

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay. So, today is December 7th, 2021. My name is [Sharon Sekhon 00:00:06]. I'm in Riverside, at the home of an important interviewee who I'm going to let us tell his name. I want to begin by thanking you. I'm not going to say your name, but I want you to know that... Well, Maurice, I'm just so grateful that you are here and willing to tell your history because people will benefit from this history. And to be honest, it's very humbling to hear this history about Orange County, because so little of it has been documented and it's important for the people of Orange County to know their history from people who know it best, the people who lived it. So I like to begin... I ask every interviewee this question, and I've interviewed a lot of people. What is your name? Is there anything significant to it? Were you named after anyone else? Do you have any nicknames?

Maurice Howard:

My name is Maurice. It means dark and mysterious. It's from a Maurice culture. I've had a lot of nicknames all during my life. When I was wrestling, they used to call me Mighty Mouse. I've been called Fish, Mouse. Most people now call me [Reese 00:01:16], they take that Maurice, now it's just Reese.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay.

Maurice Howard:

Either Reese or Mo, something like that. But that's basically what that's all about.

Sharon Sekhon:

Were you named after anyone else?

Maurice Howard:

No [crosstalk 00:01:30].

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay. What year were you born in and where?

Maurice Howard:

Okay. I was born in 1951 in Waco, Texas, at 8:30 in the morning on Cherry St. I wasn't born in a hospital, I was born in a home. I had the fortune of going back to Texas to the spot I actually came into this world. They tore out in the house now, but I just walked the land just to sort of feel the presence of, "This is where I came to this world. This is when I came in here, I came right in the spot right here."

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you know what brought your parents together in Waco?

Maurice Howard:

What brought them together? No, I don't know that. My mother was basically... She was a waitress and my father was a plumber. So I don't know what the connection was. I don't know if it was the families lived near each other, whatever, but no, I don't have the information on it.

Sharon Sekhon:

Tell me about your mother. What was her name or is her name?

Maurice Howard:

No, she's passed. Her name was Colletta. Really pretty lady. She reminded me of the women in India. She was a very, very pretty woman, very, just simple. She wasn't flashy, but just pretty. And she was real creative, I remember that. She'd always have little things that she would do for us. Teach us how to yo-yo, throw tops and stuff like that. She was always creating these environments for us to enjoy things.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was her name?

Maurice Howard:

Her name was Colletta.

Sharon Sekhon:

Her last name.

Maurice Howard:

At that time, her last name was Howard. She got remarried, and then her last name then was Walker. Her nickname is Icky.

Sharon Sekhon:

Icky.

Maurice Howard:

Icky. So they called her Mama Icky.

Sharon Sekhon:

Was she a good cook?

Maurice Howard:

She was a very good cook.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was your favorite thing that she made?

Maurice Howard:

Chili beans.

Sharon Sekhon:

Chili beans?

Maurice Howard:

Chili beans, yes.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was good about them?

Maurice Howard:

It was the flavor, it was the way she put it together. She kind of prided herself in the fact that could make food taste so good. So people were always coming in and out the house wanting to taste Icky's food.

Sharon Sekhon:

Wow.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

Was she the one who encouraged your creativity then?

Maurice Howard:

No.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh.

Maurice Howard:

No. I wasn't encouraged to do this. This came about, I think, because of boredom. [crosstalk 00:03:59] So I would just do things to keep myself entertained and then drawing was kind of interesting because I would create something and look back at it and say, "Ah, that's pretty good. I did that pretty good." And so, I can remember back to, I would say, the age of two, but I didn't start really creating until I got to be about maybe three or four. But I can remember back that far.

Sharon Sekhon:

Wow. So you remember Waco?

Maurice Howard:

No. Now this is the interesting thing because my mother and father separated and got divorced, she got remarried to a gentleman named Claude.

Sharon Sekhon:

[crosstalk 00:04:37] Claude Walker.

Maurice Howard:

He was in the service. So growing up, I basically grew up in France and then I came to the United States.

Sharon Sekhon:

How many years were you in France?

Maurice Howard:

Maybe about a year.

Sharon Sekhon:

And when you came back to the US, where did you come back?

Maurice Howard:

California.

Sharon Sekhon:

Where in California?

Maurice Howard:

Riverside, here.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, okay. So you're a long-term Riverside [inaudible 00:05:04]. This is wonderful. Do I have permission to share your history with my Riverside historians?

Maurice Howard:

Like I told you, you do your thing, no, I don't have a problem with that. See, this is what's important about this whole thing is I've always wanted to be able to tell people things about me, but you have to let that happen.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

You can't force it on people and the universe has been kind enough to allow things to happen to me that I wanted. It's just like I asked for and it just like, "Okay, you'd be cool. I'll make that happen. Just you wait." And that's what I'm beginning to realize that the things that I've wanted share with the world, now, those things are happening.

Sharon Sekhon:

Wow. That's great. The cosmic [crosstalk 00:05:52] doors are opened.

Maurice Howard:

Yes.

Sharon Sekhon:

Did you know your father?

