.

03-00:46:25
Henry:

Well, did it have the same sort of mission to take kids off of the streets and gear them toward academic success?

03-00:46:29
Marshall:

Pretty much, yeah. Pretty much. Pretty much, yeah. I don't know if he would describe it exactly that way but certainly he would call it—and probably the term is a youth development organization. Any kid he could get his hands on he wanted to help. Started in 1966. Very, very wonderful organization. And I would go over there and work with the kids and work with him.

After Peter Lee died and Roy Nall was selling drugs I said, “That’s it. You got to do something.” And so I went to Philmore and says, “Can I do your idea down here in San Francisco, in the Bay Area.” He said, “I’ve been waiting for you all along to ask me.” So yeah. Philmore bestowed the mantle on me to do this work here.

03-00:47:29

Henry:

But you knew it would have to take a different form to adapt itself to a San Francisco reality. Or you’d have a slightly different mission than Vallejo, right?

03-00:47:41

Marshall:

Well, I was going to do what I thought I wanted to do and that was-- Philmore’s was more like a typical boys and girls club and actually eventually became part of boys and girls club over there.

03-00:47:59

Henry:

The official Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Yeah.

03-00:47:59

Marshall:

Yes. He actually became an official member of the Boys & Girls Club of America. But even then he did sports and activities. He did a lot of outings, in addition to tutoring sessions. With me I didn’t want to do any activities. Well, let’s put it like this. The seriousness about education, and more importantly, I wanted to address the issues in their lives that were short circuiting their life and freedom. Because when I was teaching math, if I had known what was really going on in their lives I could have helped them. And I didn’t ask them and if I had I wouldn’t have time to do it teaching math anyway. When I started the club my focus was purely, “You tell me everything you didn’t tell me in math class. We’re going to figure this out.” So I knew that was going to be first, first, and first. And then the education piece was going to go along with that. Whatever else was going to do was going to support that. So basketball was not a big deal to me. Outings wasn’t a big deal to me, although we did some of those things in the early years.

The center of everything was what we call—we had this from the beginning. We call it the family meetings. And it wasn’t the families of the kids. We were a family. And at these meetings we would sit down and we’d discuss these heavy topics. I remember the very first meeting we had back in 1987. I got a little TV and Bill Moyers did this piece called “The Vanishing Black Family”. And I showed it to the kids and we sat and discussed it. So the heart of what we do was serious discussions about the issues that were impacting their lives. And from day one, every time we met, we did a family meeting. Family meeting, family meeting, family. Family meetings were talk about serious topics and let me hear from you about what’s going on. And that’s always been the crux and the center of what we do here. Bring me your stuff and we’ll figure it out so that you don’t lose your life of freedom.

03-00:50:26

Henry: You announced your club by sending letters out to the parents.

03-00:50:32

Marshall: Actually, they were little bitty postcards.

03-00:50:33

Henry: Postcards.

03-00:50:34

Marshall: Yeah.

03-00:50:34

Henry: Okay. And what were the values and mission of the club in announcing it to the families?

03-00:50:38

Marshall: I pretty much took a lot from what they were doing in Vallejo. In fact, if I could find my book I could actually read you what the card said. But I think the key thing was we want to help young people to reach their goals in life, to develop character, to be young people of principle. And, in addition to that, and here was the thing that keeps me awake even twenty-six years later, was if they wanted to go to college we would help them get there and try and find some scholarship assistance for them to make that happen. That was on the first postcard that we sent in 1987.

03-00:51:28

Henry: And what was the initial reaction to that announcement?

03-00:51:32

Marshall: We had about twenty, twenty-five kids show up. Most of them were my current students. A few of my former students, and they brought some kids with them. And I told them what we were going to do and I said, "You guys know me, you know Jack, and you know we're serious about your lives. We want you to make it. We also know you experience a lot of difficulties out there and we want to help you with that." But I told them it was serious. No fun and games. No sports. You can get that at the gym. We're really going to be a serious club and you got to tell us everything that's going on or we can't help you.

When I finished I said, "These kids ain't going to go for this." I said, "This whole thing sounds square, even to me." I said, "We're going to be an academic, drug free, violence free, boys club. And so we'll see you in two weeks." Two weeks later fifteen kids came back and that became my core group. Marcel and Jody and a bunch of those names you mentioned before. And I said, "Jack, they came back." We had these t-shirts and the t-shirts I got made were patterned after the t-shirts in Vallejo. Said, "I don't do drugs on the front," and it said, "Stop the violence on the back." And the kids took these t-shirts and wore them in the neighborhoods and that was a big thing to me because they were daring to be different. Going against the grain of

everything, especially the drug thing. Everybody was selling drugs. And I said, "Wow. If they're willing to do this and risk everything from being ostracized to even being possibly physically hurt, that I want to do something for them." And that's when I told them, "You stick with this, you let me help you beat the streets, when it comes time to go to college, I want to help you. I'll help prepare you. I'll even raise money, make an effort to raise money to put some scholarship money towards your college education."

03-00:53:50

Henry:

And these meetings took place at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House. What was that and how did you arrange to use that space?

03-00:53:57

Marshall:

The Neighborhood House was a community center up the street from Potrero Middle School. The executive director and grand dame of the Neighborhood House was Enola Maxwell. And Jack went to her and said, "Can we meet in your basement?" And Jack arranged it all and that was our home for a lot of years.

03-00:54:17

Henry:

And how many nights a week did you get together during the early years?

03-00:54:21

Marshall:

The early years it was pretty much like we do now. Pretty much like we do now. Sometimes we tried twice a week but we always invariably came to once a week. And the night we settled on pretty early was Tuesday night. Tuesday night, Tuesday night. I can't tell you exactly why we didn't do it more. Probably because we had a lot going on in our lives. But it was going to be every week. Every week, Tuesday night, and that became the night for the kids.

03-00:55:01

Henry:

And it went from 7:00 to 11:00 or 6:00 to 9:00?

03-00:55:04

Marshall:

In those days we started at about 7:00 o'clock and we went to about 9:30, 10:00 o'clock. And Jack and I would actually script every meeting. We lived from Tuesday to Tuesday. We would sit down at lunch time, in our prep period, and I can remember being at Potrero Hill Middle School, and then we'd script the meetings on Tuesday night. We'd write it down. And next week we'd do the next one. And Tuesday was it. Tuesday was the greatest thing in the world when those kids showed up.

Eventually we'd have to script less because the kids then would speak on their own. "Anybody have anything to say?" and they'd get up and talk. And that was the beginning of the power, I think, of the club, when the young people began to talk about their issues and stuff they're dealing with on a daily basis and other people could hear them saying, "I thought I was the only one going through that." I think that's when things really took off.

03-00:56:10

Henry: Those must have been pretty dramatic moving moments. Can you remember a few?

03-00:56:13

Marshall: Every week was powerful. We developed some great speakers. One of my earliest was Germaine King. Macio Dickerson. Those were two of the early ones. They'd just get up and these young boys, fifteen, sixteen, just powerful speakers. And the kids would go like, "Wow."

03-00:56:40

Henry: And they'd talk about their greatest fears, their dreams?

03-00:56:41

Marshall: They talk about everything. They talk about the turf, they talk about drugs, they talk about gangs, they talk about their family. They talk about everything. Anything that was going on. And when they learned a little history they'd talk history and politics. And we just let them talk. We'd just get up. And probably Macio and Germaine in the early years were really, really powerful speakers. When you put your voice out there and you let other young people see that they have a voice, too, it was really, really great.

03-00:57:15

Henry: It was a place to come to once a week for a family and a sense of haven from the streets, right?

03-00:57:21

Marshall: In the early days we actually fed them.

03-00:57:22

Henry: You fed them?

03-00:57:23

Marshall: Yeah. We'd have moms coming in and they'd cook. That got to be a bit much. In fact, if you talk to my early members, they'll say, "Well, we came as much to eat as we did—" But we fed them. Yeah, we fed them. Eventually that's hard to do on a long period of time. But that didn't stop them from coming. They just came because it was safe. And aside from the drug thing that was going on, and what was going on in their home, it was a real turf issue in the city. You had neighborhoods at war with each other. And we had rival neighborhoods who would come together in the room. To me, bring your friends, bring your enemies. So we'd have enemies in the same room. But they always sort of honored what we did at the club, even when they were enemies. I think we had one incident in twenty-six years.

03-00:58:26

Henry: One incidence of violence?

03-00:58:26

Marshall: One incident. A fight.

03-00:58:28

Henry: A fight?

03-00:58:29

Marshall: Yeah. And it was some new kids that came. Yeah.

03-00:58:33

Henry: You had Willie Brown come speak early in the formative years of the club. What was he like and what other speakers came?

03-00:58:39

Marshall: Willie was great. He was the speaker of the Assembly. And he was great. It was Willie Brown. Willie Brown early, Willie Brown late, it's still Willie Brown. He was fabulous. He talked about growing up in Mineola, Texas. I remember the story he told. He said he actually memorized his algebra book because he wanted to pass the class. He couldn't get it all, he was falling behind, so he just says, "I just memorized the book." And I used to say, "You can't memorize an algebra book." But if you've ever seen Willie Brown speak, he uses no notes. He uses no notes. Everything is up here. I said, "Maybe he did memorize it." He was really good. Willie Brown's brilliant and for the speaker of the house to come and talk to our kids like that, it meant a lot to them.

03-00:59:39

Henry: This was before he was mayor?

03-00:59:39

Marshall: This was way before he was mayor. Yeah. And I remember Dave Stewart used to pitch for the Oakland A's. He came. Art Agnos, when he was the mayor, came to speak to the kids. Let me think. I'm trying to think who were some of the speakers. But here's what we found out. We found out that our best speakers were the kids themselves. On a rare occasion we'd get champions like Willie Brown who were really great. But a lot of the speakers weren't as good as the kids were, so pretty soon we said, "You're going to be the speakers. We're going to limit the guests that come. You guys will be the featured speakers every week."

03-01:00:22

Henry: We have to change the tape. Hold that thought.

Audio File 4

04-00:00:02

Marshall: Right. Messing with my time.

04-00:00:04

Henry: Dave Stewart, Sinbad, was a speaker who was very successful as a speaker to the kids. Why was he successful?

04-00:00:10
Marshall:

Sinbad, oh my God, I'm glad you said that. I was a big fan of *A Different World* in those days. That was the show. *Cosby Show* and then *Different World*. Loved the show. Well, I found out Sinbad was performing at a local theater which is no longer here, which it was, we called the Circle Star. Remember the Circle Star Theater? Big thing was to turn around in a circle. So I got in touch with the Circle Star and asked—and I had never done it before—would Sinbad, if he was in town, come by the Boys Club. He actually said yes. And this guy took time off from his schedule and showed up that night and he comes in telling jokes. Sinbad was hilarious. And the word got out that Sinbad was coming, so everybody wasn't at the club came. The place was packed. There must have been 200 people in there. And Sinbad came in. And I expected a comedian. I didn't know how heavy this brother was. This brother knew as much history as I knew, if not more. He had been at the University of Denver. He had been involved in the movement. He was the perfect one to speak to the kids. And he was serious ninety—I think he cracked one joke the whole time. He was unbelievable. And he was on television. This guy is on television every week. When it was over, the kids gave him a t-shirt and they says, "Would you just wear the t-shirt?" He said, "Better yet, I'll wear it on the show." So I didn't hear from him, didn't hear from him, didn't hear from him. And then I got this fax and he said, "I want to wear the shirt on the show. Just give me permission." We gave him permission. I think the meeting had to start late, because *A Different World* probably—if *Crosby* came on at eight o'clock, *Different* would come at 8:30. So we probably had to be stopped. We all got around the television and we watched the whole episode and watched Sinbad with our t-shirt on. Oh, my God, the place exploded. To this day, Sinbad and I are tight. Oh, man, that was a big deal for us. That was special. I met a few other celebrities but nobody of that kind of star power has gotten that close to the kids like Sinbad did. It was wonderful. Years later I met Malik Yoba, who at that time was in a popular TV show called *New York Undercover*, and he and I became really good buddies. But he never made it to the club.

The other one was my favorite rap group of all time. And I hated hip hop until this group called Public Enemy came out and love Public Enemy. Met Chuck D, met them all. They did a concert here and they came. They didn't make it to the club but we set up a special evening for them where people just came and got to talk to them. It was really, really nice. But Sinbad, still my man. Still my man. Great talent.

04-00:03:23
Henry:

The news was consistently bad in those days about Bayview, Hunter's Point. Crack, crack babies, violence in the streets. But you managed to bring some good news about the district to the media in the form of a special project by KGO Channel Seven news. Can you elaborate on that?

04-00:03:41
Marshall:

Our first news exposure. And I've heard that it came about that somebody at Channel Seven said, "We're always doing stories about bad things going, a lot of negative stories about what's going on in those neighborhoods. I heard about this program in Potrero Hill where this guy, these two guys are trying to get these kids to stay on the right path and go to college. Let's go put them on the news." So out came this reporter named Steve Davis and he filmed our tutoring session. By this time I had added tutoring to the family meetings, because I had talked about these kids going to college. So he filmed my tutoring sessions.

04-00:04:26
Henry:

So this was your first foray into actual educating the kids, because you've added the tutoring sessions—

04-00:04:31
Marshall:

Yes. Yes, I added—

04-00:04:32
Henry:

—on top of—

04-00:04:34
Marshall:

Family meeting.

04-00:04:34
Henry:

—this family meeting. Right.

04-00:04:36
Marshall:

Yeah. I talk about them going to college but you—

04-00:04:39
Henry:

Right. But you have to follow-up.

04-00:04:39
Marshall:

Yeah. We got to prepare you in the best way. So we actually had tutoring to help them with their homework. And they filmed the tutoring session. And he came back, says, "Can we come again? Can we?" So he came like for weekly, like four weeks in a row. Every week on a certain night of the week he would say, "We're going to show you more from the remarkable Omega Boys Club in Potrero Hill in San Francisco." After about a month he had a special showing on a Friday and they showed all the clips from—they did a collage of all the clips that they had been showing as news stories over the past month. And a guy named Russ Coglin, who'd been around a while as a Bay Area anchor, a news anchor, Russ Coglin looked into the camera and said, "Isn't this been wonderful what we've been watching? This had been great." And he said, "You know what? If you like what you see, just send in money." He told the viewers at Channel Seven to send in money. So they started sending in money. And we'd get these envelopes and he'd bring them to the club. They would just pile these envelopes and they were envelopes full of dollar bills, right, and checks. And I actually have video of the kids, I remember Marcel

Evans, because this was one of my first kids, opened up the envelopes and found all this money and said, “See, they like us. They like us, they like us.” [laughter] That was just unbelievable. It was like a miracle. That’s how I got my first—we got over \$30,000 and that’s how I got my first money to send my kids on the college tour of historical black colleges and how I got my first money to actually start paying for tuition. It was a miracle.

04-00:06:28

Henry: Who were your early benefactors?

04-00:06:31

Marshall: KGO, Channel Seven. I remember this woman, I can’t remember her name, but she lived in Marin and she saw that story and she said, “Would you come over to my office in Marin?” I said, “Sure.” I walked over there and she walked me and said, “I like what you’re doing. Here’s \$10,000.” Just people came out of the woodwork, just because we were trying to do something, the kids were trying to do something good, and people just give us money. Eventually a woman I knew became my first grant writer and she started writing grants and so we started getting funding from foundations.

04-00:07:14

Henry: Foundations, yeah.

04-00:07:15

Marshall: The whole thing was made up. I always tell people that I didn’t have a five year plan, I didn’t have a venture capitalist, I didn’t have any of that. We just plunged in and we have a saying here, have a number of sayings. One is if you did good things, good things will come to you. And if you’re willing to do right, people are willing to help you. And those kids were willing to do that and I had to believe that good things would happen and they did. They just did.

04-00:07:41

Henry: Yeah. So as the money rolled in you came closer and closer to realizing your dream of actually having support for kids to go to college. Why did you first focus on the historic black schools in the south?

04-00:07:54

Marshall: I think partially because there were a lot of college tours going to—a lot of historical black college tours at that time. There were a couple. A guy in Oakland was really taking kids on those tours. And then I didn’t go to a historical black college. I didn’t know a lot about them. So I was interested in the kids knowing more than I know and if somebody could actually take them there and let them see them, that’d be wonderful. But there was also a practical reason. A lot of my kids were wanting to get out of town. Get out of town. And so yeah. That was probably the combination of the tour, them finding out about HBCUs, and their desire to get out of San Francisco, get out of the Bay Area, and these hot neighborhoods that they were being raised in.

04-00:09:03

Henry: Had you yourself visited the black schools?

04-00:09:04

Marshall: I had never—

04-00:09:05

Henry: You had never been yourself, had you?

04-00:09:06

Marshall: I had never been myself. I had never been myself. So they would come back with these stories. I'd never even been to Atlanta. I remember them coming back with these stories of visiting Morehouse and Clark and Spellman and Tuskegee and Fisk and—

04-00:09:23

Henry: And they visited the tomb of Martin Luther King.

04-00:09:24

Marshall: And Grambling. Yeah. And Atlanta, especially, visiting the King Center and the burial site of Martin Luther King. It just blew my mind. And they came back with this look, their eyes as big, as wide, glazed. But they were poorly prepared students. They had wasted ten, eleven years of school.

04-00:09:50

Henry: So you sent eight that first batch?

04-00:09:53

Marshall: I sent eight.

04-00:09:54

Henry: And what was their experience like?

04-00:09:55

Marshall: The girl was a basketball player. By the way, it's been Boys Club. I should have said this. The second meeting of the club this girl in my seventh grade class showed up and she said, "My friends are there, so I'm going to be here, too." So it became young men and young women right from the beginning, even though we kept the name Omega Boys Club. Because Boys & Girls Club belonged to Boys & Girls Club of America. So the girl went to Delaware State. She played basketball. The seven boys all got accepted into one school. Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia. I don't know why Mr. Spencer took all those kids. Maybe he felt sorry for them. Maybe they had an open door policy. I don't know. But he took all those boys and they came back and they were enrolled in college. I remember they went away, they came home for Christmas, and it was like he actually sent these kids to college. Nobody could believe it. Everybody showed up at the Neighborhood House for the Christmas break meeting and they came back and they were like, "My God, they really went to college. They did it. He did it, he did it." It was something. It was something.

And that first group was the first group and I learned a lot from that first group. The main thing I learned was that just because you get a high school GED or you get a high school diploma or even our tutoring program, it wasn't enough to prepare you for the academic rigors of college. So that led us to some other things. Now we have a formal preparation period. We call it the Leadership Academy. But that was the first thing I learned. They just weren't prepared.

04-00:11:48

Henry:

You can't just send them off. It's one thing to point them in the direction but they have to have the tools.

04-00:11:52

Marshall:

Definitely. They were not ready for college. They were not ready for college. Here's a story. I remember this one young man, and I figured they're down in school, going to class, like I did when I was at USF. I don't know what they were doing down there. But he brought me his report card. He had six units and a 1.3. And I had just given him \$4,000 to go to college. He brought me those grades. Professor, I cried. I sat there at this desk and I just cried. I cried. I said, "How could you do this?" I was crying. I was so hurt. And I said, "Well, I'm not going to do that again. I'm going to prepare you to go." And that was my first big learning. And so they told me what they were deficient in. They were deficient primarily in writing, reading, and research skills, and math. And I didn't have anybody to address the math but I found someone to address the writing, reading, and research. So we actually started a writing class. Did away with the tutoring and strictly writing and, of course, research was involved in that. And then that led to another thing and that led to another thing, to what we have today, which is the Leadership Academy.

04-00:13:08

Henry:

So did you expand the amount of nights during the week that the club members met? Expand the hours?

04-00:13:15

Marshall:

The Tuesday night, which ended up being 7:30 to about 9:00 o'clock, 9:30, we added the writing class before that. So they would get there about 5:00 or 5:30, work until the class started. Work until family meeting and then we would go into the meeting. That became the structure. Sometimes we'd try additional nights. But they weren't permanent. The permanent thing was we just expanded the structure of Tuesday night.

04-00:13:50

Henry:

So that first batch of eight kids that go to the southern schools, the black schools, did they encounter cultural difficulties, as well, being these black kids from San Francisco?

04-00:14:01

Marshall:

Well, they didn't encounter cultural difficulties but, surprisingly to me, they encountered the same kind of turf issues in Atlanta that they encountered here,

except here it was different neighborhoods. There it's different cities. So they went from battling against neighborhoods in San Francisco, Hunter's Point, Fillmore, or if the kids were in Oakland, the various neighborhoods in Oakland, to battling against New Orleans and Chicago. And I didn't know kids from California were so labeled. "You from Cali?" That's what it was. "You from Cali, you from Cali." So they got hated on just because they were from Cali.

The other thing I didn't know, I figured this was a college, right. I had no idea the kids carried handguns at college. So here they are, they're going out and they said, "They got guns right in their dorms." I'm like, "Oh, I thought I got you away from this stuff." You're right there at school in the same stuff. So it was a real wakeup call for me. This was not going to be as easy as I had hoped it would be.

04-00:15:13

Henry:

Who was Peter Lee and what was the significance of his life and death?

04-00:15:18

Marshall:

Well, Peter Lee is the young man I talked about before. Peter Lee Carr Edric whom I talked about, that was my student and got killed. The one I talked about was the drug dealer in the designer jewelry and the one whose killing set off a turf war. And he was really probably the impetus for me really saying, "Enough is enough and starting a boy's club."

04-00:15:48

Henry:

It used to be that teenagers settled their scores with their fists, like you did when you were coming up in Los Angeles and Saint Louis. But in the late eighties and nineties, guns became prominent weapons. What havoc did the easy availability of firearms wreak on the community?

04-00:16:05

Marshall:

How about 200 murders in a year? People were dying faster than you could even keep count, whether it be San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Chicago. With the drugs, the crack, came the weapons as people fought over territory. It was crazy. That's why when you see these movies, you can just see it. *New Jack City* is a real good example. It's hard to believe a whole housing project held hostage by drug dealers, but that kind of stuff happened. Like I said, when I was a kid I saw a thirty-eight. But no, these kids had AK47s and Uzis and nine millimeters and Glocks and banana clips. It's like wow. It was devastating. And we haven't recovered today. The community has not recovered from the eighties and nineties when it comes to crack. It's horrible. It's horrible. When you're in the middle of this and you had these kids, and every day there's somebody dying, every day, every day some family member going's. If they weren't dying, they were going to jail. It was, yeah, bad.

- 04-00:17:41
Henry: How hard was it to keep club members from backsliding to the streets, to the gangs, to stints in juvenile hall?
- 04-00:17:49
Marshall: Very difficult. Very difficult. They're always being tempted. Always, always, always, always, always, always. And they were being called names for being club members. There's squares and suckers and the marks and the punks and the busters and the sellouts and acting white. Little Marshalls.
- 04-00:18:18
Henry: Little Marshalls.
- 04-00:18:20
Marshall: Little Marshalls, oh, yeah. Called little Farrakhans. They were called every name in the book. And here they are trying to do right and people are riding around with all these clothes in these cars. Now, later on, this word wasn't there then but now it would be called bling, bling. Always bling, bling. And all the girls wanted all the drug dealers. The staying true and focused and daring to be different. Again, we developed these sayings over the years. No, we'd lose them. It was a battle. It was a real battle. And it was a battle I later learned how to fight much better. But those early years it was tough. It was really tough.
- 04-00:19:06
Henry: How did you learn to fight better?
- 04-00:19:10
Marshall: Hold on. Somebody opened that door. Can you hear it? Does it interfere with you?
- 04-00:19:19
Henry: I hear it through the headphones but not through the microphone.
- 04-00:19:21
Marshall: Oh, okay, good. It was an echo. I thought it was going to be a problem.
- 04-00:19:26
Henry: It's okay.
- 04-00:19:29
Marshall: Remember I said my first set of learning was that these kids weren't adequately prepared for college just because they got a high school diploma or a GED. My second big learning was this young man who was a gang member decided to get out, a lot of courage, and then said he wanted to go to school. And I said, "Oh, man, I can make that happen. Jobs. But school I can make happen." But you got to be ready. I prepared him. He went through our rigorous preparation program. Gave him a check for \$5,000. Put him on a plane to Grambling State University and he sold drugs on the college campus.

04-00:20:18

Henry: No, he didn't.

04-00:20:19

Marshall: Yes, he did. Yes, he did. He sold drugs. Came back to San Francisco in handcuffs and the officers delivered him in front of me. And he was so unrepentant. He said, "Well, you shouldn't have sent me anyway because I wasn't ready." Here's what I learned from that one thing.

04-00:20:39

Henry: That must have been heartbreaking.

04-00:20:42

Marshall: It was tough because I had given him what he wanted. Young people always say they want an opportunity, just want an opportunity, and I will do well. I have a pet phrase which today guides everything I do. Opportunity and good intention is not enough. He had been given the opportunity. He actually had the good intention to succeed. But here's what I had done. I had taken the boy out of the hood but I hadn't taken the—

04-00:21:15

Henry: Hood out of the boy.

04-00:21:17

Marshall: —hood out of the boy. And I said, "I will never do that again. You will never, ever get anything from me. I will never send another kid to college. I won't even get a kid a job unless I take the hood out of you." And what did I mean by that? Those things that would short circuit opportunity and good intention. You see, his mentality hadn't changed. I hadn't changed his mentality. I had just given him an opportunity. That was the beginning of my real success, because I began to think about how many times does a guy get out of juvenile hall and say, "I'm not coming back," and he really means that he's not coming back. I've even seen guys get jobs making twenty-five, thirty dollars an hour and go back to jail. I have a pet thing about jails. Guys in jail, they don't change. They just do time. There's nothing that produces change. I had to figure out what was it in those young people that I needed to remove or prevent so that they would maximize their opportunity and not disappoint themselves and their families and that's when I began to come up with what was infecting them in the first place and develop this medical model. I had to put it together over a period of time to attack this mindset from which their actions followed. That boy really had the opportunity and he really wanted to do well but he had a drug dealer's mentality and so he just took it down to another place. That's really what makes the difference here. Most people ask me what makes the difference and says, "We actually changed the way that a young person thinks." Thinking drives the action. Most youth programs don't even do the internal work. They just do opportunity. So that's what makes us so very, very different. Since we've done that and figured out how to purge them of all the stuff that short circuits opportunity and good intention, our graduation rate from college has been 94 percent. That's probably 40 percent

higher than the national average anywhere. I remember at USF we used to talk about a 55 percent graduation rate. So we think we've got it down, got the preparation piece down academically and we've got the mentality piece down really well. And we put them through a rigorous process to do something about what we are today calling—to do something about the violent mindset, the disease of violent mindset and to give them an alive and free lifestyle. And that's what makes this place special, yeah.