Maurice Howard:

Yes. I knew my father.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was his name? Tell me about-

Maurice Howard:

His name was Jesse. I went to spend some time with him when I was about 16. I think I spent about a year with him and he was more like my big brother than my father because I was raised by my stepfather so he became my dad. My father, my biological father, was more like my big brother. We did things, we enjoyed each other.

Sharon Sekhon:

You had fun together.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. It kind of [inaudible 00:06:33] idea that I didn't drink, because all my brothers drank, so he kept... He said, "You don't want a beer?" I was like, "Nah, nah, I'm good."

Sharon Sekhon:

Why didn't you drink?

Maurice Howard:

I wasn't interested, I didn't like the taste. And plus, the fact that my mother was an alcoholic and so that just sort of turned me off.

Sharon Sekhon:

How did you know she was an alcoholic?

Maurice Howard:

I observed it, I watched her drink. I watched her cry. I watched her pull me into the room and sit down and tell me stories and just cry, cry, cry. "You got to stay in here with me." So I would stay sometime an hour in the room, just listening to her stories about her life and how things used to be.

Sharon Sekhon:

That sounds like hell.

Maurice Howard:

It was hell. I mean, when I think of about it, to have a person pull you in a room and tell you all these things and you're so young, you have to absorb all this and it's-

Sharon Sekhon:

It's a burden.

Maurice Howard:

You don't know, "I don't know what you're talking about, I just know it's painful," but I'd sit in the room and listen to her. In a way, it was kind of good for me because I got a chance to know my mom, a lot of

children don't get to know that thing about their mothers because [crosstalk 00:07:45] they don't talk about it.

Sharon Sekhon:

That's right.

Maurice Howard:

Mine talked about it.

Sharon Sekhon:

I'll tell you that, my aunt was the one who told me about my mom and my uncle and everybody else. And it was on her deathbed. It was five years after my mom had died, and I said, "I wish you had told me this when he was alive so I could have killed him for you." And she needed to hear that anger for her damage because nobody had the time, nobody cared about what happened to those girls and somebody needed to express outrage for them. Not that I would've done it, but just to say, "You deserved better."

Maurice Howard:

Well, see, what people don't realize about life is that you either go along with it or you get in this way. And what I mean by that is sometimes, like you say, you find out things about people and then you say, "Well, I want to do this." No, no, no, no, no. Life takes care of its own.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. Karma happens.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And so you don't have to worry about that. See, everybody's trying to bring justice to this and justice... No, no, no, no. Life takes care of its own. It's been here much longer than us.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

So why do we think now we're going to come in and we're going to get everything fixed? No.

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, I think, sometimes, not to fix anything, but sometimes, like we've talked about before, is just to talk about it helps.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

And it shouldn't have waited for the deathbed.

Maurice Howard:

But that's all the processes of talking so you understand.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. But her generation just didn't talk.

Maurice Howard:

No, see, that was bad.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

And that's what's wrong with the world now is we don't talk.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yep.

Maurice Howard:

That's why the cultures, the races or what you want to call them, they don't get along because they don't know anything about each other.

Sharon Sekhon:

Exactly.

Maurice Howard:

So we think we're the best, you think you're the best, you think you're the best, where we going to go with that?

Sharon Sekhon:

When cats are the best.

Maurice Howard:

Who?

Sharon Sekhon:

Cats.

Maurice Howard:

Cats, get out of here. Okay, that's okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

That's what they like to think anyway.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

But literally, it is back to that, talking to each other. So, your stepfather was your dad figure.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you want to tell me about him? Was he strict as a military man?

Maurice Howard:

Strict. He could be strict. The reason why I question that is he had a very soft spot about him. He very indoctrinated by the service. So, of course, that came to the family. You had to know how to make the bed up. You had to keep this clean, you had to do this, you had to do that. The ironic thing about him was he was very messy. So we had to pick this up and pick it up, make sure he stayed neat, but he was messy. So it was ironic. So if we teach, we were learning all these lessons that we should be a certain way and he wasn't like that.

Sharon Sekhon:

Wow. That's a horrible lesson to have to-

Maurice Howard:

So we had to take care of him. See?

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah, yeah.

Maurice Howard:

It was cool, though. It was cool. You learn things, learn how to make a bed and keep myself neat and all that stuff.

Sharon Sekhon:

My mom was a Den Mother for the Cub Scouts.

Maurice Howard:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Sharon Sekhon:

And she would make them clean our house for [inaudible 00:11:06] badges. Teach them how to [inaudible 00:11:09].

Maurice Howard:

Smart lady, smart lady.

Sharon Sekhon:

Teach them how to cook, teach them how to rake. I'm like, "This is insane. I realized that at her funeral, how ingenious she was.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

And how weird that was as a kid. So what was it like growing up in Riverside?

Maurice Howard:

Riverside. Because I lived here, then I went away and I came back. So I'll start by-

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, you went away to your dad at 16, was that Waco?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. That was Waco.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was Waco like? And then we'll get back to Riverside.

Maurice Howard:

So you want to go to Waco and then get back here?

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah, just [inaudible 00:11:46] that time.

Maurice Howard:

Waco was a lot like this place here, a lot like Riverside. You become very conscious of the prejudice in the South more than here because they put it more in your face, they're more honest. When it came to prejudice, I realized that in the South, the people are more honest about who they are. In the North, they hide it, the same people, they just hide it. So the racism, if you want to call it that, or the prejudice, is worse in the North than it is in the South.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

And people don't believe that, but that's the truth.

Sharon Sekhon:

I think for a long time, the country told itself that the only racist place was in the South and whitewashed the rest of the country as being neutral, when the white supremacy issue happens everywhere.

Maurice Howard:

Everywhere, everywhere. [crosstalk 00:12:44] But visiting there and hanging out with my pops-

Sharon Sekhon:

1967?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. Around '66, '67, something like that, I think I was 16. It just sort of woke me up to a lot of different things because now I was around my family, family, by my cousins and stuff I didn't know. And so they all was fascinated by me because I'm from California. So we go out and we hang out and back then, they don't call the... You got your Cokes and stuff like that, they call it soda water. So out here, we call it pop or whatever. Back there, they call it soda water. So you go to the store, get the soda water and we hang out. It's extremely hot, I remember that. But the thing was back there also, there's more of a closeness with family because we would go to different people's houses that were family and in my family, they did a lot of singing. So there was always this harmony. It wasn't like people that couldn't sing, they could sing, that got me kind of interested in singing.

Sharon Sekhon:

So you're a singer too.

Maurice Howard:

Some people think so.

Sharon Sekhon:

Did you grow up in the church?

Maurice Howard:

No. Here was the thing, here was the thing. Growing up, there was women in the neighborhood and they always try to get the children together and take them to church. And so we'd go to church and I asked my mother one day, I said, "Do I have to go to church?" She said, "Do you want to go to church?" I said, "No, mom, I don't want to go." She said, "You don't have to go." So at an early age, then, I stayed home on the Sundays and did whatever I wanted to do and all the other kids had to go to church. So then we were known as heathens, [inaudible 00:14:38] but all those kids grew up to be dope addicts and this and that. So I understood that it wasn't about Christianity, it was about how you relate to each other as human beings. Either you're going to be nice to somebody or you're not going to be nice to them.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

It had nothing to do with being a Christian, absolutely nothing.

Sharon Sekhon:

Right. It seems like in Waco, there was a more mature or established community of your family who lived there.

Maurice Howard:

Well, that's where my family's from.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. So, there was a different relationship I had with them as opposed to the family I had out here.

Sharon Sekhon:

And so there really wasn't a sense of community out here that you found with-

Maurice Howard:

Oh no, no, no. Riverside, I tell you, one time was amazing. We had our own doctors, our own lawyers, we had our stores. This was an ideal situation. When I grew up here, Riverside was so much fun, so much fun. I can't even explain to people how much fun this place used to be. There was our spot, then there was the white people's spot. Everything in between that was the Asians, the Mexicans, we all lived together in sort of a variety of ways. But we were more close.

Sharon Sekhon:

So it's multiracial.

Maurice Howard:

Yes. This whole neighborhood has always been multiracial.

Sharon Sekhon:

Among the people of color.

Maurice Howard:

Yes. Yes. So we lived together. We slept at each other's houses, we ate each other's food. So it wasn't so much, "I'm black and you're Mexican." We was a community because we all related.

Sharon Sekhon:

Have you always lived in this house or this neighborhood?

Maurice Howard:

No. No. I lived further back on that side. This is considered the East Side.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

Where I live, was a street called Georgia, which is about maybe... If I walk, it's about five minute walk from here. And then growing up, see, I began to realize how in the communities that people were based on... I mean your status was based on your job. And then most of the people were military. And every

once in a while, you had somebody who had a position, you know what I'm saying? So they thought they was the shit, but they wasn't. We all, at that point, cared about each other, that was real important, family thing. So your mother could whoop me, my mother could whoop you, it wouldn't be an issue. Nobody's going to come from the state and say whatever.

Sharon Sekhon:

It seems like, and probably was affected by the Vietnam War, when I think about the periodization.

Maurice Howard:

You're saying you think the Vietnam War has something to do with what?

Sharon Sekhon:

Your neighborhood, I'm asking... Maybe it's a dumb question.

Maurice Howard:

No, ask the question, I don't-

Sharon Sekhon:

I just feel like so many people of color were destroyed in the Vietnam War. I wonder how many young men were sent away during that era and what happened when they came back and what it was like for you to see people... If you saw people going away to war. And what that effect had on you, because so many of our youth today don't understand the draft. And understanding that the government would send you away to fight a war that you may not understand.

Maurice Howard:

Well, it wasn't about, you may not, you wouldn't understand it anywhere, I mean, you're young. I remember in high school, they come out with what was called a lotto, and that was basically, they would pick a number, you're assigned a number, if your number comes up, then you go, that's as simple as that. So it wasn't about being drafted. They just sort of gave you a number, if your number came up, you went, fortunately for me, I didn't have that problem.