04-00:24:38

Henry:

There was a young man in those years by the name of Germaine King. What was significant about his life experiences that fueled your knowledge about the forces at work in the community?

04-00:24:48

Marshall:

Germaine King. Germaine King. I'm closing my eyes on this one. McAteer High School. Germaine got kicked out of school for bringing a loaded gun to school. I think his mother brought him to the Omega Boys Club. Germaine King was something else. All these early kids taught me everything. So Germaine lived in Hunter's Point. Germaine was banging for Hunter's Point. And Germaine was one of those kids—you always have an instigator. So if somebody does something, there's always a big mouthed kid that riles everybody up and gets them to go even if they don't necessarily want to go. That was Germaine. I could hear him now. "Guys, don't let him get with us." Even if you didn't want to do it, after Germaine finished talking you'd get in your car and you'd drive over and shoot up the neighborhood.

But Germaine and I became pretty close. I think the first time I really got to Germaine was—when you get a chance to see, and I think this is a real value—there's a lot of value in this film. When you get a chance to see *Fruitvale Station*, the way they shoot the film is behind every so called thug is this complete other side and they show that in the film. That's the side of Trayvon Martin and all these people accusing him of being a thug, we'll never see. Germaine had this complete other side but he couldn't show this side. But when we have our private conversations, he had his street logic, his hood logic front and center and I sort of just—it was, "Okay, yeah, but Germaine, it doesn't make any sense." So one day he wanted to go to this black history class. Because there was this whole other side of him. And he's in Hunter's Point and the black history class was in Fillmore, which was a rival area. So I said, "Germaine, you want to go?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, go." He said, "No, Marshall, man, they'll kill me." I said, "Well, I'll take you over there." He said, "They'll kill you, too." I said, "Well, if they kill me, they kill me." I said, "You still going to the class." And he was like, "Whoa." [laughter] He said, "You going to take me there?" I said, "Yeah, I'll take you." I said, "You got a right to go to the class. I'm not going to—you get in the car with me." It just blew his mind. It blew his mind that I would like risk my life for him, for something he wanted to do. So we had these conversations.

Germaine had a hit put out on him, right. So remember at Hunter's Point and they have two enemies, Sunnydale and Fillmore. They're all against Hunter's Point. So somebody had written Germaine's name on a wall in Sunnydale to be killed. So one day I'm driving through Hunter's Point and Germaine is hiding behind a trash can. "Marshall, they're after me." So he jumps in my car and I bring him over to the club.

Oh, man, we got to be really close. Be really close. He was going to school over here and hanging out in Hunter's Point but he lived in Berkeley. So Tuesday night I'd drive him home and that's how we really got close. They all wear these masks. They all have these personas. And I just stripped that away. And he's just a kid. He's just a kid who's been infected with this street mentality. But he taught me a lot, man. That boy taught me so much. Those early guys, I cut my teeth on them. Germaine, today he works with young people. I sent him to Morris Brown.

04-00:28:58

Henry: Does he?

04-00:28:59

Marshall: Yeah.

04-00:28:59

Henry: He's at Morris Brown?

04-00:29:01

Marshall: He went to Morris Brown?

04-00:29:02

Henry: He went to Morris Brown. .

04-00:29:01

Marshall: He didn't finish, he didn't finish. He came back home. And he works with young people up at juvenile hall right now. He works with a program that helps kids get their GED, get their high school diplomas. Just recently, what you're doing with me, filming me, he brought one of his kids. Because Germaine's in the book, right. So he read about Germaine in the book and Dr. Marshall make a boy's club, so his kid is doing a short video piece on Germaine and me. So he brings the kid to me, and he and Germaine and I are talking. You and I are talking about the old days. And he said, "Man, Mr. King is great. He's great. Thank you for helping him, Dr. Marshall, man. He's one of the best kids in the world." And Germaine has to be forty years old now. He looked at me and he said, "Marshall, thanks, man." Pops. He calls me pops. "Pops, thanks." And he gave me this big hug in front of the kids. And then the kid hugged me. [laughter]

04-00:30:09

Henry: [laughter] Yes. That's a great story. That's a great story.

- 04-00:30:11
Marshall: It's all true. And I say this about Germaine. Germaine let me use his real name in the book. A lot of kids here say, "Doc, we're going to save kids, put my name in the book." Yeah.
- 04-00:30:23
Henry: Took some courage.
- 04-00:30:25
Marshall: Yeah.
- 04-00:30:25
Henry: You had an encounter with the Berkeley Police in those years while ferrying Germaine around. What happened that night in Berkeley?
- 04-00:30:32
Marshall: I dropped Germaine off and my son, we lived in—I think we lived in Pittsburgh at that time. It was Pittsburgh or Concord, one or the other. I think Pittsburgh. And I would make my son come with me. He didn't want to come. "I ain't going over to San Francisco." He's got to get up in the morning and go to school. I said, "No, Malcolm, come with me." And he resisted. But if you ask him now he'll tell you it was great. But then we would ride home. I dropped Germaine off and then Malcolm and I, we'd go, and we went through Berkeley because Germaine lived at Berkeley. So we went through Berkeley. We went up towards the Caldecott tunnel to get there. And this cop pulled me over, officer pulled me over. And I probably did weave a little bit because I was tired. But then the cop made me do a sobriety test and then he looked in my eyes and he said, "You're on drugs. You're on drugs." I said, "I'm not on drugs, Officer, I'm tired." And my son went ballistic. "My dad's not on drugs. He doesn't use drugs." Malcolm went crazy. "He doesn't use drugs. What do you mean he used drugs? He doesn't use drugs, do drugs." He said, "No, you're on drugs and I'm taking you to jail." So he took me to jail. He did. He took me to jail. And put my son and me in the car, took us over to—on the other side of town now. We were by the Caldecott, right. Took us on the other side of town in, I guess, West Berkeley, put me in the jail. My son sat outside the jail just waiting for me on this—
- 04-00:32:25
Henry: On a hard bench?
- 04-00:32:25
Marshall: On a hard bench. Right. This must have been maybe midnight, about eleven o'clock after I dropped Germaine off and we're on our way home. By the time this encounter with the officer finished, kept me there till six o'clock in the morning, made me take a urine test and then let me go. We had to walk all the way back across town, praying that my car was still there. Me and my boy. Now I'm praying that they don't doctor the test because I know I haven't done anything, right. Now I'm saying, "Who knows what the Berkeley PD going do, right?" So I wrote a letter and all that. I was just relieved they didn't come

up with something that wasn't in my system. To this day my son is still angry about that. You see Malcolm, he said, "That was wrong." It's funny. That's why working with police now, being on the police commission, I'm saying all officers are tainted by the activities of any officer anywhere, because all you remember is the uniform. So I always tell them, "You can't afford to have—" "Not that this guy was a bad officer but I thought he used bad judgment. I think he just wanted to do something that night. Because there was really nothing there. He didn't smell any alcohol. So using drugs, he just had to come up with something. But I tell them an officer who's guilty of any kind of misconduct taints you, everybody. So you better make sure your officers are all clean. There's this whole code of silence with a lot of officers, amongst each other. And I'm saying you need to give them up for you because, man, that stuffs a big deal.

04-00:34:30

Henry:

It's so ironic because you were working so hard to prevent kids from falling into this life, whereas you, late one night driving home, get cuffed up by the other side. How did you not feel angry?

04-00:34:43

Marshall:

I felt the same way probably that Barack Obama feels when he talked last week about—and he's the President of the United States, so I certainly can't feel bad. [laughter] He just said—

04-00:34:54

Henry:

Comments about Trayvon Martin.

04-00:34:56

Marshall:

—every black man goes through that. Every black man goes through that. That's just part of being black. And you learn how to not have it stop you and keep moving and try to change policies if you can. But I'm not exempt.

04-00:35:13

Henry:

Yeah. Two members of the club, Sam Robinson and Danny Boy Williams, nearly came to blows at the club over a tip, over turf. What happened with that incident and how have you managed all these years to avert violence at the club?

04-00:35:25

Marshall:

Danny was from Hunter's Point, Sam was from Fillmore. And there was another guy in there, Terrence Hanson, T-Top. So this guy named Barnard Temple, who was sort of the big name thug, two gun, big fisted terror. Barnard was known to just knock people out but he also had a couple of guns. So that night he brought Danny—I'm not sure if Sam was there but I know Terrence was there. And they were going to sell their beef at the club. And somehow Barnard was going to make that happen. So we're having a meeting and this guy walks in. Jack wasn't there that night. Coach and I were there. And somebody said, "That's Barnard Temple." I said, "Who is Barnard Temple?" He comes in and he's going to—now he's walking into our

meeting. I said, “These two got to settle this. They’re going to have a fight.” I said, “There ain’t no fighting here. No, no, no, we’re not having a—they’re from different turfs. We’re going to settle it. We don’t do that here.” Probably if I had really known who I was dealing with it wouldn’t have made a difference. I didn’t care. And he said, “Turf will live forever.” I said, “It’s not going to live forever but I know one thing. You’re not fighting in here.” And so I left Coach with big fearsome Barnard Temple. Even now, you go out to the streets and mention Barnard’s name, this is fifteen years ago, they’ll say, “Oh, bad—“ they use the N word. He was a bad N. So I took Danny Boy and T-Top Terrence back in the room and I said, “No, you all—“ Went through my whole thing. “This is the Boys Club. We’re about no violence. We’re not into turf.” And then they just let it go right there. So I brought them out. Barnard was mad because he didn’t have nobody to fight anymore. [laughter] So he just left. He just left. He just left. And word got around that Barnard Temple had come up to the club and then nothing had happened. They’re like, “Oh, man, you a bad dude.” And we don’t have any guns. We had no guns.

A couple years later Barnard got shot. I think there’s this whole story. Barnard got shot in a retaliation for something else. So I get this call from the hospital and it’s Barnard. No, no, I called him in the hospital, Fillmore General. The only reason he didn’t die, Barnard was one of these physical specimens. He had such a six pack that the bullets didn’t—

04-00:38:16

Henry: Couldn’t go through.

04-00:38:17

Marshall: Couldn’t go through. He should have been dead. So I called him. “Barnard, this is Mr. Marshall.” I wasn’t Dr. Marshall yet. “How you doing?” “I’m fine, man, thanks for calling me, man. I’m sorry for coming up there and doing what I did.” I said, “It’s all right, man. I know, I know.” Barnard then became a fighter.

04-00:38:38

Henry: A boxer.

04-00:38:39

Marshall: A boxer. I told you, he’d knock people out, so he figured if he could do it on the street he could do it for real.

04-00:38:43

Henry: He could do it for money.

04-00:38:44

Marshall: And he was pretty good. He was boxing out of Sacramento and he’s still around. I ran into him a few years ago and he said, “Man, I don’t know what I was thinking, man.” Violence never happened because we wouldn’t let it happen. Coach and I would stand at the door and if somebody had a gun we’d take the gun. “You can’t come in here. Oh, no, no. This is our home. These

are our kids. And if you going to do something here you got to shoot us.” That’s just the way we thought. “You going to have to kill us. This is a special place. You are not messing this place.” And here I am like a father protecting the children. Well, even the hardcore guys get that. They get that. “I don’t have a problem with you but we’re not doing that here. And I’m willing to stand here. And I don’t have a gun. If you want to shoot me, then you’re going to have to shoot me but you’re not coming in here.” And they got it. And the only time we had a problem was when these new kids came. And the fight was actually brewing actually before they got to the meeting. And so they actually had a fight and it spilled over into the streets. But here’s what I did. When that fight happened I said, “I’m not here for this. I shut the club down.”

04-00:40:04

Henry: You shut it down.

04-00:40:05

Marshall: Shut it down. Shut it down.

04-00:40:08

Henry: Because it wasn’t going to be a venue for fighting.

04-00:40:09

Marshall: Shut it down. That’s it. “Look, I’m not wasting my time for you guys are fight.” The club members came and begged me. “We not having no meeting tonight?” Said, “No, we have no meeting. We ain’t having no meeting. Meeting’s gone. That’s it. I’m through.” Cried there. The girls came, the boys came. “Please. We got to have our Tuesday night.” One night I came back and they were just in the room waiting for me to show up. I said, “I don’t know what you all are doing here.” “Please, please. We’ll never do it again.” And they hadn’t even done it. “We’ll never let it happen. Please. We got to have Omega back.” I talked to every one of them. I said, “Look, if this ever happens again.” They couldn’t do without it. They were lost. I made them sweat. I gave them like another week off. And they came back. We haven’t had a problem since.

04-00:41:03

Henry: That’s amazing.

04-00:41:04

Marshall: Yeah.

04-00:41:04

Henry: It’s an amazing story.

04-00:41:05

Marshall: Oh, they begged for that thing to come back. “What are we going to do without Omega?”

04-00:41:12

Henry: You write in your autobiography, “Beyond the proverbial bad influence of friends, it’s startling how many boys and girls are brought into gangbanging and drug dealing by their brothers or their cousins, or in some cases their own parents.” What can you tell me about the experiences of a boy named Lamerle Johnson?

04-00:41:28

Marshall: Lamerle.

04-00:41:29

Henry: Lamerle?

04-00:41:30

Marshall: Lamerle.

04-00:41:30

Henry: Lamerle Johnson.

04-00:41:32

Marshall: It’s interesting. Just before I came here, I saw his brother. Lamerle. Lamerle was as talented a kid as I’ve ever had. Met him in a group home. Parents are in the Black Guerilla Family, BGF, or the family’s a member of BGF. His father is, too. And Lamerle joined the club. Very personable. Very good looking boy. Very smart. Great personality. Very charismatic. That same reporter that came, he got him in an internship at KGO Channel Seven and Lamerle did this video documentary of his home. Sort of like he went back to his neighborhood and filmed it and he did a great job. He really did a good job with that video. And they showed it on television. They showed it. Got Lamerle an apartment in Oakland and, of course, sent him to college. Now, mind you, this is before I knew anything about the disease of violence and the mentality. I just was into opportunity and good intention and history and culture. That was my thing. If you knew what I knew you wouldn’t do what you do.

I sent Lamerle down to college, Morris Brown. He went to Morris Brown. And Lamerle got kicked out of school like three months later for fighting. Now here I’m paying for this kid to go to college. I had him an apartment. Got him an internship. He goes out and he gets kicked out of school. He comes home on the Greyhound bus. They sent him home. I said, “What are you doing fighting in school?” Here’s another thing. Now, mind you, I remember going down there. I go down there on a tour. I went down there to speak and I remember walking onto Morris Brown’s campus and seeing Germaine King, Lamerle Johnson and Andre Akin. All in the middle of this wonderful college atmosphere, and like a thousand girls. I said, “Boy, you ain’t giving this away, right. So here he comes home and Lamerle’s like—I said, “Lamerle, okay. It’s not the end of the world. What’s the Donnie McClurkin song, *We Fall Down but We Get Up*.” By this time Lamerle is like, “I’m going to do it my way now.” He’s convinced he’s going to do it. And I don’t know what happened to

the boy. He claims that his family didn't like me trying to help him because he had been groomed to be the black Don Corleone, Michael Corleone.

04-00:44:42

Henry: In the Black Guerilla—

04-00:44:44

Marshall: In the BGF. And they didn't like it. So they sent him up there one night. While the meeting was going on he tells me to come out. So I leave and Jack is doing the meeting. And he tells me, "My family sent me up here to—they don't like what you're doing." I said, "Okay." So he proceeds to lecture me on what the real world is like. "Real world is not like you think it is, Marshall. Real world is prison and drugs and everything and what you're doing is a nice thing but that's not the real world." Now he's telling me this. I'm listening to him. At that moment I just went—he was sitting in a chair just like you. And I put my foot on the chair. I never put my hand on him. And I kicked him all the way across the room and then I went into a lecture on slavery, the Middle Passage. Look, you've seen the movie *Amistad*?

04-00:45:44

Henry: Yeah.

04-00:45:44

Marshall: I had *Amistad*. I saw people throwing their children into the water. I went crazy. I must have had an out of body experience. "The real world? Let me tell you." I know I did. I scared him. I had to scare him. I had to scare him. Because it had to be controlled rage about everything that had happened to the African people. And he comes to tell me about the real world?! I went bananas on that boy. I know I scared him. He said, "Marshall, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. They just sent me up for it. I didn't mean that. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it." Look, I know I did. And I just remember what I did. That hurt. I was like, "Do you know what's happened to our people?" I went through that whole thing. And I don't think I've ever done it that deeply with anybody. Because here it is. The real world. Oh, God, even now I'm hearing that, I get mad about it. But Lamerle is in too deep now, right. He can't go back to his family. So Lamerle comes up with this scheme. You got to listen to this. He's given up the right way. He thinks he knows more than a doctor. So he concocts a scheme. Lamerle's big weakness was always material. Material values over people. That's what we call it. He concocts a scheme to rob a drug dealer. They're going to kidnap a drug dealer and rob him. Now, he's going to put a little crew together to do this, right. So the first person he asks are the two members of the club. He asked Andre Aikins, who works for me today. So he goes over to pick up Andre. Andre lives in {inaudible} and in the car, he's driving his car, he's saying, "We getting ready to do this job and I want you and I don't need you to do anything, just to drive, right," he says, "And I'll give you ten Gs." Right. And he says, "And you won't have to ask Marshall for any more money to go to school."

04-00:47:48

Henry: Wait a second.

04-00:47:49

Marshall:

So he's running this. And when you meet Andre, you're going to be—because you say how difficult it is to keep them from being pulled back in. So they always getting pop quizzes which can turn into final examinations. So Lamerle is like just sweetening the pot. "You can get the money, this much." And Andre is listening to this. Now, he's picked him up in east Oakland, he's in west Oakland now because he's talking to him all the way. And he said, "I have to do what? I have to do what?" And he said, "Lamerle, you crazy." He said, "Let me out of this fucking car right now. You out of your mind." Andre had no way home. He gets out of the car, leaves Lamerle and catches a bus all the way back to east Oakland. He said, "I had nothing to do with this." So now Lamerle's got to get some more people. He gets some more people. The other guy he was going to get was his other buddy because Lamerle and Andre and Germaine were sort of the three musketeers, three amigos. Well, Lamerle doesn't ask Germaine. And later we figured he didn't ask Germaine because he didn't want to cut anybody else in. He didn't want to give up any of the money. Germaine and Lamerle were so close. I don't know if Germaine could have resisted like Andre did. Right. So he robs this drug dealer and somebody poses as an off duty Oakland police officer, off duty cop. And they kidnap a drug dealer, hold him for ransom on Friday. By Monday Lamerle's in jail. He couldn't even make it through the weekend. There was this woman over the weekend, I don't know if you heard this story, she's a Tiffany employee. Did you hear that story?

04-00:49:55

Henry: Un-unh.

04-00:49:56

Marshall:

She got arrested, she's getting all this time, for stealing five million dollars worth of jewelry. And apparently what she did, she would take the jewelry out to show people and then she would go back and say it was damaged or lost and then she'd go sell the jewelry herself. Why people think they can get away with this stuff is beyond me, right. She's an employee, right. What makes her think she can just do this? This is crazy. So what made Lamerle think he could get away with this I have no idea. These schemes these people come up with. So Lamerle's in jail. The story comes out. He's busted. The kids, "Lamerle's in jail." But the problem is now Lamerle is at the mercy of the system now. And since Lamerle's family is in the BGF, they're going to go hard on him. So Lamerle goes to trial. Goes through the whole thing. And you know this from reading the book. They gave that boy life plus eleven years. A life. Look at that. Life. Lamerle's still in this jail to this day and he is the biggest learning experience we've ever had around here. He had it all. He had it all. He was in college, he was talented, he's bright. But a lot of the stuff we build around here, and the sayings we build around here is you're only one bad decision away. We tell the kids that all the time and I use Lamerle.

04-00:51:37
Henry: One bad decision.

04-00:51:39
Marshall: You're only one bad decision away. He made one bad decision.

04-00:51:42
Henry: Was there something the club could have done to cut off that bad decision point?

04-00:51:48
Marshall: Had I know what I know now I would have recognized his weakness, his material values, and I could have addressed that. Remember I said in those days I got the boys out of the hood but I didn't take the hood out of the boys. If I had known what I know, I would have drilled directly on that. Again, he was unprepared. The hood was still in him big-time. I didn't understand or know about that mentality. I was operating on opportunity and good intention. Yeah.

04-00:52:20
Henry: Why did he get life? Why so heavy a sentence?

04-00:52:24
Marshall: Probably because his family's in the BGF. Yeah.

04-00:52:27
Henry: They saw no hope for him.

04-00:52:29
Marshall: No. They probably wanted to get his family. I don't even think it's a matter of anything to do with him. They don't care about him.

04-00:52:37
Henry: Well, Dr. Marshall, thank you for another session. I think we'll go one more if you have it in you.

04-00:52:43
Marshall: Yeah. Because we just did the middle.

04-00:52:45
Henry: We're in the middle. We got a ways to go.

04-00:52:47
Marshall: We still got another fifteen years to go.

04-00:52:50
Henry: Right.

04-00:52:53
Marshall: Oh, man. And he isn't bored yet, so he's hanging in there with us.

04-00:53:00

_:

Great interview. Stop it now.

[End of Interview]

Interview #3 August 5, 2013
Audio File 5

05:00:00:00

Henry:

Okay, today is Monday, August 5, 2013. My name is Neil Henry and I'm sitting with Joseph Marshall in his office in San Francisco. Dr. Marshall is the founder of the Omega Boys Club, recently renamed Alive & Free, and which last year celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The mission of the Boys Club has been to take disadvantaged and troubled inner city kids and guide them to college educations. It has been remarkably successful in this mission and has become a national model as a social service and education program. This is the third of several conversations I am having with Dr. Marshall about his life and times. Last time we discussed the beginnings of your professional life as an educator and founder of the Omega Club and I'd like to continue in that vein today. My first question is who was Andre Aikins, how did you meet him, and what does his experience say about the Omega Club's vision and mission?

05-00:00:53

Marshall:

Andre. Well, let me back up here. So there was summer school at Castlemont High School and they invited the Boys Club to speak. I don't know if they canceled second period or whatever, and they put all the students from Castlemont summer school into the auditorium and at some point we came on stage and in those days we had the t-shirts. It's early. We had the I don't do drugs t-shirts on. And some of the club members spoke and then Jack spoke and then I spoke. And it's funny. When Andre saw us, we had on what looked like him to uniforms, he thought that we were a basketball team or something like that. And then he heard Jack speak and Jack said, "What's up, my brothers?" And he said, "Who is this white man Santa Claus looking guy who is saying 'What's up, my brothers?'" And then I spoke. And apparently what resonated with Mr. Aikins was—I call him Mr. Aikins now—Andre, was, I said, "If you knew what I knew, you wouldn't do what you do." And then I did the rest of my thing. And afterwards he came up to me and says, "What do you know that will stop me from doing what I'm doing because I'm good at it and I like it." And by that he meant selling drugs. So I proceeded to just tell him what I knew and it was basically about the sacrifices that people have made for him. All those heroes and sheroes that had come before to put him in a position to get an education, here he was throwing it away. I must have struck something because he then became interested in the program. He lived in East Oakland and then his probation officer brought him over here to the club the first night. He was on probation for something. And that's how we met. And he started coming. I ended up taking him home every Tuesday night. Little did I know that that chance meeting—and it's funny, because we always talk about it, that he was the only one out of the whole auditorium that came up and talked to me. Led to a total turnaround in his life.

05:00:03:38

Henry: And he was the only one in the audience who followed up and went to the club and everything?

05-00:03:42

Marshall: Yeah, as far as I know. Yeah. Maybe a couple hundred kids in there, maybe more. He was the one that that particular phrase, “If you knew what I knew, you wouldn’t do what you got to.” The rest literally is the history of his life, which has turned out really great.

05:00:04:07

Henry: What was it about his background that was different from the typical kid?

05-00:04:13

Marshall: Well, later I learned that even though Andre was doing nefarious activities, street activities, that he was selling dope and repping for his hood, he had a mother and a father. Turns out his father wasn’t the nurturing kind of dad. He only disciplined, he didn’t do anything else. And so his dad was an unemotional guy, so Andre and him weren’t very close. His mom was the emotional side.

05:00:04:53

Henry: But he was physically there, which was different.

05-00:04:55

Marshall: Yeah, he was physically in the house. I remember meeting him. There was Andre, his sister, Deidre, and I think his brother’s name was Anthony. I better check on that. But his brother was sort of developmentally delayed and I remember going to Andre’s house. The house was so small, Andre was almost like living in the equivalent of a closet. And I remember one thing that struck me. For some reason I went over there and I saw his clothes and he had all these neatly arranged—everything was neatly arranged. I was stunned really. This boy in the hood. Everything was laid out. He was matching everything. He had different baseball caps and he had the same color shoes. He was impeccable. Everything matched. But I just remember that living space wasn’t much of a living space. But yeah, he had a mom and a dad at home. But neither one of them knew what he was doing. So later, Andre grew up in front of his dad, everybody knew his dad but they didn’t know what he was doing out there. And his dad was the kind of “Just don’t let me find out” kind of dad. He did a lot of discipline with not much explanation.

05:00:06:19

Henry: Right. So he came to the club. And what sort of personality did he provide for the club? Was he a speaker? Was he a leader of the group?

05-00:06:33

Marshall: Well, first of all, Andre was from Oakland and at that time most of the kids were from San Francisco. Not all of them but a lot of them. And so he was naturally skeptical of coming over to the city. And Andre was a fighter. So he was used to fighting. He expected a hostile welcoming. Certainly a

threatening welcome from these brothers that he didn't know. And I remember the first time he came, Corey Monroe walked up and he said, "How you doing, brother?" and shook his hand and he was like, "What is this?" But Andre was a great personality as he relaxed and let his guard down, because when he wanted to see was very, very different environment than what he believed what he would see. Dre is more like a rock. He's a leader in that sense. He's a good speaker but he's a very, very solid guy. In fact, when he was out on the street, he was kind of the enforcer. People went to get him to do it and he would do anything. He was the guy like, "You need something done?" If he had been in the mafia he'd have been a hit man, which he probably—I don't know all the stuff he did. He's very solid. And he's pretty trustworthy. So yeah. He's interesting because no matter what group he was in he would be like the moral conscience of the group. So if he's a gangster, which he was, if you could have a moral compass. But there's rules and we all go by the rules and blah, blah, blah, blah. But now he was on the other side, so he was very loyal and true and dedicated to the club.

05:00:08:43

Henry:

It took a lot of self-awareness and self-knowledge and courage on his part to make that change because he was evidently successful on a certain scale as a drug dealer. You mentioned he had the clothes and everything and he was providing for himself and he was making a profit. But what was it about the club? What was absent in his life that he could see that the club could provide for him?

05-00:09:06

Marshall:

Well, that's a good question and probably he can give you a better answer than me. No matter how "successful" you are out there, it's a very tenuous existence and it's very scary and you really can't trust anybody. So I know a big thing for him is one of his friends that he was dealing drugs with, they were out on a corner in East Oakland plying their trade and Dre left to go home and get a jacket because he was cold. And while he was gone somebody came by and did a drive-by and killed his friend. And that really shook him up. He didn't give it up but it shook him up. But he also knew had he not gone home, he probably would have gotten killed, too, because he would have been right there when they came by and did it. So he was searching for something better but just didn't know that it was out there. Now, this is a kid that had been kicked out of Oakland schools, been kicked out of Richmond schools. He had run out of schools to go to. Weren't many school districts left. So I'm not saying he was doing it out of necessity, because that's not the answer. It was just that he wanted something else and just didn't know where to find it or if it was even possible.

05-00:10:33

Henry:

And during that year in the club before he went away to college did you notice a change in him?

05-00:10:38
Marshall:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Sure. Like I said, when he was in the street side he was all the way. When he came this way he was all the way. We have a saying. We have a million sayings. One of our coachisms is, “All you have to do is turn right and keep straight.” And I refer to that as the Andre Aikins coachism, because when he turned right he completely went straight. Now, there were times he had lows. I remember a couple of times when just things—yeah, because he tried to join the Army and they rejected him because he told them the truth about selling. They said, “Have you ever used drugs?” He said, “No, but I’ve sold them.” [laughter]

05-00:11:20
Henry:

[laughter] So they rejected him from the military.

05-00:11:20
Marshall:

So much for full disclosure, right. So they rejected him. So he was like, “You know, damn.” And I told him, “Dre, I don’t know if you want to go in the Army, right.” He said, “No, I’m going to go there, right.” So he did. And then just life. He’d run out of money. And I said, “Look, Dre, why don’t you just give up this Army thing.” And now he had to give it up. Said, “Why don’t you go to school?” But he hadn’t graduated from high school. I said, “Go get your GED.” “Well, I don’t know about a GED.” But this struggle. Because when you’re used to having money and now you don’t have any money, it feels like there’s a hole in your pocket. There’s a hole in your soul. That whole lifestyle is based on material values. So I remember one night in particular, we were in West Oakland, he came out and he just had hit bottom. These kids are like the stock market. Three steps forward, two steps back, right. So he was in one of these nadir periods, down in the valley. And so I said, “What? No, no, no. I’m not having it. No, you’re going to do right.” I gave one of my Dr. Marshall talks and I remember what he said to me. He said that day, he said—I don’t know if he’ll recount it this way but he’ll probably recount what he said. He said, “Well, everything I keep trying not working.” He said, “From now on, whatever you say I’m going to do. I’m going to do it your way.” I said, “Thank you. Finally.” So after that, he said whatever I said to do he would do, no matter how skeptical he was. Whatever notion popped into his mind, he just really did in that sense follow the doctor’s orders and he got his GED and he was off to Morris Brown College.

The biggest hurdle he had at college was since he had wasted so much time in high school he felt like he didn’t belong. A lot of those college professors let him know he didn’t belong. He’s a very tough minded kid but that’s a college, that’s a totally academic setting, and he felt like just, “Man, I don’t know if I can make it. I can make it.” And he had this math professor. He tells a story about this math professor, who he went in and the math professor said, “Why are you here? Why are you here?” And then he said, “You’re not ready for college. You’re not ready. You’re not ready for this.” And he said, “I know.” But Dre humbled himself and he went and talked to the professor and said, “Whatever you want me to do.” And the professor said, “Look, these are my

office hours. You show up.” And he knows the complete details but it was something like, “You show up at these hours, you go to the library, I’ll help you. If you don’t—“ And he laid it out for him and Dre did exactly what—and he passed that math class.

05-00:14:25

Henry: How about that.

05-00:14:29

Marshall: It was either sink or swim, right, and he was not coming home. So he did exactly what the professor did and lo and behold, this kid who was a horrible, horrible math student ended up getting a degree in math education [laughter] in college and then became a math teacher just like I had been in the public schools.

05-00:14:53

Henry: And now he’s working for Alive & Free, right?

05-00:14:55

Marshall: Now he’s working for Alive & Free. He’s my right hand. It’s funny. And it was good because he had blazed his own trail, so to speak. He had gotten off on his own career as an educator, taught math for a number of years and then became an assistant principal. Where have I heard that before? Just like me. And then actually mentioned one day about a career change. And it just so happened that we were looking for an operations manager and the two fit. And he’s number two man around here. And I said, “Now, did you think years ago when I would take you home from the Boys Club, we would sit in the car in front of your house and then say—“ he called me Marshall. Said, “Marshall, I’m hungry, let’s go to McDonald’s.” He can eat. To this day he can eat. It’s a good thing McDonald’s food is not expensive. For twenty bucks I could get him everything. And then we’d go back and sit in front of his house. He never wanted to get out of the car. Never wanted to get out of the car. And I had these cassette tapes. He said, “Who is that?” And I had taped two speeches of Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” and “Message to the Grassroots”. And we’d sit and we’d go over them speeches. And if you talk to him now he can tell you from memory half the speech of Malcolm. He had never heard anybody like Malcolm. “You’re nothing but a house, Negro.” We’d talk about Malcolm, talk about Martin Luther King’s march on Washington, white clown or black clowns. He talked about it’s the ballot or the bullet. He just never heard it. Again, it was great. He was really great. So yeah.

And maybe the best thing, he got his degree working here, he’s a true role model for all the young people. He’s a guy you can’t fool with anything. Anything. Nothing gets by Mr. Aikins. But the best thing for me is as problematic as his father was for him, he has two sons and he is the exact opposite of his dad. He is the most nurturing dad you’ll ever find. He’s a great father to his two boys.

05-00:17:31

Henry:

That's a lovely story. You obviously get a lot out of mentoring. I can just see you sitting in the car listening to the tapes with Andre. That's fulfilling for you, isn't it?

05-00:17:43

Marshall:

Sure, sure. It's great. Alive & Free is really an accurate description. I'm trying to keep these young people alive and free. And if they don't get it, they're going to die or go to prison. But it's funny. My dissertation, when I got my PhD, I actually tried to prove myself. So my dissertation was called, the acronym was SONPABMA. Because I remember when I took it into my advisor he said, "What's that?" I said "The Effect of Significant Other Non-Parental Adults on Black Male Adolescents." So I wanted to prove that even if you weren't their parent you can have a significant effect on their development. And obviously that came from my teaching experience and then later working with the club. So that dissertation ended up turning into the book *Street Soldier*. I love doing it. It's my calling, I guess you would put it like that. Yeah.

05-00:18:58

Henry:

Yeah. Who was Enola Maxwell and how was she important to the early success of the club?

05-00:19:03

Marshall:

Enola was the grand dame and executive director of the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House and she let us meet there. We needed a meeting place. So Jack knew her. And I knew her, too, but Jack knew her better. And Jack said, "Can the kids in our club meet here?" So for the first seven years, from 1987 to 1993, yeah, 1994, we met in the basement of the Potrero Neighborhood House and she allowed us to do it. The other thing she allowed us to do was we needed a fiscal sponsor for our organization and the Neighborhood House became our fiscal sponsor, which allowed us to just concentrate on program. So I didn't have to worry about a board of directors, the board meetings, the board minutes, or any of that. I just worked on us and the kids and getting our program to function well.

05-00:20:06

Henry:

When did you decide to incorporate as a non-profit and what was that process like?

05-00:20:11

Marshall:

We sort of outgrew the Neighborhood House. I didn't have an office. I had a desk in their office and it was literally a desk and I had a file cabinet and pretty soon we got almost bigger than the Neighborhood House did. The Neighborhood House did. It was a case of I guess the tail wagging the dog rather than the other way around. So at the end of 1993 we decided it was time to go off on our own and put a board together. I met an attorney and she said she'd help me do it. She actually then became one of my first board members. And that was a whole new experience. But it not only was the time, I was

ready for it. Remember, in the early years I was still in the school district either teaching or being a school administrator and did the club after school. So when we finally incorporated I also said—we wrote a grant and it allowed me to become the full-time executive director. It was a little scary because we're our own 501(c)(3) and I had to have my own accountant and my own board and all that sort of stuff. But looking back on it, it was pretty seamless really. Yeah. My early board was my first accountant, a couple other people, and my friends. It was a small board. So they just allowed us to keep doing what we were doing. Yeah, it worked out pretty well.

05-00:21:55

Henry: Yeah. And the meetings, you met monthly, the board?

05-00:22:00

Marshall: Board, yeah. We still do.

05-00:22:02

Henry: You still do?

05-00:22:02

Marshall: Once a month, yeah. Once a month. We had to start doing audits. We didn't do an annual report for years. I had to learn a lot about the non-profit way and how it functioned and being executive director. Being the director wasn't so hard because I had been a school administrator. But, still, it was non-profit. I had to learn how to save these young people the non-profit way. A lot of rules tied to that.

05-00:22:28

Henry: Yeah. And where physically did you move after leaving the Neighborhood House?

05-00:22:31

Marshall: We came right here, this building right—

05-00:22:33

Henry: You've been here since '94?

05-00:22:33

Marshall: Yeah. Came here in the fall of '93 and been here—I think officially we signed. Yeah. But when we got here we only had the admin room, the office.

05-00:22:47

Henry: Right. That office was the only one you had?

05-00:22:49

Marshall: That's the only room we had here. And there was people on the second floor and the other offices on this first floor. And gradually they moved out and we kept expanding, we kept expanding. And we actually leased this from a school district and it's worked out pretty well. And we've been here since 1993. What's that? Twenty years now in the same building.

- 05-00:23:16
Henry: Yeah, yeah. And where does the club physically meet in this building? Where do they get together and when?
- 05-00:23:22
Marshall: So the room where all the magic happens is right across the hall.
- 05-00:23:26
Henry: Near the stairs?
- 05-00:23:29
Marshall: Yeah. It's the first room when you go out.
- 05-00:23:31
Henry: It's to the left of the stairs?
- 05-00:23:30
Marshall: Yeah, to the left of the stairs.
- 05-00:23:32
Henry: Okay, right.
- 05-00:23:34
Marshall: That's the place where it all goes on. You walk in there one way and you come out another. [laughter]
- 05-00:23:44
Henry: And is there an age limit to the members?
- 05-00:23:50
Marshall: We've settled on young people that we see. See, I'm older so everybody's young to me now. But the ones that come here, the ones we actually get our hands on are between thirteen and twenty-three, with probably the main group between sixteen, seventeen, and twenty-one. Sixteen, seventeen, and twenty-one.
- 05-00:24:19
Henry: And how often is it? Still Tuesday nights?
- 05-00:24:22
Marshall: Still Tuesday night. Yeah, the light is always on on Tuesday night. That's what any club member would tell you. The light is on on Tuesday night. And we had a Thursday class now. It's evolved into a Thursday class. We had a Thursday class in the spring semester of every year for that group that's going off to college in the fall. So we call it academic boot camp. We got to get you ready, six months later you're going off to college. So we actually transition to—I'm Dr. Marshall all the time, then I'm Professor Marshall. So I'm a whole different guy, I'm a whole different guy. We simulate a college environment for the first six months, that six months, so that when they get ready to go back they will have been prepared.

05-00:25:11

Henry: And your board membership has changed from sort of the accountant and close friends to some of the leading figures in San Francisco, hasn't it?

05-00:25:19

Marshall: Yeah. The sort of mom and pop board, we've evolved to a serious board. And actually some of the mom and pop people still with me because they just wanted to stay. One in particular is with me. I've known him for years. But what happened was in the early years we were heavily dependent on, almost 90 percent, and remember, this is during the nineties when money was sort of flowing everywhere. And I thought because we were good we were getting all this money. But it was more like everybody had money to give away. We were heavily dependent on private foundations. There were times when 90 percent of our money was from private foundations. And when the dot.com bubble came and burst all of that, we had to realize we had to diversify our funding, develop other revenue streams. And the board had to take more of a role in fundraising. And there were board members who didn't want to do that. So we did two things. I let those members who didn't want to be involved, didn't want to help with that go. They were adamant they didn't want to do that. So I let them go and I also expanded the size of the board because in those years it was a small board, seven. And I doubled it in one year. Went to fourteen. And we decided we were going to create some other additional revenue streams. We're pretty successful at that. We're probably now maybe two-thirds dependent on private foundations and we've created other earned income streams. Have gotten some city funding, which we didn't have before. And maybe the biggest piece is our individual donor base has expanded. Yeah.

05-00:27:27

Henry: And back when you began there was a budget of zero and today your annual budget amounts to about what?

05-00:27:33

Marshall: And it's funny because people say, "You do all you do on that? That doesn't sound like a lot of money." But it's now one point five million. It's about, what, a million and a half.

05-00:27:50

Henry: And has it stabilized at about a million and a half over the last few years?

05-00:27:53

Marshall: It's actually expanded. It was about one point one, one point two but we took on some more programs. We're in a partnership with the city, the county of San Francisco, this community ambassador program. We're the community partner with them. So that has expanded the budget a bit. Scholarship budget obviously is—

05-00:28:19

Henry: Is that part of the one point five? The scholarships?

05-00:28:21
Marshall:

That's one point five. The scholarship is about—well, I budgeted generally about 400,000. I usually budget it high because I want to make sure I don't run out of scholarship funds. But yeah. There was a time I really tried to manage that portfolio because I got more kids and I don't want to turn anybody away. But it's usually about \$400,000 a year in scholarship. It's grown but it's grown in accordance to the things that we're doing and the programs that we've taken on. We just do so many more things than we did in those early years. The glamour program around here has always been the scholarship program. Taking the kids from the neighborhoods, making sure they stay alive and free, and sending them on to college alive and free and educated. But we've taken a whole bunch of other things since then in an effort to reach more kids and that's all reflected in the budget, in the budget growth.

05-00:29:34
Henry:

How many students do you fund a year?

05-00:29:39
Marshall:

Well, it never works this way. This year we had seven graduate and we're sending—all these meetings—I want to say thirteen or fourteen.

05-00:29:57
Henry:

Starting?

05-00:29:59
Marshall:

Starting. So this year twice as many are going in that are coming out.

05-00:30:06
Henry:

Right. And are these four year scholarships?

05-00:30:09
Marshall:

We fund them all the way through school. The way this works is the club makes up what financial aid and the families don't make. And you can figure a lot of families don't do much, if anything. So it's really financial aid and the club. And I sit down with everybody and I'm the guy that picks up the calculator and goes through all this and I ask the family what you can put in and they'll say, "Well—" I'll say, "We need you to do this." I'm the one that makes all the numbers work. Gotten a lot more savvy over the years. My first college graduate was in 1993 so I have twenty years now of getting them to make wise choices about where to go to school. At first the kids just wanted to get out of town and go anywhere. And then they sort of did it based on their majors. That first group, they just wanted to go to Atlanta. But I try to make more academically savvy—and lately I've really tried to make them more financially savvy about where they can go to school for the least amount of money without compromising—

05-00:31:36
Henry:

The quality of education they receive.

05-00:31:36
Marshall:

—the quality of education. In fact, now they have to cost out their entire education over four years. So they got an idea about how much it'll cost and how much they'll have to borrow. And this is probably something I couldn't have done twenty years ago or fifteen years ago or ten years ago. I had two students, they were accepted to—actually twin girls. They were accepted to Howard and Spellman and they turned them down for UC Santa Cruz and UC Davis strictly based on the money.

05-00:32:19
Henry:

On the finances.

05-00:32:19
Marshall:

Yeah. And that would not have happened. Because they had been through—we call it Financially Alive & Free. First I keep them alive and free and now I have to teach them to be financially alive and free. And they really saw, "I don't want to borrow \$40,000 over four years. I don't want to make my parents take out a PLUS loan." But I have told them that if that's an experience that they want, when they get to school, go right in right away and see what the exchange programs are at that school with historically black colleges." They might get that black college fix in anyway. So yeah, really savvy about it.

On the average, you asked about, I'll say we probably average between—have a rolling number between forty and fifty kids a year in school all the time that I'm on the hook for.

05-00:33:18
Henry:

You're on the hook for.

05-00:33:20
Marshall:

I'm on the hook for.

05-00:33:21
Henry:

That's pretty good. So the board got into a fundraising focus. And there was a man who was celebrated at the twenty-fifth anniversary dinner. He was a member of your board and he was evidently celebrated as a good fundraiser. Do you remember that man?

05-00:33:40
Marshall:

Well, I don't know if it was Larry Solomon.

05-00:33:44
Henry:

That was it. Okay. Larry Solomon, yeah.

05-00:33:45
Marshall:

Now, Larry is a member of my advisory board. He says, "I don't want to do board stuff." But he is a big champion of the club. He's on my advisory board and Larry sort of knows his role is to bring potential funders to the group. He is a vice president of Capital, the Capital Group. And they had, a few years

ago, it's got to be almost ten years now. They had a luncheon and they brought various community groups in and we each had three minutes to speak about our particular organization and what we do. And Larry tells a story that after he heard me speak he wanted to throw his wallet at me because he just loved what we were trying to do with the young people. He's since been really great. He's done the, "I'm going to give a lunch, invite all my friends. I'm going to pay for all the—get in there." Larry's produced a lot of money for the organization and to this day we talk about the organization and it's possibilities. Right now he's really interested in the gun buyback programs that we're doing. So he really likes that. I'll be calling on him very soon because I'm getting ready to do one. Do a couple this year, yeah. But no, he's a great guy, wants to help the kids, he wants to help me keep young people alive and free.

05-00:35:33

Henry:

This gun buyback program, is this something new that you've been doing? What other fields are you involved in besides the club?

05-00:35:40

Marshall:

Well, like I said, the glamour program has always been the hands on, comes to the club on Tuesday night, alive, free, college education. Primarily working with young people thirteen to twenty-three. But not everybody can come here, or will come here. So the other important piece is me going to them. So I get a lot of educators that will come here and say, "This is amazing. You got these kids coming from everywhere. They got an after school program. They don't want to be in school and they're sitting here," and they're going, "It's perfect order. You got a 94 percent college graduation rate, ninety-four, ninety-five percent, which is higher than most school districts with this population. Would you come help me with my kids at my school?" That request led to what we call the school adoption program. And the first school I ever adopted just happened to be the school that Mr. Aikins was working at, Frick Middle School in East Oakland. Basically the school adoption is an attempt to create Omega away from Omega. And it's a tough thing to do because you have to teach the staff the methodology that we use and then they have to give it to the kids. And it's always difficult because unless a school commits to this and wants it, because it evolves learning something new, modeling it yourselves, and then giving it to the young people. And most educators and teachers, they don't want to do that. They got too much to do. Have so much to do. So in its purist form that's what school adoption is. And we've had some really good school adoption programs. We really knew what worked because when we started at Mr. Aikin's school, at Andre's school, the principal wanted it. We have this criteria for school adoption and it begins with the administration saying, "I want it." The entire staff was trained and they went in it wholeheartedly. That became what we call an Alive & Free school. To this day if you go out to Frick Middle School there is a mural of all the Alive & Free principals on the wall. And I've been told, I've always been told, it's never been vandalized.

When they ran at it full-time we actually in that middle school created an Omega away from Omega and their test scores went through the roof. Their test scores were so remarkable they thought maybe that somebody had cheated. It didn't. And we evaluated everything and one of the things—they talked to the kids and they talked to the staff, “Why have you done so well on standardized testing than you had before?” And the kids just said, “Well, we just tried harder. We didn't even try before we'd get the test. The test didn't mean anything to us. But we were in an academic mindset now because of Alive & Free. We tried harder. And they said the staff expected more of us and we expected more of ourselves because we were there.

05-00:39:13

Henry: So did they set aside a room for the club to meet and was there certain hours? Certain days?

05-00:39:18

Marshall: No, we taught the staff.

05-00:39:20

Henry: You taught the—

05-00:39:22

Marshall: We did what we call a training called the Alive & Free Training Institute and we taught the staff how we basically got the academic flower to bloom here at the club and we taught them and they did it right there. There's no secret to this. We have high expectations and we helped the kids deal with the issues they bring to the academic setting. So we don't kick anybody out. These kids got problems. So we know you got problems, we help you deal with the problems but we also expect while we're helping you deal with the problems that you continue to work hard and be great students. So we actually say we check and challenge the students. And most public schools that I've seen, and I was an administrator for years so I can talk about it, I was in the district for years, they have low expectations of the kids. They just don't believe they can do it. So we taught them that. And they started doing it. So it wasn't that we set aside a room. All the teachers did exactly what I do or Ms. Estelle does. When Mr. Aikins started teaching there, his kids had the highest math scores in the school or maybe around in the district. And he had perfect order in his class. So the people were going and saying, “How you doing this? They're tearing up everybody else's class and they're flunking and here they're getting As and Bs from you and it's perfect order.” He says, “Well, I learned this at the Omega Boys Club from Dr. Marshall.” When everything that he was doing and embodied, not perfectly, of course, but enough, and the other staff members and the kids were sort of on that same level in every class, it went up. I'll tell you how long it worked. It worked so well that even as a staff composition change, it worked until—because you have sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, right. So new principal, new staff. Didn't know it but it was so much into the kids, part of the kids that the school finally started to revert when the sixth graders had become eighth graders and they left. They were the

last group that really knew the Alive & Free prescription and methodology and principle and that's how they lived.

So the hard thing about school adoption is there's so much staff turnover it's almost impossible. I've been here for almost twenty-seven years now, right. We've had very little turnover and even when we do we plug the new people in but it's a seamless transition. They're as good or better than the people we had before. But the schools, you got a new principal, they come in, "I don't like it, I want to do my thing," and new teachers. There's no continuity in a public school.

05-00:42:50

Henry: How many partner schools you got now?

05-00:42:52

Marshall: We've had a bunch over the years. Right now I have one in Berkeley. B-Tech. That's my school this year. I have Paul Revere, which is a middle school. B-Tech is a high school. Paul Revere's in San Francisco. Well, let me back up. We found that it was so hard to do staff on a consistent basis that the schools would say, "Look, staff just doesn't want to do anything. But we'd like you to work with our kids directly." So what we end up doing in most of these schools now, since the staff doesn't want all the training and what they figure is something extra, we'll go in and they'll say, "Look, will you just work with our kids?" So this year we're going to try to do full school adoption at Berkeley B-Tech over on Grove Street. Or I guess it's Martin Luther King now. And then we're going to do a—I got a class of fourth and fifth grade boys that I'm going to work with for an entire year because their academic light is starting to flicker and the school sees this and they want me to try and catch them before it goes out.

05-00:44:19

Henry: So you yourself are going to take this on?

05-00:44:21

Marshall: I've done all the school adoption.

05-00:44:25

Henry: Wow.

05-00:44:25

Marshall: All of them. All of them. Every one. I've been involved in every one. Principally me and Mr. Aikins. Now, the other school that still does some Omega, some Alive & Free, is John Muir Elementary School and that's because Ms. Estelle, who was the coordinator of the Leadership Academy, is an elementary school counselor. So she does everything she can to keep Alive & Free in that school but that's because she's on staff. Yeah. So we've got that going.

That's happened a lot locally with educators. I would have these training institutes and people would come from everywhere. I mean everywhere. Because they would hear about this thing and they'd say, "I live in Brooklyn," "I live in Atlanta," "I live in Seattle," "I live in Los Angeles," "I've heard about what you do with these young people. Can you teach me what you do?" So, again, they would take the training institutes. This is separate from the school adoption piece. And then they would go back to their cities and start doing Alive & Free work there. In 2003 I did a refresher and these were some of the people who had been using it for a while. So I brought them back and I said, "Let's just make sure you're doing it correctly and want to refresh your skills." At the end of that refresher this group says, "Doc, we need a national organization. We need to have some sort of entity that keeps us connected." I said, "If you guys want it, sure." So we started what we call—we call it the Street Soldiers National Consortium. It's now the Alive & Free Consortium because now everything's under Alive & Free. And in many ways that was sort of my best disciples. And we decided as a group to be this consortium and we decided to have annual retreats and we would figure out what we're going to do every year as a group.

The first decision we made is that we were going to start having national conferences in the areas where the consortium members are. The first national conference was in Birmingham, Alabama in 2006. And that was the launch of the Alive & Free movement. It was a big deal because it was in Birmingham. If you're going to have a movement you got to have it in Birmingham. And it was well attended. Had about 800 people over two days. I remember my guest speaker. My guest speaker was this guy named Reverend Joseph Lowery. For people that don't know who he is, I always tell them he did the benediction at President Obama's first inauguration. And he marched with King. It was an honor. It was really an honor. He said, "I want you to take over now and you work with these kids like Dr. King would have worked with the kids."

So in 2006 we had our first national conference and that was in Birmingham. In 2008 we had a second national conference and that was in Baltimore. Two thousand ten we had a third national conference in Seattle, Washington, and last year, in 2012, we had our fourth national conference in Sacramento, California. And we will have our fifth one in 2014 in Pasadena, California. Even more shocked that we've been able to have these. And they're really, really well attended. The one in Sacramento, one day we do for adults and one day we do for kids. We had 320 young people from the Sacramento area and the Berkeley area in a room while they teach them the Alive & Free prescription and they loved it. They left with Alive & Free bags, Alive & Free t-shirts. So yeah. And we're looking forward to Pasadena. That's a big part of what we do now.

But probably the biggest thing that I do as far as reaching people is the radio show. And this radio show has been on the air almost as long as the club. The club started in 1987, the radio show started in 1992. And for twenty years

now, just about twenty years, we're off the air as the radio station changed hands. We've been putting out this message of Alive & Free over the airways different days. Originally it was on Monday night, now it's on Sunday.

05-00:49:13

Henry: Is it still simulcast to Los Angeles?

05-00:49:16

Marshall: Not simulcast to Los Angeles, principally because radio station's keep changing hands. When it was simulcast it was owned by the same company. We are picked up in several other markets. I think seven other markets. Phoenix, Petersburg, Virginia, some places. But now the show is audio and video streamed. So a lot of people watch us on the internet and listen to us on the internet. So when the kids are away from home, Sunday night they can go on there. And you can watch the show. So it's just like being on the studio. More people know me from Street Soldiers than know me from Omega Boys Club.

And then there's other stuff. The invitation from the State Department to go abroad, to go to Haiti, to go to South Africa, to go to Canada. The invitation from the ombudsman, office of the ombudsman in Thailand to go to Thailand. The Nigeria trip. Yeah. It's been something.