But the thing that kind of blew my mind was watching my buddies go off to war and some of them didn't come back. And the ones that came back, how different they were, I had one friend I used to wrestle with in high school, and he went to Vietnam. He came back and he went back to Vietnam and I ask him, "What was the interest in the whole thing with the war?" And he said, "Well, I was a sniper." And he would give me all these stories about how he would kill people. I was like, "Wow, okay." Had another friend, he had been so traumatized by the war that when he was at home... You just heard that car door thing. [inaudible 00:19:44] she going to go around the back.

Sharon Sekhon:

Is that your roommate?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. Roommate. And then it was just all these things with how people were being changed now, because of circumstances in their lives with the war and all this. I was more concerned about, was I going to have to go? Because I watched my buddies come back. I had one buddy, he was a really handsome guy and he came back and he got blown out of a foxhole or something. So he had scrap metal all on here. So he

developed some kind of skin disease, that sort of acid, it just ate him. And I just watched him go down. I thought, "Wow, this is amazing, how people can just die like that." It's open, Javianne.

Javianne:

Okay. Thank you.

Maurice Howard:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Javianne:

Hi.

Sharon Sekhon:

Hi. Sorry, my stuff's on the way.

Javianne:

[inaudible 00:20:47] okay. Let me get out of here.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, you're fine. I'm Sharon.

Javianne:

Hi. I'm Javianne. [crosstalk 00:20:55].

Sharon Sekhon:

Nice to meet you.

Maurice Howard:

Okay. So the war itself, in my opinion, it made people more aware of how this government felt about them. And the government didn't give damn about you, you were put in a position to protect what they wanted you to protect that was theirs.

Sharon Sekhon:

Property.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. It had nothing to do with people, it had something to do with, "You make sure we keep what we want. So, I mean, if you die, we got 20 other people we can put in there and do this." For some strange reason, though, during that time, people were starting to wake up, realizing, "No wait a minute, something's wrong. You can just take our children and just take them over there and when they come back, you treat them like they're dirt." People are starting to wake up because now they're going to have children and they're thinking about this.

Sharon Sekhon:

Did you wake up in that time period? I mean, some may argue that the politics of the Left was a wake up call in some ways, like the Black Panther Party [crosstalk 00:22:02].

Maurice Howard:

Well, that was that during that period of Black Panther, I was a Black Panther for a while. And I think my main objective about that was just, I just wanted to do something different. I really wasn't interested in their philosophy to tell you the truth. I just like their image itself.

Sharon Sekhon:

And they were doing things.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. They were doing things.

Sharon Sekhon:

This was in Riverside?

Maurice Howard:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sharon Sekhon:

What was that chapter of it like?

Maurice Howard:

We had on the [White St. 00:22:36], the White St. which is back over where I used to live. And they were basically doing community services, make sure that people ate, stuff like that. And that's kind of how I seen it. I liked the fact that they were trying to bring the communities and protect the community, that kind of thing. But then it got a little weird.

Sharon Sekhon:

In Riverside?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

There's a couple of chapters that I've heard about that were really anti-white. And if you were a party member and had white friends, you could not be a party member.

Maurice Howard:

I don't really think about that.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay. I just think it's local. All politics is local, but in Riverside, did you deal with police abuse?

Maurice Howard:

No. There was an incident here where two policemen got killed, and that was a big deal because, wow, in Riverside? And at that point, you would've thought that maybe the police would've been very violent, but they weren't. So if they caught you on the street, what they did is they'd take you home, take you to your parents. I have to tell you that Riverside Police Department, at that point, I think were more compassionate towards you if you were black than they are today.

At that time, they seemed to really give a damn about your presence on this earth. So they would bring you home and talk to your parents, blah, blah, blah. "It's not good. He's out there, blah, blah. There's a curfew." So, of course, at that time, I was kind of a little pissed off, but now I think about it, it was really cool. It was okay. It was all right, but today, it's different. Today, they will kill you. They will kill you. If that same circumstance happened today where those two policemen got killed and you got caught on the street, it wouldn't be good.

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you remember, roughly, when those two police officers were killed?

Maurice Howard:

See, I hadn't left here yet to go to school. It was in the '60s. I don't [crosstalk 00:24:54] know if it was-

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay. [crosstalk 00:24:57] I can find it. That's interesting because a Black Panther killed a police officer in Santa Ana, and he got seven years only for it. But when they were looking for them, they were destroying black homes, going through each one and it's one of the reasons why... One of my interviewees was charged with it, even though he wasn't the person who did it, he wasn't there. He gave himself up so that his mother's home wouldn't be destroyed by the police. And then, Harlen was the mitigating African American police officer who tried to be the person in between these racist people and his community. How do you bridge that? I mean, I don't know. I don't know. So Riverside, what schools did you attend?

Maurice Howard:

I went to Longfellow as an elementary school. Then I went to [University of Junior High 00:25:54], which was junior high school. And then I went to North High, which was the high school here. When I left there, I went to the city college here at Riverside City, and then I transferred to Cal State Fullerton.

Sharon Sekhon:

When did you start wrestling?

Maurice Howard:

When I was about 16 in high school, 15, 16. And I wrestled up till I was 58.

Sharon Sekhon:

What did you love about wrestling?

Maurice Howard:

I liked being in shape. I liked the fact that I could take care of myself. It gave me a lot of confidence. So, you have to understand, I've always been a small person and growing up, I was always being picked on.