05-00:50:34

Henry: Yeah. I'd like to talk about your radio experiences and your early days in radio. But I'll get to that in a few minutes. I wanted to ask you about the work at the Youth Guidance Center. How important was it to gain access there and what sort of things did you and Jack do there?

05-00:50:51

Marshall: Well, I will say Jack has a prison ministry. He's always wanted to go into jails. And we started it really early. Probably right after we started Jack had access to—so we've always gone into different juvenile hall facilities and even adult prisons to sort of help people, young people get out and stay out. Recidivism is very, very high and institutions like that are not—they're there to punish, they're not there to rehabilitate. And so I tell people all the time, people in jail don't change, they just do time. A lot of times they do worse when they go to prison, right, because the thinking doesn't change or they do cosmetic change. And they come out. And it's not just a matter of skills. Not just a matter of skill. You can teach a guy to be a carpenter or teach a guy whatever skill you learn in prison. But if the way he thinks doesn't change, if the job goes away, then he goes back to what he was doing all along. So I met this kid in juvenile hall one time, I said, "How many times you been in jail?" He said, "Eighteen."

05-00:52:22

Henry: Eighteen.

05-00:52:22
Marshall:

I said, “What’d you say when you got out the first time?” He said, “I’m never coming back.” I said, “Did you mean it?” “Yeah.” I said, “What happened?” “Well, you know, my friend.” I said, “Well, you didn’t change. You didn’t change.” I said, “They should have probably never let you out because you disappointed your family and yourself because you really wanted to succeed and now you’re here again.” I said, “But you have to change.” And so we actually go in there and try and help young people change. And that’s not easy to do. That’s hard to do it because the things you need to do to change are difficult to make happen in a prison setting because part of the change involves talking about all the issues that you’ve been confronted with all your life and the things that have happened to you because you got infected in the first place. You’re thinking that way. And that’s very hard for them to talk about in a prison setting because they don’t trust anybody in jail. They didn’t trust the people on the outside, but they certainly don’t trust—you got all these infected people in the same room. So that’s really tough to do. And a lot of times I have them do a lot of writing or I’ll do a one-on-one. But it’s very, very difficult to do because prison is all about one-upmanship and gamesmanship and prison rules and it’s a hierarchical hellhole. But if we can get them through that and then get them to come to the club when they get out, then they got a real chance.

05-00:54:02
Henry:

And is that where Jack spends most of his time?

05-00:54:04
Marshall:

Jack spends most of—I would say 90 percent of his time up there.

05-00:54:08
Henry:

Does he have a physical place there in juvey hall?

05-00:54:10
Marshall:

He’s got an office.

05-00:54:11
Henry:

He has an office.

05-00:54:12
Marshall:

He has an office.

05-00:54:13
Henry:

That the authorities allow him to use?

05-00:54:14
Marshall:

Yeah. And it’s generally the public defender’s office and Jack has a little desk. That’s where he is. I actually think he has a key to juvenile hall. I actually think he has a bed in juvenile hall for himself because he’s there all the time. I went there for a long time. I also went to Alameda County juvenile hall and Andre Aikins still goes to Alameda County juvenile hall. I’ve been to San Quentin. I’ve been to Lompoc. I’ve been to Phoenix Federal Correctional

Institute. I've been to Fulsome. I've been to Vacaville. I've been to a lot of programs. Mule Creek. Just a couple other prisons I can't even think of. In fact, I was on the radio just recently and this guy called the radio program and he said, "Remember when you and Danny Glover came out to this program at Corcoran?" Might have been Corcoran Prison. And we spent a day with the guys and then they had this meal cooked. I don't know how they did it. They had barbecue and all this stuff. And Danny, who was a good friend of mine, liked it so much he would fund the prisoners, that meal day every year.

05-00:55:36

Henry: Is that right?

05-00:55:36

Marshall: Yes. And I didn't know that until the guy told me, "Oh, his name is Nate Williams." He called me on the phone, on the radio. Said, "Thank you for coming out there. I'm out now, I'm doing this, I'm doing that." You never know. You just go in and—

05-00:55:47

Henry: He turned his life around after.

05-00:55:49

Marshall: Yeah, yeah. I owe him a phone call so I'm glad it made me think of that. He's probably thinking I forgot him. But yeah. He called me maybe a month ago on the radio. It was a great call.

05-00:55:58

Henry: And you knew Danny Glover from your BSU days, right?

05-00:56:01

Marshall: Yeah. He was at State and I was at USF. We were student activists. And, of course, he was just Danny Glover. I would go over there, I'd meet this guy, Danny Glover. When I was in college I gave a lot of parties. So one day Danny and what would later be his wife, girlfriend, came to party, right. And we'd have a good time. And I lived on Hayes Street and Danny lived on Page Street. I think he was on Page Street. That's where his family grew up. He had just graduated from college and he was twenty-three. I said, "Danny, what are you going to do? What are you going to do now?" He said, "Joe," he said, "I'm going to be an actor." I said, "Man, you too old to be an actor. Damn, you can't be no actor." The next time I saw him I was teaching at Potrero Hill, he had just done the *Color Purple*, and the school invited—what do they have? It's like career day or something like that. And in walks Danny Glover. I said, "Man, I was wrong about you, wasn't I?" [laughter] I said, "I'm glad you didn't listen to me." Yeah, that's my buddy.

05-00:57:22

Henry: Great. That's great. Let's change the tape.

Audio File 6

06-00:00:00

Marshall:

Everybody gets there twice. You get there when you go in and you get there when you finish, right. So the people that finished would say, “I remember the first day I came.” They’d go over all this stuff. It was really, really touching, all the graduates. The new group, every year at the end of the college prep cycle, I take the new group of kids, the new potential scholars, because they don’t know if they’re getting a scholarship award yet, on the radio show to basically—because when they come in everybody—I say, “You’re not ready to go on the show. It’s not a place where you’ll give shout outs to your friends. You’re there to teach other young people how to stay alive and free.” Their scholarship application is—oh, see those binders over there?

06-00:00:56

Henry:

Yeah.

06-00:00:57

Marshall:

That’s their scholarship application. Each kid does this. They do more. It’s amazing the amount of work they have to do, to put into the application. And maybe the highlight of the application, and the hardest thing for them to do, they have to write an autobiography. Complete full disclosure. Everything. And Ms. Estelle explains what full disclosure is. You would not believe the stuff in those autobiographies. Neglected, abused, hurt. I got one boy, when I met him, he wasn’t going to stick it out but he did. So on the radio, Ms. Estelle pulls him to the side and she said, “Honey, when I read your autobiography I want to have all your people arrested.” She said it on the radio. She said, “What has happened to you should not happen to a human being.” You seen the movie *Antwone Fisher*?

06-00:02:03

Henry:

Yeah.

06-00:02:03

Marshall:

Well, it’s worse than *Antwone Fisher*. And that was bad. So as she’s saying this, and she says, “It’s a miracle you’ve made it but now you’re going to Clark Atlanta University and it’s a new day and you got people that love you.” And you know what I’m saying. And now this is on the radio. Ms. Estelle just became a Delta. She did. After all these years she became a Delta. She was a Delta. She pledged this year and while she was pledging I had to take over everything. But that’s a whole other story. So Ms. Estelle’s line sister hears her talking about this kid. Immediately she gets on the internet and she tells all her other line sisters to listen to this. Deltas are like—they love it. So she’s listening to this kid’s story. His name is Demondre Harrison. And she falls in love with this kid over the radio and he’s going to Clark and she went to Clark. Now, this is all happening on the air, while we’re on the air. She texts Ms. Estelle and Ms. Estelle is trying to do the radio show, trying to write her wrap-up speech and looking at her phone and her line sister says, “When I

went to college, my mother told me that if I went to Clark she wouldn't help me, and she didn't." She said, "I had no help." She said, "But the members of my church for four years sent me money all the time I was in school." She says, "So I want to help this boy." And she says, "I want to give him a thousand dollar scholarship to go to Clark." So this happened last Sunday right on the air. And then during the week apparently she says, "I want to do more for him." So this woman decides—does he have a laptop? So she buys him a laptop. Bought him a brand new laptop. So yesterday he met her. She's there. She walks up. He didn't know any of this, right. So he's the last one to speak and we keep him there.

06-00:04:25

Henry: And he's an entering collegiate or a graduate?

06-00:04:27

Marshall: He's an entering. He's a brand new kid.

06-00:04:28

Henry: Brand new kid.

06-00:04:30

Marshall: Brand new kid. This is the kid who's been abused all his life and there's even a back-story to that. After we introduce, he speaks up. "Demondre is a boy from the hood. He should be dead. I taught him how to dress. He's got a tie on. He's never had a tie on. I sent him to Burlington, get him some slacks," the whole bit, right. This woman comes up and talks to him. She meets him and she says, "I'm giving you a thousand dollar scholarship." And he didn't know about the laptop. And she gives him the laptop. He starts to cry. She starts to cry. The thing is ridiculous. That's the way yesterday unfolded, right.

Now, here's the back story. Twenty-eight years ago I had his father in the club. His father, Deabra Harrison, didn't get it.

06-00:05:15

Henry: His father went to prison. He was the abuser. He was an abuser.

06-00:05:18

Marshall: He was part of this. The whole family was part of it. His father went away to prison, had nothing to do with his son. Three and a half months ago I see Deabra for the first time in twenty-eight years. I'm like, "What?" I didn't know if he was dead. I heard he was out of jail. It may not be a lot of things that dad has done in his life but that night he brought his son here and he said, "Dr. Marshall, I want you to take care of my son." That's how I got him.

06-00:05:46

Henry: That was Demondre?

06-00:05:47

Marshall: That's Demondre. So last night, after the ceremony's over, we're back on the radio. I said to Demondre, "Don't go home. Just come with me. Come with.

Come with me. Just come to the radio show. It's been so bad for you for eighteen years but it's going to be all good now." And I told the kid, I said, "Look, nobody's taking care of you, I'll take care of you. I'll take care of you." And he looks at me. I said, "I'll take care of you. You have nothing to worry about." I take him to the radio show. So he's talking about, "I'm Demondre Harrison. By the way, he's blooming quickly because he went with me to the Commonwealth Club and he spoke there and people got all these cards. Now people want to make a wish list for him to go to college. This thing is crazy, I'm telling you. You can't even script stuff like this, right. If you put this in a movie they'd be like, no, no, no. So he's on the show. And I'm saying, "You deserve everything that's happening to you." He hasn't seen his dad since he basically dropped him off here. His dad didn't even come yesterday to the reception where he's being honored and it's his big send off. So I said, "Your dad, he better talk to you." And I said, "Mr. Harrison, you know who I'm talking, I'm talking about you. You better call your son." Or not call. I said, "You better talk to your son and tell him you love him and congratulate him." So then he calls the show. [laughter] That's great. And he's telling me, "Mr. Marshall, man, I didn't listen to you. You were the best thing ever happened to me. I'm sorry I didn't listen. I'm apologize. I got caught up in the street life and gang bang and I want to tell you. And I left my son." And he said, "I just wanted to tell my son that I love him." I said, "Well, you tell him." So I put him on the phone. This was over the radio, right. He says, "Son, I love you. I'm sorry I wasn't there for you but I'm really proud of you. You're my role model. And thanks for taking care of—" "I mean it was—

06-00:07:53

Henry: That's fabulous.

06-00:07:56

Marshall: It was a mess.

06-00:07:59

Henry: We started the tape in the middle of your soliloquy there, which we were talking about the first weekend in August being the annual celebrate of alumni.

06-00:08:10

Marshall: Did I go off the path? I was just—

06-00:08:12

Henry: No, no, no. It was wonderful. It was wonderful. And we talked about yesterday. You have the annual meeting of new collegiates and then the graduates who come and they give testimony to the benefactors and to others and their family. And you talked about the scholarship applications and how thick they are that all of the kids have to fill out. And this is how we got into the background of one of these kids, Demondre Harrison and his abusive background. And central to that is a woman named Estelle, a staffer here. Can you tell who Estelle is and her—

06-00:08:44
Marshall:

Her name is Ms. Deborah Estelle. Nobody goes by first names. I'm Dr. Marshall, she's Ms. Estelle. Everything's old fashioned here. And the kids love it. There's no first names here, right, except Jack. Jack is Jack. So Ms. Deborah Estelle is the coordinator of the Leadership Academy. She runs the academic program. If I am the dad of the group she's the mom of the group. And so we're a family and she is mom and she's great. She's very gifted. She's a great teacher.

06-00:09:29
Henry:

How did you find her?

06-00:09:32
Marshall:

Well, she's the second mom I've had here. And when the first mom left, when Ms. Norris left, it was scary because we needed a mom. And Ms. Estelle actually came and took my training and she went back to her school, asked me to come work at her school, work with the kids and the staff at her school. And I did. And then from time to time she would just come over to the club and be there. When the prior person left, who was also on the radio, I asked her would she just guest host. And it worked. It worked. And then when I needed a new academic coordinator—she didn't think she could do it. Here's this new woman coming in, right, "Who is this? Who is this?" But I'm going to tell you where she's really good. She's good at a lot of things. She has an MF, master's—what is it?

06-00:10:54
Henry:

Fine arts?

06-00:10:55
Marshall:

Family therapy. No, MFT. What's that degree? Anyway, I can't say it. And she has a master's in counseling. So she has this very, very, very varied background and she also was an elementary school teacher and she teaches at San Francisco State. So she brings a lot of skills to the table beyond just teaching. And she is an ordained minister. So she really, really is able to sort of help young people with the issues they bring to the table because she is a professional counselor and she's a minister. She's a very, very, very special person. There's no way we would do this without her. No way we can do without her. Every family needs a mom, every family needs a dad, every family has an uncle, has a grandfather, and we have brothers and sisters. But Ms. Estelle is unbelievable. I can't say enough about her.

06-00:11:58
Henry:

The origins of your beefing up the academic portions of the program were the experience of your first batch of students who didn't succeed academically when they went off to college. And you hired Margaret Norris—

06-00:12:12
Marshall:

I hired Margaret—

06-00:12:12

Henry: —shortly after that to develop the academic program.

06-00:12:16

Marshall: Right.

06-00:12:16

Henry: You write in your autobiography, “We had to confront the fact that our Main Street gangbanging turf fighting high school dropout YGD GED teenagers, for all their intelligence and resolve, were simply not ready for the life of scholarship.” That’s when Margaret Norris enters the picture. What can you tell me about her and her contributions to the development of the academic program?

06-00:12:36

Marshall: Well, she was the first mom. She was the first mom and Ms. Norris is a very skilled teacher. She’s an English major, public school teacher for years. Now has her own doctorate in education. And she and I went to college together.

06-00:12:55

Henry: She went to USF.

06-00:12:56

Marshall: She went to USF.

06-00:12:57

Henry: That’s where you met her.

06-00:12:58

Marshall: That’s where I met her. I was a senior and she was a freshman. But I was around long enough for us to know one another and I was speaking at Glide, at a conference at Glide one day and she was in the audience. And she came up to me. “You remember me?” I said, “Aren’t you, aren’t you, aren’t you?” And I told her what I was doing. She had moved to Southern California, had since moved back. I told her what I was doing. She said, “I want to come see it.” So she came and she said, “I want to volunteer.” And when I saw the deficiencies in the kids, particularly in writing and research, she organized a writing class. And the writing class then became—at that point we called it academic prep. And the writing class was just a one hour a week thing and then it grew to a class before our family meeting. Because we still had the family meeting early years. And at times it was co-ed and at times it was just single sex. And for years we would call it academic preparation. And then that morphed into what we now call the leadership academy, which is still held before the family meeting but also has added the college prep class on—

06-00:14:22

Henry: On to it.

- 06-00:14:23
Marshall: —Thursdays during the spring semester. We added a math class. So now the structure it has taken is a math class, the academic and life skills class, literacy and life skills class, the college prep class on Thursdays and then the financially alive and free class. Instead of doing math on the Thursday in spring we do financially alive and free. So it actually has four parts. Ms. Norris was the one who got that whole thing rolling and Ms. Estelle took over and has taken it to the next level.
- 06-00:15:08
Henry: When did Ms. Estelle come?
- 06-00:15:13
Marshall: Ms. Norris was here from—she was here a long—she must have been with us for fourteen years. I'm thinking she stayed in '89 and left in—
- 06-00:15:22
Henry: Two thousand and three or so?
- 06-00:15:23
Marshall: Two thousand three, 2004. I have to look exactly. And then Ms. Estelle has come and been here ever since.
- 06-00:15:30
Henry: Did Ms. Norris retire?
- 06-00:15:31
Marshall: She left to pursue her doctorate in education.
- 06-00:15:36
Henry: I see. I see.
- 06-00:15:39
Marshall: Scary moment but—
- 06-00:15:40
Henry: Yeah, it must have been losing a pillar like that.
- 06-00:15:43
Marshall: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. Not only was she here, she was my co-host on the radio show. So to find somebody else that would be able to do both, I was very, very lucky. Very, very lucky. And not only not to have a drop-off but to become even more proficient at it. I've been very, very fortunate. And the kids have been very, very fortunate.
- 06-00:16:06
Henry: What is peer counseling and what role did it play in the early beginnings of the club and its work at the YGC?

06-00:16:14
Marshall:

We'd take the kids up there and we'd say one thing. We're not as believable maybe as the kids that we took. So Jack did a lot of that. He liked taking the Omegas in there to juvenile hall. And that was his way of doing things. He liked the whole peer counseling concept. And it worked. It worked. The hardest thing was keeping kids coming all the time. But he's managed to do that. And then he would develop young people in the units themselves to sort of be examples, to counsel other kids in their units. So the original peer counselors were ones from the club but then he was able to get people in the units. Because some of those kids are there for a long time. To be the speakers to other kids in the unit.

06-00:17:07
Henry:

Does he still bring Omega kids to the center?

06-00:17:11
Marshall:

You mean does he take kids up there?

06-00:17:15
Henry:

Yeah, does he still take kids up there?

06-00:17:16
Marshall:

Yeah. He's always developed a cadre of people that come. Always the challenge is kids grow up and move on, right. So kids that do it before don't do it anymore because they're grown. But he always develops a cadre of people that he takes into juvenile hall to work with him as peer counselors.

06-00:17:36
Henry:

Right. You right in your book, "To successfully counsel and rehabilitate inner city kids you've got to be there and be there and be there." What does this mean?

06-00:17:46
Marshall:

Jack used to say, he has a phrase. When he hears people say they get burnout, he says, "They were never burn on in the first place." My thing is every year we have an anniversary. February 26, 1987. Every February 26th we talk. I look out there and I said, "What if we had gone out of business in year ten? Or what if we had gone out of business in year fifteen or year twenty or year twenty-five?" I said, "You guys wouldn't be getting this. So we made the commitment." In fact, yesterday at the benefactor's reception I said—people are always asking me, Jack, when they haven't seen us, "Are you still doing this Omega thing?" I said, "Hell, yeah. This is what I do." No, I mean, the fact that this place has been around for twenty-six years, the fact that the radio show has been on for almost twenty years, it's something that young people can count on. They can count on. There are plenty of times the kids—let me get this. This is mistaken. What was I saying? Oh, yeah.

06-00:19:07
Henry:

You were talking about being there and being there and being there and just explaining what it means.

06-00:19:12
Marshall:

Yeah. It's just they can always depend on us. They can always depend on Omega, depend on myself, Jack, the club. In a world where people come and go in their lives and everything is tenuous, like an earthquake, the world is moving underneath their feet, we're always here. We're going to be here. Anyway, I'll be here, you'll find me here in this chair one day. I will be here."

06-00:19:50
Henry:

Who was Preston Worthy and what sort of work did he do for the club?

06-00:19:52
Marshall:

Preston was one of the early guys that used to work with us. There were a bunch of people in the beginning who wanted to help me and Jack and Preston was one of them. He was probably around maybe a couple of years. He still works in the school district. But he helped get us off to a start. Yeah. That was Preston's big role.

06-00:20:24
Henry:

Okay. There was also a counter narrative at work in the streets about the work of the club and some of the homies calling the Omega Club members punks, sellouts, and squares. How important it was for you to fight this perception?

06-00:20:37
Marshall:

Oh, and little Marshalls. That was—

06-00:20:39
Henry:

Little Marshalls, right.

06-00:20:39
Marshall:

—the big one they'd call them. Oh, yeah. Like I said, I learned a lot from them. I didn't fight it so much. The club was involved so much in those early days. So we've had to develop things to help them fight being targets or being ostracized or called a bunch of names because they wanted to do right. So now I would say when that comes up—and it doesn't come up that much anymore because we developed counters to those sort of things. So one of our counters is what other people say about me is none of my business. Or doesn't matter what name they call you, it's the name you answer to that matters. Or dare to be different. We have to give them things so they can stand up to the assault that they get for wanting to do the right thing, wanting to stay alive and free. So our big thing in those days was just helping them. You got to know who you are. Again, I've got so many things that I say. Evil doesn't like good. Sickness doesn't like health. And the devil doesn't like God. That's just the way it is and you got to be able to believe in you and what we're doing for you but the peer pressure is relentless. It's relentless. Misery doesn't like company. I always say we're teaching these young people this alive and free lifestyle and our key is not just to teach it to them but to support them in it. And probably that's the best thing. We just support them in what they know is right. This is a safe haven. This is the oasis. This is the place where they get

their inoculation, immunization to go back out there and fend that off and then come back until the point where it doesn't matter to them anymore.

06-00:22:49

Henry: Yeah. You once said the achievement that has brought the club the most acclaim is our record of sending kids from jail to college. Apropos of that, what's the significance of the life story of Joe Thomas?

06-00:23:00

Marshall: Well, Joe Thomas was our first.

06-00:23:03

Henry: The first is the first to go to college?

06-00:23:04

Marshall: The first from the jailhouse to the schoolhouse. He was the first.

06-00:23:08

Henry: What was his story?

06-00:23:09

Marshall: Well, Joe was actually at Potrero Hill Middle School. And, actually, he wasn't in my class but he was a pretty gifted athlete. He ran track, he played basketball. But Joe got into trouble. He lived in Valencia Gardens. He ended up getting caught up selling drugs, doing that. He was older. Joe was older than the kids. He was in San Bruno County. No, he was in San Francisco County Jail and he got released and he got a job as the janitor at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House. So he would come down sweeping, doing his duties, and we were having club meetings. And I really didn't know him when he was at the school but Jack knew him. And so while he was sweeping he'd stand off to the side. He heard us. "We're going to do this and if you guys want to go to college, you can help beat the streets. I'll help you go to college." So one day he just dropped his broom and came in. He says, "I want to go to college." [laughter] Because he was older, he was the first one to go off. He wasn't the first graduate. There was a girl that graduated the year before him but he was the first one. His story ended up in the newspaper.

06-00:24:31

Henry: Oh, it did?

06-00:24:31

Marshall: Yeah. It was the *Examiner* in those days. Joe Thomas. Today they would call him a thug, right, a thug going on to higher education. How he changed his life around. And his story was public. So the symbolism is a guy putting his stuff out there. Somebody needed to know what we were doing and Joe's story is the one that newspapers liked. So yeah. It was a big deal. It was a big deal. It was a big deal. And the fact that he was our first male college graduate was significant. So we owe a lot to Joe.

06-00:25:10
Henry: Where did he go to school?

06-00:25:11
Marshall: Everybody in those days went to Morris Brown.

06-00:25:13
Henry: Morris Brown was it, huh?

06-00:25:14
Marshall: Because nobody else would take them they were so poorly prepared. Later on they started going to other schools. But he went to Morris Brown and graduated. Joe come home and he'd walk into the meetings and even know he'll come in. "See, here's my diploma," the little diploma card. [laughter] Yeah.

06-00:25:36
Henry: What's he doing today?

06-00:25:38
Marshall: That's a good question. I know he's working but I don't know where. I don't know where. I just saw him Saturday at the barbecue. He brought his little niece to the barbecue and said, "You stick here and one day we're going to send you to college." Yeah.

06-00:25:54
Henry: Have any of your members who've gone on to earn college degrees, did any of them go to graduate school and seek graduate degrees?

06-00:26:02
Marshall: So there's 183 college graduates right now. I try to keep this up. But I do believe, I can't be—this number changes because I meet kids. But I would say, and I think this is pretty close, at this point there are fifty young people with graduate degrees.

06-00:26:23
Henry: Fifty?

06-00:26:24
Marshall: Fifty. Either they have the degrees or they're currently pursuing masters or PhDs in school.

06-00:26:34
Henry: That's quite remarkable.

06-00:26:36
Marshall: Yeah, it is. Yeah. In fact, I got two of the kids right now who just graduated, have already gotten into graduate school. So I got to put them on the list for the fall. So it's at least fifty. It might be more. I just can't keep track of all of them. But yeah, I was blown away. When they got that education bug. Yeah.

So what's that, a quarter of the kids who have—that's at least 25 percent, right, if I have 183?

06-00:27:04

Henry: Yeah.

06-00:27:05

Marshall: Yeah, yeah. Maybe 30 percent of the kids who have college degrees have gone on to get graduate degrees. Several doctorates. One medical doctor, one podiatrist that I know of for sure. Yeah.

06-00:27:19

Henry: A podiatrist?

06-00:27:20

Marshall: A podiatrist. Look, I have a podiatrist, Dr. Janelle Tate, who went to Tuskegee. She's a podiatrist. But get this. Janelle married Murrell, who was in the club. I didn't even know this was going on. See, I didn't know this was going on.

06-00:27:42

Henry: They met each other at the club?

06-00:27:42

Marshall: Well, I think they knew each other before. You'd have to ask them. But Murrell Green and Janelle Tate. All I know is went down to Clark and I'm talking to Murrell and he says, "This is his girlfriend named Janelle. I said, "Janelle in the club?" "Yeah, she go to Tuskegee." They ended up dating and they got married. They got married. And so Janelle is a podiatrist. Murrell, I think he's trying to get his doctorate right now. He's somewhere. I know he's running back. See, I actually know this because Murrell is also on my board. Right. Murrell Green's on the board. I had to say that real fast because Murrell doesn't like me say Janelle Tate. Just Janelle Tate Green, because that's his wife. And they just had a son. And I was at their wedding. Yeah. So yeah.

06-00:28:49

Henry: And their backgrounds were disadvantaged enough that they found the club as a way out.

06-00:28:52

Marshall: Oh, yeah. They'll tell you. Janelle. You'd be surprised how many of these kids, even if they didn't have—all of these kids are neighborhood kids, but how poorly they were doing in school. These kids are doing horrible. Like getting a one point five. But that's not them. So yeah. And then there's Michael Gibson, who was my jailhouse to the schoolhouse best example. I met him in the youth authority. Actually, Coach met him in the youth authority, directed him here. Michael got his GED, went to Laney, ended up going to Morehouse. Michael had a horrible, horrible life. And he ended up marrying E'leva Hughes, who was in the club. And she teaches at USF, so she has a doctorate in education. That's another couple.