So wrestling changed all of that in my life. I mean, once I learned how to wrestle, I mean, it was like walking out here with armor on. I didn't worry about it. I'm the same way today, I don't have that fear.

Sharon Sekhon:

I think Earl [inaudible 00:26:56] the same way because he learned-

Maurice Howard:

Yeah, he was into martial arts.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. And he can't wait to see you.

Maurice Howard:

I haven't seen Earl in so long. Wow.

Sharon Sekhon:

You guys are both just amazing legends to me, really. I could start gushing forever.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you remember your first kiss? Your first date? I should say in that-

Maurice Howard:

I can remember my first kiss.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay.

Maurice Howard:

I was very young, I must have been seven. There was a girl named Sheila who used to come over and play with us. And we lived in Colorado at that time. And I remember there was steps that went down into the basement. And so we were coming up and we sit down and we're talking and she was looking at me and so she grew had my face and she started kissing me and she stuck her tongue in my mouth and I'm like, "Ah." And I ran and I told my mother, of course, that stopped all of that. See, so I was just too young. I mean, what the hell are you doing?

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

So anyway, that was my first kiss. I remember that one.

Sharon Sekhon:

So you remember your early dating, what it was like?

Maurice Howard:

I was kind of a shy guy. I didn't really start dating until, I think, the end of high school because I just wasn't confident about the dating thing. I didn't know too much about girls and all my buddies were tall and handsome and I was this little short guy, but one of my first dates was a lady named... Well, a young lady named Judy Amonds. And I remember I'd go to her house and we'd smooch on the couch and stuff like that, but that was about what it was. Those are the exciting days and nights or whatever, I'd go there. It seemed like I was there forever, but I guess I was only there for maybe an hour or so. I think I had Judy and then I went with a girl named Darcia, who was from a very educated family.

So her grandmother was somehow involved with Booker T. Washington. Her mother was some kind of... They were all highly educated. I mean, it's really weird. And so, they kind of looked at me as kind of strange, I didn't have any kind of degree. I'm just going to be an artist, so they wanted their daughter to marry somebody in a... What is it? Fraternity or whatever that is, they wanted that look, I guess, I just didn't have it. So we lasted for a while and then that went by side and then it was just dates.

Sharon Sekhon:

So you knew at a younger age that you were going to be an artist or that you were an artist?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah, I knew it.

Sharon Sekhon:

When did you find out?

Maurice Howard:

I remember I used to lay in bed when I was in France and I'd look at the comics and I was so fascinated by how did people create these kind of characters and stuff? And I think around 1963 or '64, I created my own little cartoon character.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was it?

Maurice Howard:

Actually, it was a series of characters. I have a lot of them, but the main ones, it was like LA this and LA that. So it's [LA Funk 00:30:27] and [LA Monk 00:30:27]. And I had all these little strange characters and I thought they was cool, but now I look at them, they're kind of stupid [inaudible 00:30:35].

Sharon Sekhon:

I don't know about that. Sounds like you're a harsh critic. Why was it LA? Is LA the city?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

How come? Did you like LA? Was there an image about LA-

Maurice Howard:

No, I'll take it back. It [inaudible 00:30:48] had nothing to do with LA, it was just that whole thing about LA.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay.

Maurice Howard:

It sounds like French, kind of thing.

Sharon Sekhon:

Ooh la la.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. So LA Monk and LA Funk, that kind of thing.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, that's cute. That's really cute. Do you know MC Solaar?

Maurice Howard:

No.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, I'll get you some French music that you might like.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

He's done-

Maurice Howard:

No, I remember there was a lady and she was really well known in France and I used to... I still like her voice and I can't think of her name, but if you heard the voice, you would know who I'm talking about.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay.

Maurice Howard:

You probably know who I'm talking about. I just can't say her name.

Sharon Sekhon:

Edith Piaf? No.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

The older lady?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. Edith Piaf.

Maurice Howard:

Her. Her.

Sharon Sekhon:

[foreign language 00:31:25].

Maurice Howard:

I actually love to listen to that woman sing.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, okay.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. I'd be a little kid, and I'll be in France and we in my house, this was the street and there was a window, right?

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

And every day, this French man would come and he would have a clothes pin. And he would take the clothes pin, he'd put on his ear and then he'd put on his nose.

Sharon Sekhon:

Just to entertain you?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And only thing that kept us divided was the window. So every day he would come and he would entertain me.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, that's awesome.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

That's a great memory.

Maurice Howard:

I still remember that man.

Sharon Sekhon:

Is that your oldest memory, you think?

Maurice Howard:

No, that's not my oldest memory. My oldest memory is there was a comforter on my bed and sometimes the thread gets broken and I would take the thread and just go over the different things on the comforter, the folds.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

I was fascinated with that. That's my earliest memory I can think of.

Sharon Sekhon:

Wow.

Maurice Howard:

I was quite young, but I [crosstalk 00:32:38] still remember that.

Sharon Sekhon:

Self-defining artist.

Maurice Howard:

Self-defining, what do you mean?

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, they say that your earliest memories are often your meta-story, the fascination with art, maybe, I don't know.

Maurice Howard:

It really wasn't a fascination with art, it was a fascination with life.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

And see, art is part of that life, but life is something totally different, because it's always moving. It's always there. And so, we sort of forget that it's here because we created these artificial lifestyles. So now you get in your car and you drive, you forget about the things around you because now you got the music, you got the nice seat and stuff. So it becomes an artificial life that you enjoy. So now it's hard for you to enjoy the trees and the bees and the birds.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. It's a way of disconnecting us from our [crosstalk 00:33:43] core.

Maurice Howard:

Exactly, and I had to figure out how to get back disconnected. I mean, back connected, that was my whole thing. So I became very weird to everybody because when I was growing up, at the age, maybe 15, my sister and them, everybody was hip then. [inaudible 00:34:03] got the music and they're having parties and the girls are over and I'm outside, I'm up and looking at the sky, and it's like, "What's wrong with him?" "Oh, don't [inaudible 00:34:15], that's my brother, he's weird."

But I was fascinated by life. So they didn't understand it because they were indoctrinated to believe that what they were doing was life. I knew it wasn't, not that I didn't party, I went to parties, I did stuff, but I understood where the real life was.

Sharon Sekhon:

[crosstalk 00:34:38] That's amazing.

Maurice Howard:

It wasn't inside doing the boogie boogie and all that. It was outside, watching water run over rocks and watching insects and how they maneuvered. And I was just fascinated by that. And little creature like that could just create its own home, build his own home, had its own little culture, and I was like, "Wow."

Sharon Sekhon:

And much more complex than ours [crosstalk 00:35:07] sometimes.

Maurice Howard:

Yes. And [crosstalk 00:35:08] we learn a lot from them.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yep. I have a beehive in my backyard. I keep bees. I'll send you some honey for Christmas.

Maurice Howard:

Okay. That'll be nice.

Sharon Sekhon:

I mean, if you want to be humble, just spend time outside with them.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

And they work so hard. So tell me about why you picked Cal State Fullerton and what your first impressions of the place were.

Maurice Howard:

Okay. I didn't actually pick it, they sort of picked me. And so I was invited to the campus and I was amazed, it looked futuristic when I was there. I mean, at that time, they had built this new stuff and like, "Wow, I'm going to be going to this college." So they walked me around different places and stuff like that. I was like, "God, I could never learn this place, it's just too much." Of course, that was a lie, I just didn't know. But I remember going there my first day and I was going to do my registration, and this long line, I get in the line and my wrestling coach comes up to me, says, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I'm getting ready [inaudible 00:36:24]." He says, "No, you don't do this." He says, "You're an athlete. Come with me." So we go through this door and they go in there and they take care of everything for me. And that's when I begin to realize in this society, depending on who you know, things can be very easy. So after that, I began to realize, "Okay, then you are going to have to understand how people are going to treat you because you're different. You're really different." So I became pretty popular on campus, I was still kind of looked at as a little strange because I dressed strange then.

Sharon Sekhon:

What year was this? And how did you dress?

Maurice Howard:

This must have been '70, '71. I had this knitted hat, which was green and yellow and I had this... What it called? [Serape 00:37:18] or whatever.

Sharon Sekhon:

A Mexican Serape?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And then I wore these pants that had these enormous cuffs in them, like a pirate. And then, I wore moccasins or I either wore flip flops. So, flip flops, I probably wore the whole... It was winter to summer, it didn't matter. I had those on, but I just wanted to be distanced from everybody. I didn't want to mission and just mix in with everybody. I didn't want to do that. So I just would do things differently.

Sharon Sekhon:

So where did you live on campus or around [crosstalk 00:38:04]?

Maurice Howard:

I didn't live on campus. I lived in a place called [Brea 00:38:08], which is a few miles from the campus and I had 10-speeds, so I would ride back and forth to my classes.

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you remember where in Brea?

Maurice Howard:

What's the name of that street? West Ash? Something, something West Ash. West Ash St.

Sharon Sekhon:

Did you have any issues in Brea with being black?

Maurice Howard:

Not really. I knew that there was not a lot of us or maybe none of us in that town. And my parents taught me how to deal with different environments.

Sharon Sekhon:

How do you deal with them? What did they teach you?

Maurice Howard:

First of all, with this whole thing with prejudice, because I couldn't understand that, I'd ask mama, "Why they don't like me?" She said, "Baby, it's not their fault, it's just the way they're trained. It's what they're taught. Their parents teach them this." She said, "They're not really bad. It's just that they've been taught the wrong things. They think that you're that, but you're not that." She said, "So you kind of have to feel sorry for them." So I kind of had that attitude that whenever I [inaudible 00:39:23], I was mostly like their parents. They were kids, they didn't know any better. So I learned to be patient with that. So, living in Ash and being around these white people, they looking at you strange because you look strange to them, that makes sense.

Sharon Sekhon:

Plus you dress strange.