06-00:29:49

Henry: Teaches at USF?

06-00:29:50

Marshall: She teaches at USF. Yeah. E'leva Hughes.

06-00:29:53

Henry: Teaches what?

06-00:29:54

Marshall: She teaches in the education department. Has a doctorate in education. I'm not sure what she teaches but she's there. So Michael Gibson and E'leva Hughes. Now, these are married couples and they have a son. And then there's the Harrisons. Necca Allen at that time. Let me say, Necca, I don't know how Necca got here. But Necca lived in Modesto, worked in Concord, and would leave Concord and come to Omega on Tuesday night and then go back to Concord. I hear she went back to Modesto. I don't know how she did it. So technically she made the trip from Modesto to Omega on Tuesday night for a year in order to earn her scholarship to Clark. While she was down there she met this guy named Chris Harrison, who used to sell drugs. He lived in Brookfield Village in Oakland. He comes to Omega. He comes to Omega. And I went down there and I saw a ring on Necca's finger. I said, "Who are you engaged to?" She says, "Chris." They get married. He decides to go to Mills to get a master's in education. He gets his master's. Then he stops and lets her go get her master's in education. Then he goes back to get a doctorate and he stops and lets her get a doctorate. So they're Dr. and Mrs. Harrison. They both have doctorates in education and they have these three kids who are like brainiacs. I'm scared of these kids. And I know this because they live in Atlanta now but I'm like granddad. I know they're working like crazy trying to make this family work.

06-00:31:47

Henry: They live in Atlanta now?

06-00:31:47

Marshall: They moved to Atlanta. I can get in touch with them easy. But I would call Chris and Necca, I'd say, "You guys go out. Look, you're raising three kids." I said, "Go out. I'll take care of the kids." So I'll go over there and the kids would all sit with Granddaddy Marshall and they'd be with me and they'd go to a movie and they'd come home. They'd jump on me. They'd come home. The baby would be sleeping on my chest. Yeah. Dr. and Mrs. Harrison.

06-00:32:13

Henry: Are Janelle Tate Green and Murrell Green living in the area?

06-00:32:18

Marshall: They actually live in southern California.

06-00:32:21

Henry: Oh, shoot.

- 06-00:32:22
Marshall: But you can get in touch with these guys. Michael is here. Michael and Necca are here. Michael and Aleeva are here. Chris and Necca.
- 06-00:32:32
Henry: Not a problem.
- 06-00:32:32
Marshall: And, actually, I have some profiles on all of these kids on our website. So those are my three—I think I may have some more that are married. When you started mentioning these degrees, these degree people got together and got married and had families. So it's at least fifty and it might be more who have graduate degrees.
- 06-00:32:53
Henry: That's fabulous. That's fabulous. Any of them become lawyers?
- 06-00:32:59
Marshall: I haven't had a lawyer, although I got a girl in law school right now. Theresa Graves is at Florida A&M University Law School. Lot of educators, lot of MBAs. Yeah.
- 06-00:33:15
Henry: This is an odd question but who would you say is the most successful of your members?
- 06-00:33:21
Marshall: They're my children. They're all successful.
- 06-00:33:24
Henry: They're all successful.
- 06-00:33:26
Marshall: They're all successful. No, no, no. They're all. Really. They all show what young people can become if you can just beat the streets, that's all. Look, let me tell you something. Listen. No, I'll read it right now. Oh, I can't do it. I read this yesterday. So this is what I got this morning. Okay. "The San Francisco Police Department's investigating another shooting in the Bay View district. At approximately 11:25 pm tonight officers responded to the unit block of Harbor Row for report of a shooting. The victim, a male in his twenties, was located with a gunshot wound through his torso. The victim was transported to San Francisco General in life threatening condition. The two suspects of the crime was black male adults wearing all dark clothing who both remain at large." So since I'm on the San Francisco Police Commission, every time there's a shooting or a death in San Francisco I get this.
- 06-00:34:46
Henry: Get an alert.

06-00:34:47
Marshall:

First thing I do is I look—sometimes there’s a name. I want to make sure it’s none of my kids or it’s something that I know, because I know a lot of young people. This is their world. This is their world. This is their world. If they don’t come here, there’s a good chance they’re going to end up—Omari Williams told me when he came—Omari’s a Fiske graduate who got his masters now and he’s living in Tennessee. He went to Thurgood Marshall. And he said, when he came here, he just looked at us all and said, “I don’t want to be a statistic.” So when I say alive and free, that’s success. That’s success. Educated is icing on the cake. So I know that sounded maybe like—but to me just beating this. I get this all the time. I have five of these in the last two days.

06-00:35:39
Henry:

Geez.

06-00:35:39
Marshall:

That’s this morning. I got him. Right.

06-00:35:43
Henry:

Right.

06-00:35:45
Marshall:

I read one of them yesterday and I said, “It’s a violent world that they live in. It’s so easy to get caught up.” The girls, Aleeva and Necca and Janelle could have been with a drug dealer and instead they’re with Michael and they’re with Chris and they’re with Murrell. Right. I don’t know if you know the Kemba Smith story. The young woman who went to Hampton. We do this story every year. Come from a Bill Cosby type family. Was a debutante. Went to Hampton University in the early nineties, ’92, ’93. Got involved with a drug dealer and then got sentenced to twenty-four years without a possibility of parole because he trafficked in crack cocaine and she lied for him. That bit put her in prison for twenty-four years.

06-00:36:48
Henry:

Wow.

06-00:36:49
Marshall:

Yeah. And that story was in *Emerge* magazine. I read the story. And it’s called “Kemba’s Nightmare” and every year since then, every March we do that story with our kids.

06-00:37:06
Henry:

You read it out loud to them?

06-00:37:07
Marshall:

Oh, everything, everything. Every bit of it. “Kemba’s Nightmare.” Kemba Nyembe Smith. Because this was a girl you wouldn’t expect to have got in it. Literally she comes from a Cosby home. But one of the commandments is thou shalt get a man. Right. That’s what women think. And that negative view

of women is a risk factor. So that exists in all of my girls, right. And we know it exists in the guys. There's two sides there. Just Kemba Smith, the girl that got caught up and involved with the drug dealer, and then there's Peter Michael Hall, who was the drug dealer. Every one of my kids has the potential to be one or the other. Watch the movie *Fruitvale Village*, right. I mean *Fruitvale Station*. *Fruitvale Village*. I'm thinking of the neighborhood. *Fruitvale Station*. Oscar Grant. He's just some regular kid. He's out there, he gets caught up, goes to prison. But he's just got this glorious other side. If I had the kid—I mean, I'm not saying that because of what happened on that platform. But I'm saying the other stuff that happened to him—he could have been in college. So no, they're all successes for that reason.

06-00:38:24

Henry:

That's cool, that's cool. Who was Coach and what were his contributions to the club?

06-00:38:29

Marshall:

If I'm the mother—excuse me, if I'm the father. I'm talking so long I don't know what I'm saying. If I'm the dad and Ms. Norris and then Ms. Estelle—

06-00:38:38

Henry:

Are the mom.

06-00:38:39

Marshall:

—are the moms, Coach was the grandfather. And it's funny. This thing is generational because Coach is twenty years older than me, right. So I would have been his son's age. Yeah. See who that is. I don't know who it is.

06-00:38:56

Henry:

Yeah, pause it. So you were talking about Coach being the grandfather.

06-00:39:00

Marshall:

Oh, Coach.

06-00:39:01

Henry:

Was Coach meaning he has an athletic background?

06-00:39:04

Marshall:

Coach coached basketball at City College part-time and Jack asked the head coach at City College to come speak to the kids, be a guest speaker at the club. Brad Duggan. Brad's a pretty well known basketball coach. So he asked Brad to come and Brad couldn't come. So he asked Coach Wilbur Jiggetts and we learned his name later. But we just call him Coach. I's got to be formal. Coach came in. Had to be '88. It was before Ms. Norris, I remember that. And he was blown away. He's just blown away. He's talking to the kids and he looked at me, he said, "Marshall, this is amazing." Right. He always called me Marshall. "Marshall, this is amazing." He says, "Can I be a part of this?" I said, "Yeah, man, come whenever you can." Unbeknownst to me, Coach went back and quit his job with City College to be a full-time volunteer with us.

06-00:40:05

Henry: Wow.

06-00:40:06

Marshall:

After that Coach was every week, every weekend. In fact, it started out with me and Jack, and then it was me and Jack and Coach. Then it was me, Jack, Coach, and Ms. Norris. [laughter] And it was that way until Coach passed away and then Ms. Norris left. But that's the way it was for all the nineties, early 2000s. It was the quartet. Coach even came on the radio show with me. A lot of times he'd be in the studio. Now, you got to understand, a grandfather has been added to the mix now and grandfather wisdom. So Coach introduced the old school no nonsense stuff that none of the kids had ever heard. So I hope the tape doesn't get upset with this but I have to say it because I'm going to tell you what Coach would say. So one day this kid was talking about how tough things were for him and he was just explaining all the reasons he's got to sell dope in the streets and he can't do this and he can't do that. He was explaining why he had to do what he had to do. And at the end everybody was quiet. And Coach leaned forward and he says, "Now, you know and I know that that was some bullshit." [laughter]

06-00:41:29

Henry: [laughter] He said this on the radio?

06-00:41:30

Marshall:

He said it at the club. It was a club meeting.

06-00:41:33

Henry: Oh, it's a club meeting.

06-00:41:33

Marshall:

At the club meeting. "Let me tell you something." This is the way he talk, right. He's from Baltimore, right. He said, "Let me tell you something. What works, works. What don't work don't work. And it don't make sense to keep doing shit that don't work." He said, "What you just told us, how is that working for you? We need to have a conversation about that." Wow. Andre's a lot like Coach. Ms. Estelle is a lot like Coach. You could get nothing past Coach. Coach could see through you like superman with x-ray vision. He's like, "Uh-huh. You can tell everybody else that stuff. You can't tell me." He was rock solid. He was a military man, right. Now we had the family. We had the grandfather, the parents, we had it all. No way you could get around the four of us. No way. We were just locked in. And Coach would say stuff that would cause us to just like, "Woo." Most of us had never heard real wisdom, most of the kids. They've heard a lot of game masquerading as wisdom. So a lot of times they'll think wisdom is game and I'll say—like the kids, they hear these kids. Don't take a knife to a gunfight, which to them was wisdom. And I have to explain, "No, that's game because there's knife and gun and fight in there." But it sounds wise, right. And until they met Coach you'd actually hear real wisdom. So Coach would say these things and they would just stop us in our tracks. So we started writing them down. And he would say things like,

“To do some things you want to do, you’ve got to do some things that you don’t want to do.” Well, whoa, Coach, man. They’d be like, “Coach.” And the kids would say, “Man, that’s deep, Coach. That’s deep, yo. That’s deep. That’s deep. That’s deep.” And what’d he say? He said, “You might not be able to do anything about the family you’re born into but you can do everything about the family you create.” So we started writing them down. Really. We started collecting and we named them coachisms. And coachisms became as much of the organization as anything that we do. They became the medication that we would give the kids in this medical model. When they leave on Tuesday night we have to give them a pill to hold them in place so that when the infection comes it’ll hold until we see them again. We got to have something kick into their psyche, in their head. Coach would say, “Don’t let your circumstances dictate your behavior.” And he explained what that meant. Something’s going on with you, you can’t let that determine what you do. And he’d give all these examples. And all this stuff was just simple but profound.

My favorite one, it’s so much a part of me. It’s number eight on the list. And Coach would say, “You’re only one bad decision away.” They just became like these aphorisms that everybody would use all the time. And to this day all the kids know all the coachisms. All the kids know all you got to do is turn right and keep straight. That came from Coach. What’s important is how you handle your business on a day to day basis. That all came from Coach. All that stuff came from him. He would just roll these things. And to him he’s just talking.

I got them in my computer. All Coach’s sayings are in the computer. And so we teach the kids all of these. That’s why if you talk to the kids and you hear a coach, you think he’s still alive. Because to him he is. I know him but the new kids that don’t know him, they say, “Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach, Coach.” Oh, Coach was—

06-00:45:46

Henry:

And this wasn’t the result of book learning. This was just life wisdom he had accumulated through years, right?

06-00:45:52

Marshall:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Coach was fearless. Coach used to go with me to all the prisons. I’d go to Lompoc. I’d get up at four o’clock in the morning, meet him and Ms. Norris, get on a plane, fly to Santa Barbara, rent a car, drive to Lompoc and work with the guys in the jail. And if Coach didn’t come they’d say, “Where’s Coach? Where’s Coach? He didn’t come today?” They didn’t want to see me or Ms. Norris. They want to see Ms. Norris, she’s a woman. But they’d say, “Where’s Coach? Where’s the old man?” Because he was a rock. He was solid. I’m telling you, he was unbelievable. The stuff he said would just stop you in your tracks, right. So, again, today, literally, you would

think he's alive because the kids know all—I said, “Tell me a coachism,” and they'll say one.

We started making up coachisms based on Coach. So one of the kids, named Donald Thomas, who was from Third and Palou, went to Tuskegee, and he had been influenced by Coach so much. One day he came, he was talking to the kids, he says, “You better listen, because how well you listen determines how long you live.” And I said, “You've been listening to Coach.” He said, “Yeah, I sound just like Coach.” You have no idea. I should print it out. There is twenty-three coachisms and we use them. Fifteen of them were made up Coach, the other eight were made up by us being influenced by Coach.

06-00:47:30

Henry: Being influenced by Coach.

06-00:47:31

Marshall: Absolutely.

06-00:47:32

Henry: Is it on your website?

06-00:47:36

Marshall: That's a good question. I think so.

06-00:47:39

Henry: Okay, I'll look. I'll look for it.

06-00:47:40

Marshall: I think so.

06-00:47:40

Henry: I'd like to see it.

06-00:47:42

Marshall: Oh, look, look. I've taken those all over the world. People love them. There is so much wisdom in those simple sayings. And the other thing is that, see, you don't get to be seventy-five unless you know what you doing, right. And these kids couldn't get to be twenty-five. So Coach would say, “Look, I must know something you don't know.” [laughter] Fearless. I mean fearless. But it worked both ways because when Coach came here, Coach carried a gun because he's a military man. He always had a gun. But when I went through our thing and we identified guns as a risk factor, Coach said, “Look, I can't carry a gun and work with you, too,” so he gave up the gun. Gave it up.

06-00:48:34

Henry: How about that.

06-00:48:34

Marshall: Oh, you can't do that with kids. Kids will know if it's export enough or import. They'll know it. You can't, what, do as I say, don't do as—I never get

that right. You can't say, "Don't smoke, not good for you," and you're smoking. It doesn't work. They'll figure you're phony. And so Coach gave up his gun. He had to live this in order to convince the kids. And if I pointed something out in our alive and free lifestyle that he wasn't living, he changed. He was an amazing man. He was an amazing man. The classroom where we do our work, two years ago we modernized it, put in the flat screen TV and all that fancy stuff and renamed it Coach Wilbur Jiggetts Hall. And we rededicated, had a ceremony. And his wife came. Gloria Jiggetts came. Gloria, who let Coach come here for eighteen years, come here all the time as a volunteer. By the way, Coach has this where—the kids would say, "Coach is my best friend. Coach is my best friend." Coach says, "No, you ain't my best friend." He said, "My wife's my best friend." And Coach would get up and leave. He said, "I'm going home with my best friend. Bye." He'd leave us. He had a chair and he sat in that chair. Chair there. And he always sat in the same chair. If a new person came and sat in that chair, Coach would look at him. Eventually that person got up. Because we knew. It was so old school in there. I'm telling you, you would not believe the order in that room.

There was this gang member, I'm just going to leave him out because he's probably heard this story too many times, in Los Angeles that Coach was very fond of him. And when he got locked up one time, Coach gave him some bail money. He bailed him out of jail. He's a pretty big known figure. He's a Crip. And he was always having problems with his wife. So Coach says, "Hey, one of my rules is love will never leave you to danger. So I'm telling you and your wife you all need to get apart. You stay apart." Gang member didn't like what he said. Didn't like what he said. And the gang member is, what, maybe thirty years younger than Coach. So he's talking to me on the phone. "Coach ain't going to tell me what to do with my wife. You wait til I see him." And I'm saying, "Look, this man just gave you money to get out of jail so if you're going to be like that." "I'm going to talk to that old man." So we were going to LA to do the radio show, right. Twice a month we go to LA. So I told Coach, I said, "You want to talk to him?" Said, "No, when I see him, I see him." So we get off the plane, we go do our class. We do a class before we went to the radio show. We're at Seventy-Fifth and Vermont. Maxine Waters. Maxine Waters Center, right. We do our class there. We've got the gang members coming. So when the class is over, this gang member shows up. Coach walks over to him and said, "You got something to say to me?" And this is a big bad Crip who'd have probably have shot—look, he backed down like a puppy. Coach was taking nothing. Coach said, "I'm from Baltimore." [laughter] I'm telling you, that man was unbelievable.

At his funeral, he was a member of Jones—that's the other thing. Coach went back to church because he started working with the kids. It rekindled his whole connection with the Lord and he went back to—so his funeral was at Jones. I was fine until the end of the funeral, that service. I cried gushers all the way because he had to leave the church and go over to where they had the reception, the repast, right. The kids was hugging me, comforting me. I can't

stop crying. He was unbelievable. That man was totally unbelievable. Yeah. So he's very, very, very special to us. But I'll tell you, you would not know that he was not here anymore because he's talked about so much.

06-00:53:11

Henry: He lives.

06-00:53:12

Marshall: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. When I say that, they say, "No, he's alive." Like those people. They'll say, "No, he's here. He's here." And he is. He's huge.

06-00:53:22

Henry: And he's irreplaceable. You haven't been able to replace him with anybody.

06-00:53:24

Marshall: We haven't tried. You don't want to replace somebody. You don't need to. Coach is singular. No, no. There are people who do other things but there's only one Coach Wilbur Jiggetts. As I get older, I sound more like Coach and Andre sounds more like me.

06-00:53:46

Henry: Do you remember the name Martin Jacks and what does his experience tell about the challenges of rehabilitating inner city kids?

06-00:53:52

Marshall: Martin Jacks ran the Mentoring Center in Oakland and we did a lot of work together. In fact, Coach actually was on Martin's board, so he did a lot of work with Martin. He was working with us and with Martin. And that's how Coach got into youth authority, which is where he met Michael Gibson, because he was actually going up there with Martin Jacks. So no. In fact, we did a lot of work together. I used to host a radio show. I'd bring the radio show to the Mentoring Center and we'd do the show from there. So, no, Martin is like an Oakland version of me. We were both dedicated to young people. We did the same kind of work.

06-00:54:31

Henry: What does the experience of Corey Monroe and Omar Butler say about the challenges of fighting the ravages of inner city life?

06-00:54:40

Marshall: So Corey and Omar—I've had three really bad nights here. Three. The first one was the night Corey and Omar—we had had a meeting in 1990. It's three years after we started. We had a meeting at the Neighborhood House. We just finished a meeting. They leave. Unbeknownst to me they got into the car of a friend who was a known gang banger. And he was banging for Hunter's Point and they were driving down Third Street going banging. And he's just giving them a ride. Both of them are in college. Omar is at—

06-00:55:19

Henry: They're back home for college.

06-00:55:19
Marshall:

—Tuskegee. They're on break. They're on break. Yeah. They're on break. Summer break. Omar is at Tuskegee and Corey is at Morris Brown. And so they're riding home and some rival turf members from Sunnydale pull up, see the car, shoot into the car. And don't hit the driver, who is gang banging and hit both Corey and Omar. And I get a call that my boys have been shot and they're at SF General. So I'm at the hospital. Now, I'm not a relative. I'm just their Boys Club director. They must have took mercy on me because I talked my way past the nurses and everybody else and went right back and saw both of them laying on these gurneys, blood everywhere. And I couldn't believe it. Oh, God. Because, see, it's one thing to do this at the club, in the laboratory that's pure and nothing's going on. Now my kids have been shot. So I got two concerns. Neither one was seriously hurt, thank God. But I got two concerns. One, I've been trying to sell them on this whole alive and free thing and no retaliation. So I'm worried about them. And the other thing I'm worried about, their friends tell them, "Oh, you tried this Omega thing, right. Now you got shot." So they be whipping them up. So I go to Omar first, then I go to Corey and I remember Corey look up at me. They had blood everywhere. He says, "Don't worry, Mr. Marshall." I said, "Don't worry." He said, "You don't have to worry about me. I'm going to make it." He says, "Nobody's going to get me to do anything." He says, "I'm going to tell all my friends. I'm calling it off. Don't retaliate." He says, "Then I'm going back to Atlantic City, hell out of San Francisco." [laughter] Which he eventually came back. Both Corey and Omar obviously lived through that. Corey still has a bullet in his hand because they couldn't take it out because they worry about the nerve damage. It's in his right hand or left hand right beneath the thumb, right around here. Both have just been wonderful, eminently successful.

06-00:57:46
Henry:

Did they get their degrees?

06-00:57:49
Marshall:

Omar got his, Corey left after two years, came back home and started working. Corey is working in the sheriff's department. Corey, he's a legend around here. I know he works at the sheriff's department and he does a lot of work in the school district over at Vis Valley. Omar used to actually work for me and then left to run his own program. He's actually the director of a college track program out here in the Bay View. So we're now working collegially together to help young students, help young men. So yeah. They're both doing great.

06-00:58:35
Henry:

That's cool. Is there a person here, that if I wanted to reach out to various alumni to interview about their experiences both prior to Omega, then during Omega, and after and finishing their degrees in college, is there somebody who is—

06-00:58:49
Marshall: Andre knows everybody.

06-00:58:50
Henry: Andre.

06-00:58:51
Marshall: Yeah. Andre. I think Andre would be the best person to ask.

06-00:58:55
Henry: Okay. And Ms. Estelle, is she available for an interview at some point?

06-00:59:00
Marshall: Yeah, she is. And she's across the hall so you might want to get her just to talk to her about that.

06-00:59:06
Henry: Very good.

06-00:59:07
Marshall: Yeah.

06-00:59:08
Henry: So if we can get one more session to sum up, I'd appreciate it. Maybe next Monday?

06-00:59:13
Marshall: We'll see, because the hard thing is getting—yeah, see what Deb—

06-00:59:18
Henry: I'll talk to Deb.

06-00:59:18
Marshall: The problem is my—

[End of Interview]

Interview #4 August 14, 2013
Audio File 7

07-00:00:00

Marshall: You know, Tuesday night is a long night. Yeah. All kinds of stuff going on around here. All right. One more swallow. I'm ready.

07-00:00:11

Henry: Thank you. Sorry for interrupting your lunch. Today is Wednesday, August 14, 2013. My name is Neil Henry and I'm sitting with Joseph Marshall in his office in San Francisco. Dr. Marshall is the founder of the Omega Boys Club, recently renamed Alive & Free, and which last year celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The mission of the Boys Club has been to take disadvantaged and troubled inner city kids and guide them to college educations. It has been remarkably successful in this mission and has become a national model as a social service and education program. This is the fourth of several conversations I am having with Dr. Marshall about his life and times. Last time we discussed the evolution of your professional life as an educator and leader of the Omega Club and I'd like to continue in that vein today. How did your experience with KMEL radio "Street Soldiers" program begin?

07-00:01:04

Marshall: Oh. KMEL. How did that start? Well, there was a show that KMEL did years ago called the "Love Zone" and you can imagine. A music station. One night a week the board operator, I guess the DJ, would have people call and talk about love problems. So this night he decided to talk about community issues and that was prompted because—remember MC Hammer?

07-00:01:45

Henry: Mm-hmm.

07-00:01:46

Marshall: MC Hammer had done a new album and he wanted to promote it and MC felt he had sort of lost his street credibility so he wanted to promote his album on KMEL and so he convinced the DJ to—"Let's focus on community tonight. Put out a call to the people to talk about what's going on in their neighborhoods, what's going on in their homes, and I'll come in and I'll promote my album." That was the plan. So that's what happened. That night Kevin Nash, who was the—said, "We're not talking about love tonight. Tell me what's going on in your homes, in your neighborhoods, what problems you're encountering. Just talk to us." And they had no idea what they had asked, because they got this flood of calls about everything. Community problems, neighborhood problems, home problems, personal problems. And they had no referral. They had nothing. They didn't know what to say because they were DJs, they were music DJs. Hammer was late. They were waiting on him. He was caught up on the Bay Bridge. So for the first maybe forty-five minutes, an hour of the show, they just was sort of stumbling around listening to these people. Hammer showed up and basically said, "Stay strong, Street

Soldier. Stay strong streets of San Francisco. Buy my album,” and he left. So they were sort of struck by this phenomenon of people calling in about community issues. So they decided to bring the show back one other time on another one time deal and they asked me to be sort of, I guess, a guest host, guest commentator. It was myself and a couple of other people who were involved with community agencies. And they knew of me because they knew the work that I did with young people through Omega.

I remember the first night. So this happened in late November 1991. So the first show had to be the second or third week in November. They asked me to come on when they brought it back a second time. I remember it was the day after Thanksgiving and I was actually in Los Angeles visiting my family. So I flew back, came in on a Friday night, did the show, and people said later when my voice hit the airwaves it was like magic. Actually, the KMEL people told me that.

07-00:04:30

Henry:

Had you had any radio experience prior to this?

07-00:04:32

Marshall:

No. No. No, no. But to me it was just like talking to the kids at the club. So I just started telling the audience what I tell the kids. It was an immediate hit. We brought it back a couple more times in December and then in January 1992 they decided to make it a weekly show. “Street Soldiers” on KMEL, listen to this, Monday nights at 2:00 am. Every Monday night. And, remember, I had to get up and teach the next morning. Had to be up at 7:00 in the morning or 6:30 in the morning to get to school by 8:00 am. But that began just a remarkable longstanding relationship with KMEL and this long running program that is still, what, twenty years later, still on the air. Different hour, different day, but it just—it’s hard for me to believe that “Street Soldiers” is still on the radio because it goes against type. It’s a talk show on a music station. And people will tell me it’s pretty much contrary to everything else they hear on KMEL during the week. But yeah. “Street Soldiers”, that’s how it started and there’s been some remarkable things on the air that have happened over the years since we’ve done that show.

07-00:06:01

Henry:

And what nights does it air now?

07-00:06:04

Marshall:

Now it airs on Sunday night. Sunday nights. I guess it’s evolved and shortened. For years, I guess from maybe 1992 to almost 2000 we were on Monday night from ten o’clock to 2:00 in the morning. And we had no topics. We just open line. For three years between 1994 and 1997, since KMEL was owned by—KMEL and the Beat in Los Angeles, 92.3, the Beat, were owned by the same company, we got to simulcast the show. I think that was easily the best years. Well, they’ve all been great. But to have a statewide show where you would get southern California and northern California and we’d get

calls from all over the state. And then twice a month we would go to Los Angeles and do the show. So we would go down there and do the radio program. So those were great years. And there was some pretty significant moments.

There's a lot of stories but just a couple I can think of. I remember in 1996 when Tupac got killed and I needed some perspective. I really wanted some perspective. I just had happened to have met Jada Pinkett maybe six months earlier and learned about her relationship with Tupac. They grew up as friends and they actually went to school in Baltimore together. I wanted someone to give me some perspective on him and his life. And I remember calling her and she said she'd do it. And I said, "Can you spend a few minutes with us?" Well, that few minutes turned into an hour that turned into four. She stayed on the air until two o'clock in the morning—

07-00:08:03

Henry: How about that.

07-00:08:04

Marshall: —to talk to us about Tupac. It was astounding. I remember the march on Washington, the Million Man March. I sent one of my young people there so I got a description.

07-00:08:18

Henry: First hand encounter of the Million Man March.

07-00:08:19

Marshall: First hand encounter of the Million Man March and I remember all reports and the press were saying—and he said, "No, there really is a million brothers here." [laughter] I think it's all kinds of stuff. That really it's been just countless nights where people would call in and grieve. I remember this Samoan young man got killed by a Filipino, a Filipino youngster and the Samoan family called in vowing revenge over the air. And we had to talk him out of it. [laughter] And I remember talking to the father and the uncle and these Samoans "Tiny" and "Papa Smurf" and all of this. That was something. Then a couple of weeks later he called in and said, "We had gotten him and they weren't going to do anything."

There was this gang called the Romper Room Gang who were committing these robberies and one of the gang members called in to the radio show and started telling us what they were doing. They eventually caught the gang. One of the gang members then, who was in jail, called from prison and talked to us over the air and said he was innocent. Now, this is all live radio. Couple of years later I got a call from the US Attorney's office to subpoena all of the tapes that we had to find out that we had obstructed justice.

07-00:10:01

Henry: Really?

- 07-00:10:03
Marshall: They came to my classroom at the school and asked me—“We’re from the US Attorney’s office.” When guys in suits walk in [laughter]. So I had to go home, find—and they had cassette tapes because we taped every show on cassette shows. Find the tapes, give them the show. They wanted me to go down to Fresno to testify. That was on a Friday. So I spent the whole weekend. I was prepared to go down to Fresno to be at this court trial around these accusations that we were obstructing justice. And then he called me late Sunday night and said, “Oh, no, you don’t have to come. There’s nothing there.”
- 07-00:10:39
Henry: There’s nothing there after all that?
- 07-00:10:39
Marshall: Nothing, nothing.
- 07-00:10:41
Henry: How about that.
- 07-00:10:42
Marshall: So that was just a few of—you know about a reality show? That’s the reality show. So this is a reality show.
- 07-00:10:50
Henry: And where did the name come from?
- 07-00:10:51
Marshall: It was a record. It was a title of a—
- 07-00:10:54
Henry: It was MC Hammer?
- 07-00:10:55
Marshall: Yeah, it was the title. He had a song called “Street Soldiers” and we took that and made it the title of the show and it actually became the title of the book. That book, too, yeah.
- 07-00:11:07
Henry: What did those experiences hosting the show reveal to you about the community that you didn’t know before? What did you learn?
- 07-00:11:14
Marshall: Well, I think I sort of knew this. It just gave me a wider audience. Not everybody’s going to come to the club but this allowed me to take the club to them. In a real sense, just like we have our weekly meetings with the young people here, and they plug in once a week and get their immunization to try and make it through, to try and stay alive and free, for the radio audience this became their weekly inoculation to stay alive and free, and it still is. I was at a conference in Los Angeles and this young man came up to me and said, “You’re Mr. Marshall, huh? You’re Mr. Marshall?” He was a *Street Soldier*

guy. I said, “That’s me.” He said, “I want to thank you, man. I listened to you all through high school and you kept me out of trouble, just by listening to you on Sunday nights.” It showed me that I could keep more people alive and free if I could just reach them and the radio show has been a way to do that.

The other thing it taught me is that there’s a lot of issues out there that concern the community, they just don’t get a chance to talk. It’s a very different program. And it’s a solution oriented program. It’s not a program where you just throw out things and massage things. I tell them what I think. And I tell them. We give good advice, good information, good example, good instruction for your life and freedom, to keep you alive and free, to have all these crusades, make it good in your neighborhood. And if you do it, it’ll work. And that’s what makes it so different. It’s just not a talk show, it’s a solution oriented show about how to stay alive and free.

07-00:13:05

Henry:

Can you give an example of a problem that a caller called in with that you directed the caller to a solution?

07-00:13:14

Marshall:

Well, certainly that one involving the Filipinos and Samoans. That was huge.

07-00:13:19

Henry:

Yeah, that was opening.

07-00:13:20

Marshall:

That was a possible gang war. That was ethnic cleansing. It was a mess. So I told them don’t retaliate. Simple. Said, “Don’t retaliate. It’s not going to get you what you want. It’s not going to solve the problem. It’s only going to make it worse. I know you’re hurt, I know you’re grieving. We can grieve through that right here on the radio in front of everybody else.” And because it was so public. I had to talk him out of it. So sure. I’ve met people who are carrying guns and they thought that was the solution to their problem. And I tell people, “Put down the gun. Put down the gun. Put down the gun.” Is that a guarantee? Well, there’s no guarantee. But I know that’s not the solution to your problem. So just to say stuff like that publicly and say, “Yeah, I know it’s going to work. It’ll work, it’ll work, it’ll work.” And it’s a risk that it won’t. Again, I’m telling the kids at the club the same thing so it’s pretty much easy for me to tell the radio audience that.

So one night I did this show called—the show, it was a topic that night and it was “Been There, Done That. Haven’t Been, Don’t Intend, or Still Caught Up In It.” So everybody can call because everybody’s one of those. Me, I was haven’t been and don’t intend. So we get all these range of callers and a lot of people who had done things in the past but have now changed. Talked about their experiences. And clearly those who are like me, had never gotten in trouble and they had to explain how they were able to stay out of trouble. But what I was hoping to find was somebody who was still caught up in it. And

this was when the show had gone to Sunday night. Then we're on from 8:00 to 11:00. Now we're on from 8:00 to 10:00. So ten minutes to 11:00 this kid calls in and he said he's still caught up in it. And he says he has the angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other shoulder and if he doesn't get some help the devil's going to win. So this is what I said. This is what I said. I said, "You called the right place." I said, "I can bring you from death to life." That's what I said. I said, "Call me tomorrow in my office, 1-800-765-3437. Call me and we'll continue this conversation." So the kid actually calls and I find out the kid's name is Marqux, M-A-R-Q-U-X. He's named after Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Marcus Garvey. And he lives in Vallejo. So I said, "I know it's a long way but show up to Omega on Tuesday night." The kid actually comes. He shows up. He walks in here. This kid.

I meet Marqux. Marqux, he got dreadlocks down to here, he's sagging. He's totally street. And he starts telling me a story. His mother is a sort of seventies, sixties revolutionary person. She wasn't a black panther. She certainly had those leanings. Marqux is her oldest child. He's her prince. She takes him to Mexico. She travels, they travel. He's this very bright, good looking, intelligent—he's everything, right. He's a prince. She was so concerned about his education that she would not let him go to public school. She homeschooled him for elementary school and high school. When he turned sixteen, a junior in high school, he begged his mother to let him go to school. So she relents and says, "Okay, you can go to Vallejo High School." The summer before he's supposed to start Vallejo his sister-in-law tells him that, "Okay, you're too nice a kid. The girls won't respect you. You need to get thugged out." And he says, "What's a thug?" Never tell a guy girls won't like him. She just told him he was too nice. So she says, "Look, I'll give you a crash course on becoming a thug." So she gives him some Snoop Doggy Dog CDs, some Tupac CDs, and the videos, and he studies them and watches them and six months later he's a total thug. He starts selling drugs, running guns. Everything. The whole bit. He takes on this whole persona. And, of course, that's not really him anyway, so his whole life goes downhill and that's when he called me.

So I get him in and the street culture has now taken over this kid. And I meet his mother. She starts crying in front of me. "Can you help me bring my baby back?" Really. She's like sixteen years is undone in six months. So he's got this conflict going on inside of him. This wonderful good side and then this street side. So I said, "Come on, Marqux. Get in, get into the program." And he would come from Vallejo and then I would drive him home every Tuesday and I would pull up. I remember I would drive him home and pull up in front of his house. He'd say, "Doc, you all right?" "Yeah, yeah." "You all right?" Said, "You want to come in for a minute?" I said, "No, I'm fine." I pulled in front of his house and he'd go in the house and then I'd get back in my car, it was a van I drove, and I'd go to sleep in front of his house. [laughter] And he would wake up and see me and wake me up and I'd go home. It took probably maybe a year to bring Marqux back to his true self. He had picked up all—

every manner—he was a creation of a video. He really was. You just look at a video. The hair, the walk, the talk, the goatee, everything. The grill. Everything. And it was just tug of war. We had to just reel him back in and slowly but surely. But it wasn't so much us, it was being with the other young people in the room who were also struggling with it. And you could see him gradually change.

I remember one day he had walked in, he had cut his hair. I said, “Oh, my God, Marqux, is that you?” He'd taken the grill out and now his white teeth were back. He had this beautiful smile. I said, “Oh, so that's what your mother's been looking at all these years.” And, remember, this was a gifted student, right. So he decides he wants to go to college. I said, “Marqux, where you want to go to college?” He picked the University of the Virgin Islands.

07-00:20:28

Henry:

University of Virgin Islands?

07-00:20:29

Marshall:

He picked the Virgin Islands. I don't know how he picked the Virgin Islands. He met somebody. So we went him to the University of Virgin Island.

07-00:20:36

Henry:

Did you really?

07-00:20:37

Marshall:

Yes, we did. Sent him over there. He went there. In his junior year or sophomore year, I can't remember which one, he became an exchange student. He went to Mexico, lived in Mexico for a year, learned to speak fluent Spanish. Came back, graduated from the University of Virgin Islands with honors. He had more honors. He had this portfolio full of honors. Got into graduate school. Is right now finishing up with his MBA. Has been in China for the last year and trying to get a—then he wants to get some degree in international business. I don't know. Something like that. But I just talked to him maybe a month ago. Yeah. Yeah. And he still had trauma in his life. His brother, his younger brother, got into a shootout with the police and died, and that really hurt him. I remember being on the phone talking to him. That emotionally jarred him but he kept moving forward. Marqux is probably a citizen of the world now. And it's funny because when he comes home we go to the Mission, right, and he orders everything in Spanish. Oh, my God, Marqux. But all come from him calling in on Sunday night to that radio program. And I tell people on the phone, “You can get as much out of me as you want. We can just talk over the phone, you can get this life saving advice, or you can come in and meet me and I'll send you to college.”

07-00:22:19

Henry:

But there's no magic elixir that you provide these young people. It's meeting other young people like them in the same straits, being here on Tuesday night,

getting straightened out toward academics and doing better in school. But there's no magic elixir.

07-00:22:38
Marshall:

Well, the elixir is the prescription. The magic is the prescription. We look at ourselves as doctors. We have a prescription and the potion we give them, the medicine we give them is the Alive & Free prescription and we know that if they take the medicine, just like you go to your doctor, you tell them. He says, "This'll work if you take it now. If you don't take it, it's not going to work." And that's all we're doing. We'll tell them, "We are absolutely, one hundred percent certain that if you follow this prescription, you take this medicine, you adopt this lifestyle—" I always tell people I don't have a witness protection program. I don't move people out of the neighborhood but I can put a force field around you so that you probably—what's that show? What's that commercial from Men's Warehouse? Guy says, "I guarantee it." I can pretty much almost guarantee that you will not be a victim or a perpetrator of violence, even in a violent world. That's my guarantee.

So when a young man who wanted to go to college and he couldn't do that because he was not part of the program and he wanted to get out of Oakland—this is another young man. Came here and begged me, begged me to help him. I said, "I can't do it. You have to be part of the program." And he said, "I got robbed last night. I'm worried about dying in Oakland." I said, "Well—" He said, "You telling me to take my chances?" And I looked at him and said, "I can keep you alive for six months for sure." "How can you do that?" I said, "Come here on Tuesday night. Come here, give me six months at the club." I says, "I can keep you alive." I said, "Nothing's going to happen to you." He said, "Well, you know, I'm only here two days a week. You're not with me the rest of the time." I said, "I know, I know." And I say, "Trust me. I know it's going to happen." And so he looked at me like I was crazy. He said, "Okay, I'm going to give you a chance." Came here for six months. Six months later he went to Howard University, to Darrell Randolph two years later. Graduated from Howard. You don't make statements like that unless you know the medicine you're giving them is going to increase their chances significantly of staying alive and free. I have to have an answer to "bullets don't have no names" and "stuff happens" and "when you got to go you got to go." "Wrong place, wrong time." I have to have an absolute answer for all of that.

Another young man told me, "There's a bullet out there with my name on it." So I said, "I'll help you outrun the bullet and nothing ever happened to him." So it's not magic. There is a method and a prescription that if they apply it and take it, I'm pretty sure they will not be a statistic. And that's a pretty bold statement.

07-00:25:37
Henry:

Do you remember the name Otis Mims, a football star?

07-00:25:41
Marshall:

Sure.

07-00:25:42
Henry:

What was his story?

07-00:25:42
Marshall:

Otis. How did I meet Otis? I can't remember how I met Otis. Otis, oh, my God, I can't remember how I met Otis. Otis went to Tennessee State, played football. I remember doing a video about Otis. Otis. Oh, Otis was a high school football star at Oakland Tech, I believe, and somehow he went out to celebrate after a big victory and somebody told him the way to celebrate was to introduce him to crack cocaine. So Otis never made it to college because he started smoking crack. I forget how he found his way over here but—

07-00:26:28
Henry:

Did he call into KMEL?

07-00:26:30
Marshall:

I can't remember. I can't remember he called into KMEL—he might have. He might have called in. Might have been he called in and I invited him over here. But eventually Otis did come and we sent him to Tennessee State where he resumed his football career. Yeah, Otis was funny. Otis would go to school and he always wanted to come home. I said, "Otis, no, you got to stay." That helped Otis grow up and become a man. I remember he played as long as he could. He didn't graduate. He came back home, he got married, he had a son, and he eventually brought his son here to the club. Yeah. Haven't seen Otis in a while. I got to find out how he's doing.

07-00:27:19
Henry:

As time went on you received glowing reviews of your work in the media, including *The New Yorker* magazine, the *New York Times* magazine, Oprah Winfrey and recognition by the Bush White House, as well. How did all this attention make you feel and what effect did it have on the club members?

07-00:27:35
Marshall:

Well, I was just glad that the young people's efforts were being recognized. So I always took this recognition as a salute to them because whatever I got was because they were listening to me. So I always went back. And the kids were always excited. Oh, my God, anytime the club, Omega was saluted, they were just—I remember the night I got the Essence Award and the Essence Award was—

07-00:28:13
Henry:

From *Essence* magazine?

07-00:28:15
Marshall:

Essence magazine. Up to that time it had been given to women and this was the first year it was given—this year, breaking tradition, they were giving it to men. So they actually came to film a segment at the club and they filmed it at

the club and I got the award. There were three community people who got the award. Myself, Robert Moses, who runs Project Algebra was the founder of SNCC, Benjamin Carson, the surgeon, gifted surgeon, and there were four celebrities. It was Eddie Murphy, Spike Lee, Quincy Jones, and, of course, the name that—even I say the name, everybody screams, Denzel Washington, right. See, she’s going to laugh [indicating videographer]. We all got this award together.

07-00:29:16

Henry:

And there was a big gala in Hollywood?

07-00:29:17

Marshall:

Gala. No, it was at New York, Fairmont Theater in New York and it’s nationally televised. Took my mom, took my sisters, took my son. My son came. And we were all there. Michael Jackson’s there. Michael Jackson was still alive then. I remember all these people. Maya Angelou, Aretha Franklin, all these celebrities are sitting down there. My sisters are pointing out all these people.

I met Malcolm X’s daughter. And I remember when I made my remarks I said to be in the city, to meet Malcolm’s daughter, and I wanted to salute—I’m not sure. I think Betty Shabazz was still alive then. I’m not sure. But she was in the audience. So I said to her how much her husband’s work influenced me. But I remember walking up to the podium, looking at the stage. I remember I see Sugar Ray Leonard there. [laughter] But then everything shuts out. I remember saying—I thanked a lot of people but the ones I want to thank were the boys in the hood because they’re the ones that put me up there. I remember I said, “All the homies. You defied what everybody said. They said you wouldn’t give me any time at all. You not only gave me five minutes, you gave me ten, you gave me all of your time. And I told everybody, if you want to find me, no matter how you’re saying you want to find me, you’ll find me in the hood.” Everyone was standing there, were clapping around me. Everybody. It’s funny. There weren’t a lot of standing ovations that night. I remember that because maybe celebrities is used to that. But everybody stood up and clapped and gave me this rousing standing ovation.

So the next recipient after me was Denzel Washington. So he goes up and gets his award, he starts talking about me. “Mr. Marshall’s, is there anything I can do for you?” blah, blah. Right. So he says that to me. So he gets his award. Women are screaming. Ahh. So he gets that. And he comes and he stops where I’m standing, where I’m sitting and he almost genuflects. He gets down. And I’m saying, “Man, get up.” And Denzel Washington says, “Anything I can do for you.” That was the one that I found out—you get fooled. I’m figuring when these guys said they’ll help—Spike is sitting there going like this. He’s panning me, right. [laughter] Jesse comes over, Quincy comes over. They’re all saying—but I found out celebrities say things that

night and then that's it. And not that they don't mean it, it's that after that they move on to the next thing.

But I will say this about Denzel. When I wrote the book, I wanted to get some reviews for the book. Somehow I got to this person and they said, "We just asked him to just look it over." I don't know why I asked Denzel Washington to read a whole book. But she said, "He started reading it." What did he say? "It's an incredible story. It's remarkable. It's an incredible story." So that's the quote we use for the back of the book. So Denzel gave me an endorsement for my book. And that was worth—he did it and even to this day—.

Oh, I remember Spike actually came to San Francisco and asked me to come to his hotel room. And so I go to the hotel and Spike says, "I just want to know how I can help." So I said, "Well—" I don't know why I said this. Spike actually did give me some money later on, contributed to the scholarship fund. But that moment I said, "Why don't you make a movie about the club and have Denzel Washington play me." And he sort of laughed. Yeah.

But I remember the kids when they saw it, the awards show, they said, "Wow, Omega's big, man. Omega's big. Oh, man, look it up. Doc is everywhere." And then they showed the clip that they played and it was of a club meeting, right. Oh, they loved it. They loved it. It just made them feel so good because they were being celebrated for doing the right thing.

07-00:33:53

Henry: Yeah. Yeah. And was Goo Goo there at the—

07-00:33:56

Marshall: My grandmother wasn't there. She watched it.

07-00:33:59

Henry: Oh, okay. But it was one of her proudest moments you said, right?

07-00:34:01

Marshall: Oh, yeah. When it was live it was taped and then played later, right. So, actually, what happened was when the actual national broadcast came on, because it wasn't live and it was taped, played later, I happened to be in Los Angeles and we watched it together.

07-00:34:19

Henry: Oh.

07-00:34:20

Marshall: Oh, man. She started crying. "Junior, I knew this was going to happen." She's going on. Oh, man, she was like—and then my grandma, she start praying and she's looking up, just kind of, "Lord." Yeah.

07-00:34:33

Henry: That's great.

07-00:34:34
Marshall:

It was something, yeah.

07-00:34:35
Henry:

That's great. It was almost like a mirror image of your life, seeing scenes of the movie *Menace to Society*, which you watched with Margaret Norris. After viewing it you together came up with nine risk factors underscoring life for at risk kids. Can you recall a few of them?

07-00:34:53
Marshall:

Sure. We took the night off, me and my co-host at that time, Margaret Norris, we took the night off from the show because we wanted to see this movie *Menace to Society*. And we go to the movie theater and it's a typical hood movie of the nineties. And everybody's laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing until the end when everybody gets killed. King dies. You just know. Actually, it wasn't a story of my life because my life was nothing like that but it was a story of a life with these young people that I am now working with.

07-00:35:29
Henry:

That's what I meant.

07-00:35:31
Marshall:

So I get in the car and I'm thinking. And we never laughed through the movie at all. There's nothing funny about this stuff. And it is tragic at the end. So we're sitting in the car and we go, "How did this happen? How did this happen? How did this happen?" And they have these shows like CSI now where they perform an autopsy and sort of reconstruct the story of how the person died just by the cause of death. And, similarly, that's what we did sitting in that car. We just turned on the light and we went from the last scene back to the first scene, what elements had they—what elements—how did we put it—contributed to this person's death and the rest of the deaths, the deaths that were in those scenes? So we sort of had this laboratory of personal experiences with young people and books which we had read and all these movies that we had seen. There's some elements here that if they were removed these tragedies wouldn't happen.

So in our mind we sort of had risk factors for heart disease. So that night was the beginning of our prescription, our methodology. And we actually sat down and wrote out pretty much the risk factors for violence. Because up to then I knew we had success but I couldn't tell people how. They just said I was a dedicated guy. But I knew there was a method to the madness and that was the night we came up with the first piece of this is our methodology. And it was really important for me to come up with it because then I didn't have to beat around the bush. I could go straight to the medicine, right. And more importantly, then if I could get it, I could teach other people. "You can do this. You're in Brooklyn, you can do it. You're in Los Angeles, you can do it." So, yeah, I clearly remember that night. That was a big night for us.

07-00:37:40

Henry:

Do you remember some of the risk factors you jotted down?

07-00:37:42

Marshall:

Oh, absolutely. The first was the obvious one. And it's so obvious I don't want to say it. Well, the obvious one is the unhealthy family and environment. But there's nothing you can do about that, just like when it comes to heart disease you can't do anything about family history or predisposition or genetics. It's almost like a given. So since you can't do anything about that, then you need a list of things you can do something about that can counter that risk factor. So in heart disease you can't do anything about heart disease, it runs in your family, but you can do something about smoking and drinking, exercise, diet, cholesterol. Those are all things within your control. I wanted a list like that so that I could say, "Yeah, you might live here or your family might not be the greatest family but you can counter all those things by eliminating all those other risk factors." So it had to be a tangible list and it couldn't be low socioeconomic status because if I said that the kids would sell drugs. It couldn't be single parent homes, which everybody thinks is a risk factor but if that's—for one thing, that ran counter to my own experience growing up in Los Angeles where there were a lot of single parent homes and there wasn't a lot of violence. But if that's a risk factor for you—if I'm at risk because I'm the son of a single parent, then I just need to find my mother a husband. Why waste time? And I remember being in a PhD program and people were talking about risk factors for delinquent behavior and they said—he wasn't looking at me but I felt like he says, "Being black and male puts you at risk." I'm saying, "What the hell can I do about being black and male, right? That's what I am." So I always said those are correlates, not true risk factors. So risk factors are things like drugs, and alcohol, and guns.

07-00:39:50

Henry:

And guns.

07-00:39:52

Marshall:

Things like material values over people. Huge risk factor. If you put money over people, which is what drug dealers do. If you sell drugs to a pregnant woman, you're saying that's more important. By the way, that's a Wall Street risk factor also. There's a character *Menace II Society* called O-Dog and he says, "I don't give a—" That's a huge risk factor. And it's funny. With little kids it starts off, "I don't care, tell my momma. I don't give a damn. I don't give an F." So I renamed peer pressure fearship, relationships based on power, domination and control.

07-00:40:30

Henry:

Fearship?

07-00:40:32

Marshall:

Fearship.

07-00:40:33

Henry: Fearship.

07-00:40:34

Marshall:

Everybody has experienced peer pressure. I need to have an antidote for peer pressure, but it's more than peer pressure to me because I had a young man who was in a gang and he wanted to get out of the gang and I said, "Well, get out." And he said, "It's not that easy. They'll kill me." So I said, "Wait, you just told me the gang was your family. The gang were your friends. So I'm confused. Why would your friends or family want to kill you?" "Well, but they are my friends. Well, they are my friends." I said, "Well, let me tell you something. If you do something that you want to do, do you have to do what they want you to do?" Said, "Well, yeah, I kind of do because—" And then he just said it. He said to me, "Dr. Marshall, I'm going to think about this." He said, "In a gang everybody's afraid of everybody." That was his conclusion. And I said, "Well, you don't have a friendship, you have a fearship." He said, "Wow." I said, "You're afraid of your own friends." And he's like, "Man, that's so—"

And most of my kids are engaged in relationships where they are afraid to be their own person because they either get—the low level is being ostracized, called a bunch of names, to where they'll get killed. And I said, "That's not friendship." Fearship I've taken to—look at the mafia, right. They're all related but they're all afraid of each other. They're a family. I said, "That's not family. That's fearship, right." We've got women who are involved in domestic violence relationships under the guise of love. That's not love. That's fearship. They're afraid of their husband. So that concept has become huge. People hear that for the first time, go, "Wow." Let me tell you, I've done this in lectures and people start looking at all the relationships in their lives from friend, family, and loved ones, and realize under the guise of friends, family and love—

07-00:42:45

Henry: There's all kinds of abuse.

07-00:42:45

Marshall:

It's fearship. And they're controlled by the words friend, family, and love. So that concept we developed here, I think that thing—you'd be surprised. I've been places with professional people and they were like—well, there's all kinds of fearship phrases. You have work fearship phrases. You're not a team player. That's a work fearship phrase. Right? [laughter]

07-00:43:09

Henry: Right.