Maurice Howard:

Plus I dress strange. They had one art store, I remember going into the art store and the lady's following me around, she says, "Can I help you? Do you know what you want?" I said, "Yeah, I know what I want." She said, "Well, what do you want? What can I help you with?" So I told her, I said, "I need this, I need this. I need this." So after a few visits there, then they're comfortable, they're okay, you're not a threat. And then what happens is they talk to John, John talks to Dave, Dave talks to Linda, Linda talks to Mary, so they get around who you are, where you stay and that whole thing. And that, since I wasn't a threat, they were very, very kind to me. So they were more kind to me than, I think, any other blacks that were come into town because I wasn't threatening. I was weird, but I was-

Sharon Sekhon:

You were an artist.

Maurice Howard:

I'm an artist. That's the other thing.

Sharon Sekhon:

It's another class.

Maurice Howard:

Yes.

Sharon Sekhon:

You can travel in lots of different ways.

Maurice Howard:

Yes. Not only that. What I learned about being an artist is you're royalty, and I have to tell you, that's really what it is. I've been in situations where... I remember going out when I was married with my wife, my wife had an issue with me, with this whole thing with art, she just thought it was a waste of time. And so, we would go out to dinner and we'd meet people. And she had friend that she worked with because she worked at... What was that? [Litton 00:41:19], some kind of company. So you had all these highfalutin people come in and we having dinner. And so the lady was saying, "Well, what do you do?" And I said, "Well, I'm an artist." "Oh, you paint and draw?" I said, "Yes." "Oh," she just lit up.

She's just having conversation, everybody's looking at me and her talking, right? Because everybody else is sort of snobbish and stuff and it just wasn't happening. They just was at the table. So they're interested in what we're talking about. So then my wife, [inaudible 00:41:49], "What are you guys talking about?" I said, "We're just talking about art." "Art?" "Yeah." This lady was fascinated about why I got into art. Just sort of like what you're asking me, questions. And I'm telling her, she's like, "Who your favorite artists?" And I'm like, "Salvador Dali, I like MC Escher. I like George [inaudible 00:42:11]." And it's like, "Oh, my God, those are..." So she understood I understood what I liked about art. I didn't know a lot about art, but I knew what I liked about art.

Sharon Sekhon:

I feel like it's a shared language too.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah, it is. It is.

Sharon Sekhon:

Once you love something together, you know what you're talking about.

Maurice Howard:

Right. So, that was that experience. So, being an artist, I realized that there's me and then there's the artist. I'm not the artist. I'm just me and the artist is the one that sort of does things for me.

Sharon Sekhon:

You started art classes at Cal State Fullerton.

Maurice Howard:

Yes. I can't remember my art teachers.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay.

Maurice Howard:

There was one gentleman. How can I say this? He was a typical Orange County kind of guy. And I remember at the time, I didn't have a lot of money and we'd have to buy materials and I didn't have the money to buy materials, so I just sort of do the best I could. But he was fascinated by me. I was the only black in his class, right? But he found I was very talented. It was just something about me, he was just

fascinated with. And he's a sort of very stern kind of guy, white hair, white beard kind of stubbly, little guy. And he said to me, he says, "I want to talk to you in my office."

I'm like, "Oh, hell." So he says to me, he says, "You're not doing too well in the class. I just want you to know that." I said, "Yeah." He says, "You're not able to get your projects done," he says, "Here's what I'm going to do." He says, "I want you to go in that closet right there and pick everything you need." He says, "Because you're an extraordinary artist." He says, "You just don't have materials."

And I look at this dude like, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, go in there, get what you want, get what you want." He says, "Because right now you're doing C work." And he said, "And you're not a C work." He said, "You're an extraordinary artist." He said, "You should not be getting Cs. Not in my class." He said, "So I'm going to give you everything you need to do, so you can produce what you really should produce." And to this day, I really appreciate him doing that.

Sharon Sekhon:

That's what teachers are supposed to do. That's our job, we're supposed to support each other. And it's so humbling that you saw exactly what he was doing.

Maurice Howard:

Well, it still to this day, it touches me because at that time in my life, I was trying to get my stuff together. I wanted to be an artist and I just didn't have materials. So I had to always sort of put things together. And I think he appreciated the fact that I didn't give up. Even though I didn't have what I needed, I used what I had. But anyway, to make a long story short, I ended up doing very well in his class and he was very supportive of me, so I appreciate that.

Sharon Sekhon:

Tell me if you remember it. The incident in the Student Union with the Black is Beautiful supergraphic.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

If you want to.

Maurice Howard:

No, here's what happened. There was a wall down in the student area and they came to me and they said, they want me to paint this mural. I said, "Okay." Now it wasn't my mural, it was actually a picture from an album cover, The Last Poets.

Sharon Sekhon:

By Charles Wright, is that what was said? The name of the artist on it?

Maurice Howard:

No, no, no, no. The Last Poets was a black group that did poetry.

Sharon Sekhon:

From [Watts 00:46:18]?

Maurice Howard:

I think they were from Watts. I'm not sure where they're from, but they were popular during that time in the '70s. The Last Poets. It was sort of like Gil Scott-Heron, they were on that level.

Sharon Sekhon:

I think they came to campus.