07-00:43:09

Marshall:

Yeah. So that concept has really transcended me. I have people everywhere saying, "Don't fearship me" because it's just a way to manipulate people to get them to do what you want them to do and not what they want to do. That's

a huge thing for my kids. So they don't even talk about peer pressure. They'll look at their relationships in terms of fearships and friendships. And then I had to explain what a friendship really is and what love really is and what family really is. So yeah. And as I'm explaining this, when I make a statement like, "I can keep you alive. We can outrun a bullet." I can beat "wrong place, wrong time. And stuff happens. And bullets don't have no names," what I'm really doing is saying I'm going to—oh, God, how do we say it? I'm going to remove you from those people and those places that increase the chance that something's going to happen to you. So if you really get fearship, then there's a lot of people you rule out of your life. If you get fearship then there are family members you're not going to hang around with anymore. If you get fearship, a gang member can't be your friend. So there are so many guys that get in trouble just because they're with somebody. Now they've eliminated those people, right. So it's a lifestyle that you take on and once they adopt this lifestyle it's just like they're not there, where they would have been before. They're not around the people that they would have been with. They don't feel disrespected anymore, like they would have felt disrespected before. They don't act the same way. The whole prescription, it works. That's what it comes down to. I remember we started with risk factors but if I went to the whole prescription it's really changing the way you think, changing the way you act, dealing with the emotional residue that comes from being involved. Now they got PTSD and all this other stuff. But it's really anger, fear, and pain that you don't know how to handle and then adopting some simple rules for living to decrease the chance that you will be a victim or a perpetrator of violence. So I have to explain what a friend is. Kids don't know what a friend is. Adults don't know what friends are. They're around people. I tell them. They finally say, "Well, what's a friend? What's a friend?" I go through this whole thing. A friend is somebody that has my back. A friend is somebody who I grew up with. A friend is somebody I can talk to. So I give them all these examples of friends. Were Cain and O-Dog friends in the movie? Did it keep him alive? No. I said, "You need somebody that keeps you alive." When I finally say it, they go like—I said, "A friend is someone who would never lead you to danger." So the key word in that sentence is danger. So a drug dealer is dangerous. So they have to identify everybody as either safe or—

07-00:46:36

Henry:

Dangerous.

07-00:46:37

Marshall:

—dangerous. And this forces them to relook at everybody in their lives and label them. And if they're confused about what's safe or dangerous, I'm objective. So family will never lead you to danger. So this cousin that you running around with, you got to make a decision if he's safe or dangerous. And this is a hard decision for them to make because they're around family members all the time, right. Love will never lead you to danger. So you now have to make a decision if this man that you with, you know, that you run around with and he's a drug dealer, he's dangerous. So when they really get

this, they've X'd out 80 percent of people that they were with. When I used to drop Mr. Aikins off, I used to say to him, "Andre, listen. Dre, you're only one bad decision away." And I would pray that I would see him next week. Tuesday night I'd drop him off. Tuesday night he comes back. And later on he would tell me, "But for the grace of God I should be dead. But for the grace of God." So when I finally taught him what fearship is, I had him list all the people he would hang around with on a daily basis living in East Oakland. He listed forty people and then he marked all of them. Every one of them was dangerous. He should have been dead. His chances of surviving were zero percent. He should have been dead. And it's a miracle that he's alive because everybody he was around—and this guy's from a neighborhood. But this gives my young people a filter for people. Up till then they had no filter for people. Does that make sense?

07-00:48:29

Henry: Yeah.

07-00:48:30

Marshall: All they had was the word friend. Well, anybody be your friend. What's your standard? They had no standard. I'm giving them a standard. Danger. Right? And here's the key thing. I never say these people are bad. I say they're—

07-00:48:45

Henry: Dangerous.

07-00:48:46

Marshall: That's different from saying bad. I'm saying they might be great people. They're probably good. Because you hear all these mothers that—look, you have mass murderers and what do the mother tell you? They're really a good boy. I never said they were bad. I said they were dangerous, which takes all the judgment out of it. See, the way we do things removes the judgment. And medicine in a pure sense does not judge. It treats. So I don't have any bad kids. I have infected kids. This computer's a great instrument. But if it gets a virus it can only do—you can't do anything good. That doesn't mean it's a bad computer. It means it's an infected computer. So what makes this work here is there's no judgment. Everybody else judges them. I don't judge them. If somebody has an STD and they go to the doctor, doctor doesn't moralize. He wants to treat the infection. The only reason he asks you about your sexual history is not to get in your business but to stop the disease. So imagine if you went to your doctor and he started, "Ooh, you're bad, you're bad, you're bad." They don't do that. So that's why this thing is so effective because it works just like—you got to look at it from a medical standpoint.

07-00:50:02

Henry: And an antidote to fearship is Omega itself? It's setting up as this different family, an alternative family for these young people, right?

07-00:50:11
Marshall:

Oh, the antidote to fearship is the rule. The rule for friend is a friend will never lead you to danger, family will never lead you to danger, love won't lead you to danger. That's the antidote for fearship. We're a support system for this new lifestyle. Because, see, when you start living like this you're going totally against the grain. You're going against your friends, you're going against your family, you're going against everybody. You now become an oddball in a sense.

07-00:50:42
Henry:

Takes a lot of courage, doesn't it?

07-00:50:44
Marshall:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. You're daring. So we have all these phrases. One of the phrases is dare to be different. So we support them in this new lifestyle, this violence free, drug free lifestyle. So yeah. They're totally different. They've said, "I'm not street anymore." And it's even worse now than when I started because being good is totally unpopular. Totally unpopular. They're totally acting white because they're not doing this—somehow this whole thing has become—street has become black. So now they're not even black anymore, they're white. So the club supports them in what they know. So that's why I admired them so much. It takes awesome courage to do what they know is right and to stay alive and free in a world that says there's something wrong with you for wanting to stay alive.

07-00:51:43
Henry:

Do you remember the name Nate Pique and what does his experience—

07-00:51:45
Marshall:

Nate Pique.

07-00:51:46
Henry:

—say about the pathology of guns in inner city culture?

07-00:51:49
Marshall:

Sure. Nate was one of my early ones. We did a video on Nate called *Victory Over Violence*. And it's funny because—this is a name out of the past. The narrator was Walter Cronkite, who narrated that piece. We were talking about guns in Richmond. Nate came on the radio show with me one night and was telling guys, "Get rid of your gun. Get rid of your gun. Get rid of your gun." Nate was one of my early, early—you got to meet these kids early who are daring to be different, who are willing to say something different and Nate was one of them. Nate later moved to Atlanta and I found out some years later that he had died. I understand Nate is no longer with us. But he was one of the early ones that stepped out and would tell peers, "I'm not carrying a gun anymore." I'm going to tell you, they had a crazy experience. Nate's street name was Nuke. Nuclear bomb, nuclear fission. So Nate had completely changed. He had gone away. And one day he was over at the MacArthur BART station and one of his old enemies caught up with him. And he walked

up to him and said, “Nuke, I finally found you.” And he puts the gun in his mouth. Literally. It’s like in the movies. And Nate is like, “Who are you talking about? Me? I don’t even know you.” And then he clicks into his head, “Oh, that used to be me,” because this persona is completely gone. So Nate says to the guy, “Hey, man, I’m not with that anymore. I’m not with that anymore.” He said, “Nuke, that’s you.” He said, “No, I’m not with that anymore.” So the guy is looking, literally looking for Nuke and he’s now Nate. He can’t find Nuke. So he pulls the gun out of his mouth and doesn’t kill him. This is all a true story.

07-00:53:27

Henry: Geez. Gee whiz.

07-00:53:30

Marshall: See, and that’s why I can say the stuff I can say, because I’ve seen stuff happen that is so improbable. He’s actually looking for this old enemy but the enemy doesn’t exist. So he just says, “What am I going to shoot you for?” Yeah.

07-00:53:47

Henry: Who was Little Disease and what became of him?

07-00:53:49

Marshall: Little Disease. Little Disease was the ones we used in the books because his real sickness was Young Sickness so we switched it to Little Disease. So Ali, if you’re watching this. [laughter] So yeah, yeah, yeah. That was his name. He was a kid that we tried to help. Ali ended up going to jail, got out. I see him from time to time. And maybe three months ago I’m at an event and it’s a scholarship event and this girl comes up to me and she said, “You know my dad. You know my dad. You know my daddy.” I said, “Who’s your father?” She said, “Ali Satchel. I said, “Ali? Ali’s your dad?” She said, “Yeah. In the book he was Little Disease.” She said, “But that wasn’t his real name.” I said, “No.” I said, “You’re Ali’s daughter.” She comes up and hugs me. “My daddy talks about you all the time. Oh, he’s all, Dr. Marshall, Dr. Marshall.” I said, “Where is he?” Said, “He’s living in Stockton, he’s doing great.”

07-00:54:54

Henry: Is that right?

07-00:54:55

Marshall: Yeah.

07-00:54:56

Henry: How about that.

07-00:54:57

Marshall: Yeah. I said, “Tell him to call me. Yeah.” She was with her mom who was—they had a child together. And she said, “He’s been talking about you all my life.” I said, “I’m so glad to meet you.” Yeah. So Ali, you need to call me. [laughter]

07-00:55:18

Henry: You liken the drug dealer in your book to the slave master of old. Can you elaborate on that metaphor?

07-00:55:24

Marshall: Sure. The drug dealer and the slave master are the same because they're doing it for the same reason. They're trying to make money. Slavery was an economic system and slaves were property. It's been said that the American economy was built on the back of slaves and slavery, which is why people are still asking for reparations because they're saying that's how they got its start. But it was all about money and a drug dealer to me is the same thing. It's all about money. It's just another case of man's inhumanity to man. And I would tell drug dealers that all the time. "You're no different than a slave master." I said, "What's the difference between you? You're doing it for money, he did it for money, but you condemn the slave master for what he did. You're doing it for the same reason." And the drug dealer said, "Well, I'm doing what I got to do," and he said, "He's doing what he got to do." Your commandment is thou shalt get that money on and his commandment was thou shalt get that money on. Then I was looking. I said, "Why would you want to do that to us again?" And they shut up. So yeah, it's the same.

07-00:56:37

Henry: What roles have *Letters to Street Soldiers* played in revealing greater understanding about the forces of life in the streets and behind bars for black males?

07-00:56:46

Marshall: I get a lot of letters here. A lot of letters to the show. The radio show, apparently a lot of guys in prison listen to the show, especially in the immediate area. And then when I was in LA they would hear it down there. And they just write me. In the book I've redacted the name but put a lot of the letters in. And this shows the extent of the disease of violence and how infected people are. Again, it just showed me, looking at it from a doctor's standpoint, how much disease and infection is out there and all that has to be overcome and how people are reaching out and how I have to somehow get this prescription to them knowing that the medicine is hard to take but necessary.

07-00:57:42

Henry: Do you still visit the jail? Juvenile hall?

07-00:57:43

Marshall: I still go to juvenile hall whenever I can. For a long time I was going up to San Francisco and when I can I go to Alameda County Juvenile Hall. I get invitations to go speak in the adult facilities. One that really stuck with me was I got invited to the women's prison out in Dublin. There are women in prison. But the thing that struck me is that aside from the political prisoners of the sixties almost all of the women in there are behind men. I'd say 95 percent of them there are behind men.

07-00:58:26

Henry: Are behind men?

07-00:58:28

Marshall: Men, men. They sold drugs for them. You'd be surprised how many women in there have gone to jail for men. They didn't even do it. They take the rap for them.

07-00:58:38

Henry: Just sacrificing for the men.

07-00:58:40

Marshall: Absolutely. Yes. There's a commandment, one of the commandments is "Thou shalt be down for their homey right or wrong." And so the men convince them that if you love me, which is another fearship phrase, and they go to jail for them. And here they tell me for the first time that, "I didn't do it." You would be shocked. But I'm not shocked anymore. But I was shocked when I first heard it because I'm not going to jail for anybody. But there are guys in jail for other guys. They don't believe in snitching and they believe in being down no matter what. So that was something. I had sixty women in there and I bet you fifty of them were there because their man told them to go or they lied for them or they carried their drugs for them. And so I would ask them, "Well, did the men visit you?" "No." Said, "They got three other women and they let—"

07-00:59:40

Henry: Yeah. Throughout the nineties and two thousands—

07-00:59:43

Videographer: Neil, I hate to interrupt but I have to switch the tape.

07-00:59:47

Henry: Okay, switch the—

Audio File 8

08-00:00:03

Henry: Throughout the nineties and into the two thousands, the Justice Department pursued war on drugs and drug offenses, instituting mandatory minimum sentencing for drug offenses. And I was wondering what do you think the effect of these policies have been?

08-00:00:19

Marshall: Devastating. Devastating. Little did I know that when I started my work—I knew that my young people were colluding in their own oppression. I just didn't know how oppressive those practices were. I knew they were walking into a trap thinking that they were getting over. But I just didn't know how it was being done. This wonderful book has just come out called—Michelle

Alexander's book. God. Mass Incarceration in the—what's the name of the book? I'm blanking on the name of the book right now. *The New Jim Crow*.

08-00:01:13

Henry:

The New Jim Crow, yeah.

08-00:01:13

Marshall

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. So I always knew there was a disproportionate number of black men in prison and all of that and I knew there was something going on, I just didn't know how it was going on. And people always say the war on drugs is a war on black people. Yeah. But that book, which I devoured just recently, showed me how this war was being conducted and it was really targeted at the young people that I was serving. So when I say that a real lot of demarcation for me in terms of community and community history and black history is 1980, and I use the term BC, before crack, and AC, after crack. I knew that crack had a devastating effect on our—the drug itself had a devastating effect on black families, particularly the mother getting on drugs and the drug being so important that it took precedence over her children and the men selling drugs and leaving and going to prison. So a lot of times when I get in front of audiences and they say, "You know, we just had a civil rights movement. We're going to the mountaintop. People are ascending." I said, "But Dr. King and Malcolm and Medgar could not have foreseen this thing called crack cocaine, which basically destroyed black families. And a community is only as good as families function and even today I tell people I'm in business because families are in disarray.

So a huge part of that was the drug and the men going off to prison. I just didn't know how that was being done deliberately. In Vietnam when they wanted to catch the enemy or I guess the enemy wanted to catch the Americans, they would set these landmines out there. And you're walking along and you step on a landmine, you blow up. Essentially all those practices put in place legally—legally, that's what makes it so tough in the war on drugs, were these landmines that my young people were stepping on. And they didn't even know the landmines were there. They didn't know anything about the practices that were put in place. And they also didn't know that even though this was supposed to be a war on drugs the lens had been focused squarely on them as the main perpetrator in the war on drugs. I can't even begin to tell people how devastating the last—and I say 1980, although crack cocaine started before. I had to pick a round date. Has been in the last thirty plus years. It's as if nothing before it ever happened. It was like you're going up a mountain, you're ascending, you're sinking. If you look at black people's history, it's always been this—you have slavery and you begin this ascent out of that hole, out of that hole, out of that hole, and you slip back in, you're out of the hole. But when you get to 1980 it's like—think about it. This is the first generation of young black people that hasn't gone farther than their parents. And you see it with simple little things like grandmother and grandfather,

these are hardworking families, and they buy a house in the neighborhood and they turn it over to the grandchildren and it becomes a crack house. You just see it in simple things like that. Everything goes. You see it in neighborhoods just right here in San Francisco where you have working class black families build things up and the violence forces people to sell their homes and leave.

The war on drugs was devastating and it's how I explain to people, really easily if it's a war on drugs. And I ask people this all the time. Is there more or less drug use and sales in the white community or in the black and brown community? Use and sale. Is there more or less? But it's pretty much, and statistics has shown, it was shown, if you couple use and sale, there is as much, if not more use, in the white community. There are frat houses at colleges I'm not going to mention, just because of you, where if you go in there, with Fraternity Row, there are drugs everywhere. Then the question comes, if there's equal or more use in the white community than the black community, what are all the drug sweeps doing in the neighborhood? That's not an equal war. So when people get that, then I can begin to show them the policies that Michelle Alexander skillfully laid out. Not only are you conducting the war unfairly, you're only conducting the war in one place, but there's money involved to conduct the war there. So it's horrible, man. But, see, different about this war, number one, it's legal. It's legal to use the pot. And, number two, enough non-black people—it's just enough so you can't call it a race war. That's the part of her book that's so—that's why she called it *Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. So it's almost the creation of a permanent underclass and I remember when I read the book I went on the radio screaming, "It's a trap." I was spending two hours on—"You know, it's a trap. If you fool with drugs, you have no idea what you're getting into." You are stepping into a system that's just waiting for you.

The first policy was—well, let me explain it this way. I remember you asked me about the LA Riots. I'm there. So I remember who came down. The National Guard. There were no SWAT teams that came in. SWAT teams came about with the war on drugs. SWAT teams came about because there's always the reluctance of local police departments to be involved. They don't want the feds in their business. So the feds, they conducting this war, but they got to convince the local departments to be involved in the war so they say, "All right, we'll give you money to be involved in the war and you can use the money to beef up your local departments. The rise of SWAT teams came with the war on drugs. Grant money. Now, the grant money, it depends on the number of drug arrests you make, right. So three weeks before, you'd look at the grant and you'd say, "Oh, my God. Our grants up for renewal. We haven't arrested enough people." So where can we get the arrests? So then you go out in the community, arrest ten, a hundred, a thousand guy. The statistics are entered and they get more money. They went a step further. They said, "We got o really sweeten the pot." So then they said, "Okay, anything you seize in these drug sweeps you get to keep." So if you seize a hundred Gs, you seize the cars, you can impound the cars. So now they do exist to beef up their

department's budget. Right? But here's the thing is. You haven't heard guys say—well, you know those guys? The police know they're selling drugs. Why don't they just bust them? No, the apple's not ripe enough. They wait till they get it, they deal enough money, they bust them, they take their money, then they send them back out there. So in this sense the war never ends. When I read this book I was like, "Oh, my God." And you know this is all this. So that's why when people come on the radio and tell me, "You know this is deliberate, you know that there's a master plan out there?" and I said, "Yeah, well, there it is. There is actually. Read the book. It's there." It's like when I found out about COINTELPRO. I was like, "What?" J. Edgar Hoover, he's actually writing letters to H. Rap Brown and pitting them one against each other. Come on now. I didn't even believe that. You just can't believe this is going on in America until you read this. So after that I was like, "Oh, I know this stuff was going on."

So what can you do? I'm back to my landmine analogy. What I have to do is help my young people identify the landmines and not step on them, while at the same time somebody's going to have to remove these landmines. That's what really has to happen now. And I've actually become more involved in policy stuff now just because I've discovered all of this. Somebody's going to have to, just like in Vietnam, get those landmines out because somebody's going to step on them. I have to help my young people not step on them because they collude in their own oppression big-time. That's why, yeah, the war on drugs devastating.

08-00:11:27

Henry:

Has your work on the San Francisco City Police Commission also enlightened you toward the problems?

08-00:11:33

Marshall:

Sure. I remember the first time I got on the Police Commission. Said, "Why are you on?" I said, "Well, my community has enough problems. I want to make sure the police don't make it worse." So that's always been my stance. Sure, I found out a lot. It's one of those things where if you're not in the room people make decisions about you just because they don't know what you know and they don't have perspective that you have. So yeah. I would also find out like about what the police do and their policies and their strategies and just offices in general and the tough work that they do. But my job was to make sure they do it right and they do it fairly. I think the one thing that bothers me about—and I tell officers this all the time. And it's probably the hardest job because the worst thing for a good officer is a bad officer because just as a lot of young people are stereotyped by the behavior—I'm reading this Trayvon Martin stuff and all they every say is, "He's a thug, he's a thug, he's a thug." So they don't know this guy but they assume he's a thug because they—it's the same thing with cops. If you have a bad experience with a police officer that taints every—it can be a Canadian Mountie—but you extrapolate that experience to all the officers. That's the tough thing for an

officer. So my job is to make sure officers—just for the officers’ sake. Because they got to go back out there on the streets. And there’s an officer who has been involved with some kind of misconduct, it puts all those officers in danger. And so I tell them my job is to make sure there aren’t any bad officers in the department and that’s the work that I’ve really been trying to do. We either correct it or you got to go. And we fired officers. We have fired police officers. Yes.

08-00:13:29

Henry:

At one point you decided to take your learning and lessons from the Omega Boys Club to Los Angeles and began an effort to work with the Crips and the Bloods. What did that work involve?

08-00:13:40

Marshall:

I remember a Crip and a Blood came up to me and they were on television. They were on a show called *People Are Talking* back in '92. And I remember seeing them on TV. And, literally, I'm sitting there at the club. I said, "We got to meet these guys." So I jump in my car, run out. And as they're walking out of the studio I walk up to them and say, "My name is Joe Marshall. I do Omega Boys Club, *Street Soldiers*, blah, blah. Here's my card." And the Blood is like, "Ugh." The Crip is like, "Oh, maybe this guy is sincere. He's sincere." No, no. So that's how I met these guys and they started inviting me to Los Angeles. And I would go down and work with the Bloods on Saturday and the Crips on Sunday. Number one, that's where I grew up. It was amazing. Gang violence is horrible, man. It's horrible and even though I grew up around gangs this had taken it to another level. And it's funny. Even gang members would tell me how bad drugs messed up the gangs. Not that there was ever any real loyalty because there is no loyalty but there were no allegiances when drugs and crack cocaine got involved. They really imploded from the inside. It was horrible. And I learned about how they got infected, how they get into the gang in the first place. Yeah, it was an experience. Probably the biggest thing that I learned is that nobody really helps those guys and the so-called organizations and structures that came out, gang alliances, gang truces, sort of this structure for dealing with gangs, it doesn't do any good at all. Any good at all.

I remember meeting this guy who was supposedly a gang expert and he was a former gang member and he was going to somehow do something about peace and doing—and I asked him, I said, "Well, look, I know a simple way to do that." And he was a Blood. I said, "Just tell the kids you're working with not to be a Blood." And he looked at me and he said, "Dr. Marshall, I can't do that." I said, "Why can't you do that?" And he said, "They'll laugh at me." I said, "Wait a minute. It almost got you killed, it got you all these years in jail, you know what's going to happen if they become gang members and you won't tell them not to do it because you don't want to be laughed at and you're one of the shock collars around here in keeping the peace?" I said, "You

guys are a joke.” It’s almost like saying get injected with a virus and hope it doesn’t kill you.

Now, that taught me a lot about this whole structure that was set up around gang truces and gang innovate—if you think about it, the only reason you have a truce is you got enemies. Right? But you’re Henry, I’m Marshall. We don’t need a truce. So they’re inept when it comes to dealing with—and that’s why they’ve been so unsuccessful.

08-00:16:49

Henry:

Yeah. The explosion of the crack epidemic in the eighties and nineties, coupled with the easy availability of firearms made this problem exponentially worse.

08-00:17:03

Marshall:

Exponentially worse.

08-00:17:04

Henry:

How easy was it and is it to get a firearm out there?

08-00:17:07

Marshall:

Easy. Simple. Get somebody in, get a gun faster than you can get a copy of the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Because I’ve asked them to do it. Everybody’s got a gun. Everybody’s got a gun. Everybody’s got a gun and they all use the same reasons. They’re scared and there is a commandment, “Thou shalt be strapped.” Thou shalt carry a gun for protection. It’s almost like a maxim. Now I’m looking at it in 2013. Everybody’s got a gun. All the kids got a gun.

And they’re not so much into the Second Amendment. They just need a gun because everybody else got one. So it’s the biggest risk factor there is. So I tell the kids about my growing up and I tell them that I didn’t go to a funeral of one peer and they said, “Why?” I said, “Because nobody had any guns.” I said, “We had a lot of the same risk factors you have. “ I said, “I’m not saying this is a good thing but we fought.” It was almost unmanly not to fight. You didn’t shoot somebody. You stood and fought, right. I said, “But that’s the only reason.” I said, “Instead of dealing with your fears you settled everything through violence. But it’s not settling because then you just create more violence.” Oh, guns are the main issue. On my list, if there was one risk factor, if there was one I could immediately do away with it would be guns. That’s the biggest risk factor of all.

08-00:19:10

Henry:

So you’re a strong proponent of gun control?

08-00:19:13

Marshall:

I’m a strong proponent of getting rid of guns.

08-00:19:16

Henry: Getting rid of them.

08-00:19:17

Marshall:

You can call it gun control, you can call it what you want. See, phrases, those are trigger phrases for me. Gun control. No, I ain't got a gun. Reason you got a gun is because you scared. That's why you got a gun. Because you scared and you better deal with your fears. Now, I don't even want to get into the Second Amendment, it's my right. It's funny when people talk about their rights. I'm not going to go into it was a different country and all of that sort of thing back then. But rights also carry responsibility. Well, let's put it like this. If somebody has a gun I don't want to be around them. Why? Because I never know what's going on with that person. Right? I don't care if it's Pookie or Bubba. I don't want to be around either one of them because I don't know what they're going through. You have a problem with your wife, you might be the NRA responsible gun owner, fine. I have no chance against a gun. On a given Tuesday night there might be a hundred kids here. We've had a hundred kids here or eighty kids here or fifty kids here from all over with all kind of issues. They can bring every risk factor in this room. The only one I'm worried about is if they bring a gun. Right? That's the only thing. You can bring your family problems, all those issues to the table. Your attitudes. I can deal with that. But you got a gun? No. So no. We got a love affair with guns and it's getting everybody killed. It's that simple.

08-00:20:51

Henry:

You've encountered a lot of dangerous situations, I'm sure, in your professional life. Have you ever felt compelled to carry a gun yourself?

08-00:20:59

Marshall:

No. In fact, not having a gun is what's saved me. So when I go to Los Angeles and I'm in the park and I'm surrounded by these gang members, or I'm in a hotel surrounded by gang members, the reason they listen to me is because I don't have a gun. They said, "Don't you know who's in here? Killers." I said, "Well, okay. What?" "Aren't you scared?" "No." "Why aren't you scared?" When I first started this, this guy told me, he said, "You might get killed doing this work." I said, "Okay." And he looked at me. I said, "I'm going to die anyway." Said, "What's important to me is how I live." He was like, "Oooh." So I don't worry about that. I don't worry about that. If you're going to get me, you're going to get me. Now, when you get into situations like that, when you walk in totally armed to a room full of gang members, that everybody's got a gun, they be like, "Damn, man, you are really something. You must really want to help us." "Yeah. If you're going to kill me anyway, you're going to kill me. One gun ain't going to outdo fifty guns so what do I need a gun for?" They just have such admiration for the fact that you're willing to go in there like that. No, never, never. Never. And I've been in some situations. Yeah.

08-00:22:21

Henry:

Yeah. What's the significance of the words, "Life, friendship, change, respect?"

08-00:22:26

Marshall:

Those are the four rules for living. The four rules for living. You think of it, rules for living. My kids have RIP, rest in peace. So we have rules to help keep them alive and free. And there's a rule for life, rule for change, rule for respect, and rule for friendship. And these are rules. Rules. Here's the issue about rules. The problem isn't the rules, the problem is people don't follow the rules. So when I remove these commandments of violence that they live by, this infected way of thinking that they adopt, I now have to give them some rules that are airtight. And if you follow these rules nothing's going to happen to you. In fact, you won't even get infected in the first place. And it's just four simple rules.

The first rule is so basic you wonder why I teach it but in a world where life means nothing our first rule is the rule for life, was that there's nothing more valuable than an individual's life. We start there. And they know that their life isn't valued by anybody. They don't even value their own lives. Certainly the neighborhood that they live in don't value their lives. A lot of times the families don't value their own life. So we start with there's nothing more valuable than an individual's life. Then the rule for friend, which I've already said. A friend will never lead you to danger. And the subset's family will never lead you to danger and love will never lead you to danger. The rule for respect is the hardest rule. People have to evolve to this rule because respect and disrespect is so—

08-00:24:05

Henry:

Loaded.

08-00:24:06

Marshall:

—loaded, that's a good word, that I have to actually teach this over time. And very few people get this one. I got it and the people that get it then become—they sort of levitate up here above everybody else. They don't feel disrespected. Like me, I don't feel disrespected. And it's funny. So the basic rule is respect comes from within. No one can disrespect you if you respect yourself. But the rule without explanation—it's hard for people to see what I'm talking about. So invariably I go back to Dr. King, who was "disrespected" by all of these things but knew that his respect did not come from Bull Connor and the Southern racists. His respect came from himself. You couldn't move him because he was like, "My respect doesn't come from you, it comes from me." Now, most people don't get this because most people—in fact, I don't even teach people—people hide behind the word. I said, "Don't say you feel disrespected. Say what you actually feel." "I feel hurt. I feel disappointed." People get that. You say, "I feel disrespected but what does that mean?" I don't know what you mean when you say that. But if you tell me what your feeling is. "Oh, you're hurt. I didn't mean to hurt you. I

can deal with that.” Or people say, “You disrespected me.” “Well, what did I do?” You can’t correct a behavior unless you know what they did.

So I’m the assistant principal. I get a referral from the teacher. Teacher says he kicked the kid out of his class. Why? Because blatant disrespect. So I go in and ask the teacher, “What did he do?” “I don’t know. He disrespected me.” Well, say, “How can I correct the behavior if I don’t know what he did.” So I finally found the kid. “What’d you do?” I finally identify, oh, yeah, he got up and walked around the room. So I said, “Kid, why’d you walk around the room?” He said, “My mother is dying of AIDS.” I said to the teacher, “What does this have to do with you? This isn’t even about you? How can you feel disrespected by the fact that his mother’s dying of AIDS?” I said, “It has nothing to do with you. You kicked the kid out. Did you ever ask him why he felt this way?” People feel disrespected by all kinds of stuff that’s not even related to them. So I tell people don’t say, “You disrespected me.” At least tell me what you did so I can correct the behavior. Now, I’m just giving you like the very, very—respect is so huge with people. If they do stuff they regret later and it’s really about—because they’re fragile. The King wasn’t fragile.

I’ll do this just for you. So I met this guy. I’m at Kentucky Fried Chicken, right, and I’m in line and we’re in line and this guy just got out of jail. I say, “Welcome home.” He’s been in jail for fifteen years. He says, “I got two strikes. I can’t mess up. I can’t mess up. I can’t.” And he’s only been out two weeks. And a lot of these places the people don’t speak English very well. So he orders his chicken and the woman botches the order, right. And I’ve said this a thousand times. People in prison don’t change, they just do time or they do cosmetic change. And he had done the cosmetic change. He had talked a good game. So when he gets the order, the old him kicks in and he almost leaps over the counter and grabs her. “You messed up my order. You disrespected me,” right.

08-00:28:07

Henry:

Oh, no.

08-00:28:09

Marshall:

This is all true. So I just meet the guy, right, and I’ll do anything for a brother. I grabbed him from behind. Now, I’m risking getting knocked out. I said, “Man, didn’t you just tell me you just got out of jail?”

08-00:28:20

Henry:

And you got two strikes.

08-00:28:20

Marshall:

And you got two strikes. So I tell him, I said, “No one can disrespect you,” I said, “if you respect yourself.” I said, “It’s not disrespect, it’s just an order of chicken gone bad.” But you will find people’s whole notions of themselves are tied up. His whole notion of who he was as a person was tied up in this order of chicken that didn’t go right because people are so fragile. And you

find how fragile people are when they feel disrespected by the slightest things because it's them. Like, "You can do something to me but my respect doesn't come from you." You heard of the phrase, "To get respect you got to earn it." You've heard that? You've heard that?

08-00:29:09

Henry: Mm-hmm.

08-00:29:10

Marshall: All right, all right. Suppose you're my employee, right, and you want to earn my respect to get a promotion. The problem is I set the price so for two years you're busting your butt and you come back and you say, "Have I earned your respect?" "No, not really. Give me another year." You can't ever earn it because I'm the one that—it's like a dog chasing its tail. And suppose I don't like you and I just set you up. The whole notion of trying to get something. The black man wants to earn respect from the dominant society. They don't like us. So you asking somebody that doesn't like you to give you what you want? No, you have to know it.

08-00:29:49

Henry: Inside.

08-00:29:51

Marshall: All right. Look, I'm going to tell you, this rule is the hardest one to explain to adults, much less my kids. But when they get it—so I'll give you a perfect example of how it works in their favor. My kids are always feeling disrespected by the police. "They disrespected me," and they go off. All you need is to give them one reason, right, then they lock you up, take you to jail. You're disturbing the peace, obstructing the justice, messing with an officer. So I teach my kids, I say—I remember my boy Enoch. "Enoch, look," I said, "respect comes from within. No one can disrespect you if you respect yourself." I said, "Enoch." Then the next time the police did something he didn't feel disrespected, he felt the officer didn't know how to act properly. [laughter] And he says, "Officer, I think you have a problem. May I have your badge number? I'm going to tell Dr. Marshall, who's on the police commission. He's going to do something about this."

08-00:30:46

Henry: [laughter] He did?

08-00:30:46

Marshall: Yes, he did. And he gave me the name. But, see, because of that the power now doesn't belong to the officer anymore, it belongs to Enoch, right. So he doesn't feel disrespected. He just feel like the officer acted like a fool. When you get this rule—

08-00:31:03

Henry: So Enoch got it.

08-00:31:05
Marshall:

Yeah, yeah. Enoch got it and King got it and people like that get it and you're not thrown off your task because you're trying to get something from somebody, you've given your power away. But most people don't get this. People feel disrespected by anything. After (inaudible) mini-lesson, turn on Sports Talk Radio, right. People are disrespected because they didn't pass the ball to him. It's crazy. Women feel disrespected if they don't get a phone call from the man. It's a phone call. It's not disrespect but it's because they're fragile themselves. I hope I'm making sense.

08-00:31:38
Henry:

You're making perfect sense.

08-00:31:39
Marshall:

But, see, let me tell you, I knew we were going to war. I think that one of the Bush's said, "We can't let them disrespect us," right. I'm saying, "Oh, hell. We're going to war. We can't be no punks." I said, "We're going to war. That's it." "Why you say that?" I said, "Because I know the commandments of violence." So the whole country's dying behind being disrespected.

08-00:32:04
Henry:

Yeah. One of the most influential people on your life was your grandmother Goo Goo. And you've spent your life countering the effects of violence in the city. Something traumatic happened to Goo Goo in her eighties, I believe.

08-00:32:20
Marshall:

She was eighty-three years old.

08-00:32:21
Henry:

Eighty-three years old. Can you explain what that trauma was and how it affected you?

08-00:32:24
Marshall:

Sure. Yeah. So my grandmother got sexually assaulted at the age of eighty-three by a nineteen year old at knifepoint.

08-00:32:33
Henry:

In Los Angeles.

08-00:32:33
Marshall:

In Los Angeles. And I was living up here. And it was devastating. I remember getting the call maybe one o'clock in the morning and I was pretty pissed and I would say upset. And everything I just explained to you about respect came from her because at that moment I didn't know what I just explained to you. So I felt my grandmother had been, to the utmost, been disrespected, and it demanded a response. And my response was to go find this dude and kill him. And my grandmother is saying to me, "Don't do anything, don't do anything like that." I'm saying, "Yes, okay." I'm telling her yes but I'm ready to get on a plane and go to Los Angeles and get me a gun and find this guy. And she says, "No." Was saying, "Don't worry about—" But then my grandmother

told me, and I actually teach this lesson. She told me, “He didn’t disrespect me.” I’m like, “What the hell are you talking about?” And there’s a line in my favorite movie, is *Raisin in the Sun*, and it’s a line when Beneatha’s upset and the boy that likes her tells her, “Never be afraid to stop and think.” Well, I needed something to help me to stop and think and when my grandmother said that it became this riddle. And I’m saying, “What the hell is she talking about disrespect, this man just raped you, right?” And I’m screaming at my grandmother. Look, I am screaming at her. “What do you mean? What do you mean he didn’t disrespect you?” Then she says, I don’t know where she got this from. Maybe it was because she was born in 1907 and saw Dr. King do this thing. She tells me, “Junior, he didn’t disrespect me.” She says, “He did this to me but he can’t take my essence. He can’t take me from me.” I didn’t know what she was talking about but it got me to stop and think. Now I’m trying to figure out what she’s saying. She says, “I’m still your grandmother.” And then she said, “Junior, I can deal with this. I can deal with this. But if I lose you, that’ll be far worse than anything else. But I had never heard anybody say that they couldn’t be disrespected. And she explained to me, “I’m bigger than this. I’m bigger than this act. I’m bigger than my vagina. I’m bigger than all of that.” And I was like, “Wow.” Everything I just explained to you came from that incident because what it got me to do—and it’s funny. Even as I recount this, do you know—listen to this. I was on the phone with my grandma for twenty minutes first time I asked her, “How are you?”

08-00:35:27

Henry:

How are you?

08-00:35:28

Marshall:

I never even asked her how she was because up to that point it wasn’t about her, it was about me because it was my grandmother. The emphasis was on my. It wasn’t even about her. It was about me. I was the one that felt disrespected. She was fine. It was all about me. So she had to explain that. Wow. So then it became about her and then I did what she wanted me to do. I didn’t want to hurt her again. We let the law handle it. The guy went to jail for like forty years. He’d been raping women all over Los Angeles. But I often imagine what I would have—if she hadn’t said that, because that was still my Achilles heel because I didn’t have that rule intact yet. And when she said, “He didn’t disrespect me,” and showed me the places that he can’t touch, “My respect doesn’t come from any of that, it comes from who I am as a person.” I was like, “Damn.” Then I looked at Dr. King and I said, “Wow. He was able to change history because his respect didn’t come from them.” It came from him. So yeah. Even in my grandmother’s worst moment she saved me. Man, she was something else. She was really something else. And so they caught the guy. She dealt with it and she lived another nine years. Ninety-four is when she died. Yeah.

08-00:36:59

Henry:

Do you share the story and its lessons with your people here at Omega?

08-00:37:03
Marshall:

I share.

08-00:37:03
Henry:

And what's their reaction if you do?

08-00:37:05
Marshall:

First of all, not only do I share with the kids here, I train people in this alive and free prescription. I tell it to them. And everybody's reaction is the same. First of all, grandmothers are sacred. And, number two, they understood clearly how I felt that she had been disrespected and why I wanted to do what I did because they said, "I'd have done the same thing." And then as I take them through this whole thing they are just like—and when I tell them what she said to me, "He can't take my essence," you should see people's faces when I say that. They're like yours. They're like, "Wow." Because for most people the act is fused with that notion of who they are and she was able to separate the act from her notion of who she is. It was like Jesus is crucified on the cross but say, "I'm bigger than that." That's the only example I can give that people can kind of—like, "It's crucifying but I got a bigger purpose here. I'm doing it to save the world. I don't feel disrespected." The kids are like—

08-00:38:22
Henry:

Really?

08-00:38:22
Marshall:

Yeah. And the fact that I'm saying something that's so personal.

08-00:38:24
Henry:

I know. Yeah.

08-00:38:26
Marshall:

They think Doc is pretty cool. [laughter]

08-00:38:31
Henry:

In the mid-nineties you made a trip to Israel and the Holy Lands and you've traveled around the world to many other places since. What perspective on the issues facing inner city America did your visits there and other countries and your understanding of the Middle East conflict provide you?

08-00:38:47
Marshall:

Okay, here's what I get. It's the same everywhere. It's the same everywhere. It's the same everywhere.

08-00:38:58
Henry:

Conflict is the same everywhere.

08-00:38:58
Marshall:

The disease of violence is the same everywhere. So I remember sitting in Jerusalem in this forum and I'm listening to these Jews and these Arabs. And it's funny. And I'm listening and it felt like I was listening to Crips and Bloods. It was the same. I just closed my eyes, right, and I'm listening to these

people and they're going back and forth. Said, "They down for their homey right or wrong. They down for their set, they down for their hood, they down for their crew. And they're saying the same stuff and I'm over 3,000 miles away and I'm trying to think, "Wow." I was saying, "My kids are just new to the game. They've been doing this for 2,000 years," right. They got body count everywhere. They think they can kill the enemy, right. Just like the Crips think they can kill the Bloods, the Bloods—they can't kill them. They just create another enemy. And I'm saying, "Man, this is the same stuff." So it's funny. I'm sitting there and I'm just telling them the same and they are like—I'm introducing notions and I'm working with these kids over here into this huge conflict and they were like, "I never thought about it like that before. I never thought." I said, "What are you guys doing?" And I'm saying the same stuff I say to the kids over here.

No, I mean, whether it be going to South Africa or going to Thailand or going to Nigeria, going to Canada, going to Haiti, and then studying the world and looking at all the civil wars all over, in Africa. Because everyplace I go I test out this prescription. I look for risk factors, I look for commandments of violence, I look for the absence of rules for living, and I look for are people dealing with their pain, their anger, their fear and their pain. And it's funny. A lot of countries you can see right embedded in the governmental structures. Like I go to countries and you can see material values over people. Oh, the king's got everything and the people have nothing. So you can see right there why they're going to have problems. So I don't change anything I do when I go anywhere, whether it's the inner city, the suburbs, rural areas in the United States or when I go to countries outside the United States. I say the exact same—which is why people don't want me to leave because it's like you have this medicine, you have this prescription that works everywhere and anywhere. So people are always asking me to train people in other countries.

08-00:41:30

Henry:

Now that the crack epidemic has abated, have the challenges in your work changed or not?

08-00:41:37

Marshall:

It hasn't abated. It's abated in the sense that it's not—and the other drugs have come. Ecstasy has come and meth is the big one now. Let's put it like this. I have to use this phrase, I don't like this phrase. The crack era began. We're just deeper into that. So if what crack really did—I'm going to just talk about it in their bodies. It destroyed families. That means young people that get the socialization they should have gotten and now they're parents, which means they're horrible parents. So they don't know how to be parents. Now some of them become grandparents. So somebody like my grandmother they don't have. So they don't have any of the structures that were in place before that in their families. So my challenges are that way because I've got to restore families and the only way I can restore families is to get the young people—again, all these sayings we have here. You may not be able to do anything

about the family you were born into but you can do everything about the family you create. So in order for me to get things back the way they should be I help these young people become the opposite of what their family was. And that is the benefit. That's the only way I'm going to be able to restore stuff. And it's hard for them to do it because they have no notion of what it was like before. I do.

Let's take *The Bill Cosby Show* (*sic*), which was a family. So I'll take *The Bill Cosby Show* that's the way it's supposed to be like. And the kids will tell me, "Well, that's not real black people." "What do you mean that's not real black people?" "Well, he go to work do all this." And they'll swear they're not real. And I show them. I go, "That's the way a family's supposed to be. I know you don't believe it." But, see, to them everything is upside down. It wasn't normal. It was abnormal. But then I'll take a show like *TI and Tiny's Family Hustle*, right, which is today and show them the difference between a family and a wanna be family. And so we discuss it. And they're like, "Well, he's trying." "But," I said, "he's been in jail four times. He keeps going to jail. Look at the things he's doing with this kids." I said, "Is that what you want done with your kid?" "No, I don't want that done with my kid." So I got to give them an example. It's fun to do it because they've never seen anything. I said, "Now, look, you're here. We're your family. What are families supposed to do?" "Dr. Marshall, you take care of us, you help us go to school. You're hard on us. You correct us. If my mother was like you and my father was like you—" You got to take them through. I said, "This is the way the family's supposed to be. Like this." So maybe the greatest thing out of this is I've created a family.

08-00:44:38

Henry:

Hard work.

08-00:44:40

Marshall:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But that's my calling so it's okay.

08-00:44:46

Henry:

Some people say that with Barack Obama's Presidency, got the nation's first black President, we've entered a post racial society in America period, when race has been diminished as a factor in American life. What do you say about such views?

08-00:45:00

Marshall:

The only thing that happened was that a black man was elected President, which anybody should be able to be elected President. That does not signal the end of all of the issues and attitudes that have existed for hundreds of years. If anything, as Barack now enters his, what, second term, fifth year, for us it signals that it's been dormant. Here's the tough thing about Barack. He's a black President who can't talk about being black. That's the saddest thing of all. Any time he even alludes to him as a black man—

08-00:45:48

Henry: It creates all kinds of turmoil.

08-00:45:50

Marshall: Well, he divides the country. Isn't that ridiculous?

08-00:45:52

Henry: That's what he said with Trayvon Martin. He said, "I could be Trayvon Martin. That could be me."

08-00:45:57

Marshall: Well, yeah. He just talked about his experiences. And somehow talking about his experiences of being in an elevator and women grab their purses was dividing the country. Somehow him saying him being followed in a store, like you and I have been followed in a store—he can't even be him. That's what's sad about it. And that just shows how much race is still here, that this man can't talk about being—talk about everything but that. Barack, that's not what we want to hear. "You can talk about your white side of the family. But you can't talk about being a black man because that's being divisive." Which means there's so much stuff there. In fact, I read this comment the other day. I don't know if you saw the thing about the bull rider and the clown in Missouri who donned this mask. This was just two days ago. So he's a rodeo clown and he puts this Barack Obama mask on and he tells the people, "Wouldn't you like to see this bull get Barack or get him?" And they run up and people are playing with Barack and they're playing with his lips and his teeth, right. So one of the guys who was there said it was like being at a Klan rally. He said it was horrible. So they reported it. I scroll down, read the comments, and one guy said, "How do you know it was about race? They talking about Bush." You're dividing the people again. So this one guy, listen to this, this one comment—I'm going to actually mention this on the radio. He said, "I will never vote for a black man again, ever, because I might have to deal with the issue of race." So you can't win. I tell people you can't escape this. You can't escape this. But the fact that it's there means you can only be President if I don't have to deal with—no, no. You think Jackie Robinson had it tough? This man, oh, my God.

And you've got to figure, this man, he's as perfect as we can be. You can't be more perfect than Barack Obama. He's not Bill Clinton. He's got this wonderful wife. He's the essence of American values. Bill can have every woman in the world and Bush can do what he wants, they can start these wars. He's class personified and so somehow—we said this before. We know that we got to be twice as good. How many times have we said it? I said, "You got to be twice as good, twice—" He's ten times as good. So, no, it's still all there. It's still all there. Listen, he can't convene a conference on race. Clinton could, Bush could, whoever comes next can do it and they can say it's time. It's a very important issue. We need to have a conversation about this. They won't be dividing the country. If Barack Obama says we're going to have a conference on race tomorrow then he's dividing the country.

08-00:49:02

Henry: Dividing the country.

08-00:49:03

Marshall: If Hilary becomes President or the next one becomes President, if she has a conference on the status of women she's not going to be dividing the genders. She's going to be addressing something that's really—this race thing is so part of American fabric and we've never really, really even come close to dealing with it. What did W. Du Bois say in 1903 or whatever year he wrote the book? "The problem with America in the twentieth century is the color line."

08-00:49:29

Henry: Is race. Yeah.

08-00:49:30

Marshall: It's still the problem in the twenty-first century America. The difference now is that the black community is so fractured that it's imploding from the inside because the family structure is gone.

08-00:49:44

Henry: Yeah. In your years in this organization you have sent nearly 200 at risk young people on to college and sometimes graduate educations. Can you give me a range of professional activities that they are involved in now?

08-00:49:59

Marshall: Well, I feel sorry for the group that wants to be like me. So you have a number of them who run their own community organizations, are involved in human services. "I want to help young people, too, Dr. Marshall." From probation officers to social workers to teachers. You got that whole group. Nurses. But then I have the group that are MBAs. A lot of educators but lot of business folk. I don't know if I have any lawyers. A couple MDs.

08-00:50:46

Henry: Practicing physicians?

08-00:50:47

Marshall: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know one is a podiatrist and one is at USC in residency right now. Diane Thomas. Dr. Diane Thomas.

08-00:51:01

Henry: And these were young people, all of them who were failing in school and really troubled?

08-00:51:06

Marshall: Well, let's put it like this. They were all at risk. So even the ones who were doing well felt that there was something wrong with them doing well. So I had to convince them that, "No, you're fine the way you are. You're trying to fix something that's broken." And then we did have those that were broken. So yeah. We have kids come in here. "What's your grade point?" "One point five." "Oh, my God." And we begin the processes. "But I know I'm smarter

than that. I can do better than that. That's not really me." Okay, then, yeah. So yeah. All of them. I had to fortify every one of them, either convince them—a lot of them were like me. They just started feeling bad about being a good kid. That's why I felt bad. I felt bad about being good until the adults said, "No, no, you're fine. You're fine. There's nothing wrong with you." And that was in the community that was a lot healthier. Them, they're like, "I'm strange."

08-00:52:06

Henry:

You're strange for going to the parochial school in Los Angeles and doing well and reading Latin and all that.

08-00:52:11

Marshall:

All of that. And that was in a community that was, again, a lot healthier. So, yeah, they come here to feel like they're okay. One of my former board members is a Los Angeles police officer who went to Morehouse. Paul Bowser. His father was a Stanford professor. You might even know his father. And he lived in San Mateo and he was always trying to get away to come over here to the hood. [laughter] Just felt weird being good. And when he came here we said, "Paul, there's nothing wrong with you. You are black." Right, because that was—like listening to Ice Cube and all of them. That was the image. So he's now an LAPD field training officer. Married a Spellman woman and has got his own Bill Cosby family going. Yeah.

08-00:53:14

Henry:

You recently renamed our umbrella organization under which Street Soldiers and Omega Boys Club reside Alive & Free. What is the future of your organization looking ahead?

08-00:53:23

Marshall:

Alive & Free. We had the three brands. We had Omega Boys Club and they evolved over time. Think of your closet with all these closets that you can buy and a nice time to clean them up and a bigger closet. So Omega Boys Club first, Street Soldiers, and then Alive & Free and so we went through a rebranding. I could always explain the difference between the three and how they all interconnected but I wanted to make it simple for people. Alive & Free became the one that resonated with most folks. And Omega Boys Club, we've always had girls. Street Soldiers, well, people would say, "Well, if you're for peace, not violence, not soldiers." But I didn't hear that a lot. Some people would say that. But everybody got Alive & Free because that's what you do. You keep young people alive, unharmed by violence, and free from incarceration. So it became the parent name of the organization and then we have—I always use Apple as this example. You have Apple, then you have iPhone, iPad. So we have Alive & Free as the corporate name, then we have Alive & Free Omega Boys Club. Omega Boys Club is headquarters for Alive & Free. Then we have Alive & Free Street Soldiers radio, because that's the voice. We have Alice & Free Consortium, which are my national and international members. Sort of my best disciplines. And then you have Alive & Free Training Institute, which is where I create more people to take the

medicine, the prescription elsewhere. And here at Alive & Free Omega Boys Club we have all our education programs. We have our leadership academy and we have our school adoption programs. So it's almost a very corporate approach to everything. But the main thing is the message, what we're trying to get out there. It's the prescription. So I'm getting ready to do a conference in DC and we're not going to talk about Omega Boys Club. We'll talk about Alive & Free and how we can help. I always tell everybody ask how we can help you keep young people alive and free. So yeah.

We're really excited about it. We got a new logo that says Alive & Free. We just did it a couple of months ago. Watching this thing take off and this whole message. If you look at it this way, the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington is coming up and we're honoring Dr. King's attorney, Clarence Jones. Clarence said, "We need a new movement." And he says, "We had a Civil Rights Movement. Now we have the alive and free movement." And he says, "We shall overcome was the saying for the Civil Rights Movement. This movement, alive and free, here's the slogan for the movement." So if you see a lot of these night walks that are going around in places that we've been able to get to, you'll see people walking through Richmond, California late night and they're saying, "Stay alive and free. Stay alive and free. Stay alive and free." I'm not there but that's the message we want to get out there. So when I was in Detroit we would walk through the streets of Detroit and we were saying—the message resonates with everybody. When I was in Haiti, little boys were saying, "Stay alive and free. Stay alive and free." So yeah. We're looking to help the world stay alive and free and we figure the name being that will help with that process, make that happen more.

08-00:57:15

Henry:

Okay. Just a couple of summing up questions. Are you married and do you have children? Who are they and what do they do?

08-00:57:22

Marshall:

Not married anymore. Got three children. Well, I'm not going to give their age. They'll be mad at me. But oldest is my son. He's the producer of my radio show. When I say his name, you'll be able to figure out from one name, but his name is Malcolm and he's the producer of my radio show and so he's with dad. He now has a daughter so I'm a grandfather. Gran. She hasn't called me gran yet.

08-00:58:02

Henry:

Congratulations.

08-00:58:03

Marshall:

She's three years old and she sort of looks at me, "You look like my daddy." And then my oldest daughter, Sydney, went to Howard. Lives in Virginia and she runs a Kindercafe in Virginia. And then the baby, Cassie, she went to Stanford, sorry. Went to Stanford, got her master's from UCLA, was at the

CDC for two years as a fellow and is now I said sorry, at Cal right now getting her doctorate in public health.

08-00:58:41

Henry: Oh, at the public health school?

08-00:58:42

Marshall: Yeah.

08-00:58:43

Henry: Good.

08-00:58:43

Marshall: Yeah. She likes it a lot.

08-00:58:45

Henry: Many years from now hopefully, hopefully many years from now when you pass away, how would you best like to be remembered?

08-00:58:54

Marshall: Well, my grandmother told me the more you know, the more you owe as you progress in life so you must help others to do likewise. So her saying pretty much sums up me. Dr. King's whole thing about service. Said you don't have to have a PhD to serve. It's all about service. And I think that sums me up pretty good. You haven't asked this but my favorite musical artist is Stevie Wonder. My favorite musical group is Earth, Wind & Fire. You can see how it dates me. But probably my favorite group is a group called Take Six. So I know everything about Take Six. Take Six is a remarkable group. They're acapella and they do this song which to me sums up—people ask me why you do what you do and this song's called *Nothing But Love* and that's pretty much it. Yeah, that's the reason.

08-01:00:01

Henry: Thank you, Dr. Marshall. This has been a real pleasure.

08-01:00:03

Marshall: Thank you. Thank you.

[End of Interview]