Maurice Howard:

I don't know if Last Poets came. I don't know. I don't remember them coming out, [crosstalk 00:46:37] put it that way. Anyway, so I got the picture and I'm pinning the thing on the wall and I come every day and I'm painting and everybody's like, "Wow, that's nice. That's nice." And then one weekend, it was defaced. So they had nigger and blah, blah, all this stuff on it, so then I get called by the newspaper. They wanted to do an article on me. I'm like, "Okay." So in the article, they're asking me, "How do you feel about this and the prejudice." And I said, "You know what?" I said, "To be quite honest with you," I said, "It's all part of the art." So I said, "I'm not going to change anything. I'm going to leave it like it is because that's what it evolved into."

So they were really pissed off. It's like, "No, we need you to change this." I said, "No, you guys need to see who you really are in this country because that's who you are. I didn't do anything wrong. I just put the colors and stuff up there and then you came along with your, 'Nigger this,' and so what do you want me to do now? Want me to pretend like you really don't think like that?" I said, "No, I don't want to change it." Oh, they was pissed. "No, you got to change it. We'll make..." "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. What you don't understand is I offered you my talent and then you offered me all this nonsense.

Now you want me to correct it. Why should I correct it? You correct it. You correct your behavior." That was my thing. "You guys correct your behavior. And then, you don't have to worry about this ever happening again. But if I go there and I repaint it, it's going to happen again because you haven't corrected your behavior. That's the problem. You didn't correct your behavior, now you're asking me to fix it for you, no. Mm-mm (negative)." So it was a big deal about that, but I didn't care. I mean, I wasn't offended by it. I mean, I grew up in this country, I know what this is about. I was like, [inaudible 00:48:46]. No, no, no, I'm good. I'm good. So I don't have that feeling of prejudice against them because like I said, they're like children to me. So I'm just being [inaudible 00:49:00] children. Would you like some water?

Sharon Sekhon:

No. I'm good. Thank you. I would [inaudible 00:49:08], do you need water?

Maurice Howard:

No, no. I'm going to go restroom though.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, okay. [Perfect 00:49:14]. You are-

Maurice Howard:

I might tear up here and there, I think about things.

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, it's amazing experience, profound, and it's the student teaching the teachers. I'm hoping that the exhibit becomes a teaching moment for people on campus because I'm pulling pieces like that out, as well

as in '68, they dedicated six pages to discrimination in housing throughout Fullerton, if you were black. And they gave the Daily Titan to six different students who just, they talked about.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

And they don't don't even have the consciousness to do the history yet. And I'm like, "Why not?"

Maurice Howard:

Because they don't want people to know.

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, it's also, we're taught that we're not valuable. We're taught that Kim Kardashian's ass is more important than we are as a society or that if you're a crime victim. You have to achieve some soundbite quality for them to pay attention. And that's kind of why I did this exhibit. If the first black police officer in Santa Ana and a Black Panther, who's now a pastor, can't get your attention, what will? And what about everybody in between who may not seek out the limelight? Don't their voices matter? So, literally, it's that simple. And I really was reticent to do this history because I'm not black. And I want to make sure that I don't mess it up, but if I don't do it, who will? And at least it's a start here and people can then revise what I've done and say, "Well, you forgot about this. You forgot." Then they can go forward and fix what I haven't done. Or at least [crosstalk 00:50:59].

Maurice Howard:

Well, at least you have enough consciousness to consider the fact that maybe if you're not black, that maybe my people might not accept what you have to do, but you don't have to be black, I'll be quite honest with you.

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, no one's going to do it. So let's just get it done.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And that's the whole thing about life, see, you know something needs to be done, you know how to do it, you do it.

Sharon Sekhon:

Exactly. It's your special skill set.

Maurice Howard:

You don't have to sit up and say, "Well, I'm not this and I'm not that."

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, and I always felt, because I was mixed race, I could do everybody.

Maurice Howard:

That's what I'm saying. So it's all the same.

Sharon Sekhon:

But you know how [crosstalk 00:51:33].

Maurice Howard:

I know, I know [crosstalk 00:51:33].

Sharon Sekhon:

You know how it is right now.

Maurice Howard:

I know, I know.

Sharon Sekhon:

I'll tell you later.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

I said the word Nigger Creek and Nigger Alley because they're place names in LA. And I was reprimanded by my supervisor for using the N word. And I was like, "I'm telling you in an anti-racist context about real estate in Los Angeles." And the person who told me not to use that has never studied race history, doesn't study history. So you have administrators telling researchers and historians how to use these terms, even if you're on an anti-racist platform. So, the assumption is that you can't talk about anything then.

Maurice Howard:

What's this thing they got now? Critical...

Sharon Sekhon:

Critical race theory. First, there's two concepts to what people think of critical race theory.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

The first one was created by this African American scholar at Harvard, and it's this belief that whites are oppressors and evil. It's a very one racist attack approach. Then there's other people who do critical race history, or call it critical race theory who just study race in a critical manner and use history as a platform. And so, what they've done is use this concept of critical race theory to attack all history focusing on race, you know what I'm talking about?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

So people in the South or on the... Because they don't even get the same news that we get. Sinclair Media is very biased, it's a Republican news outlet that controls most of the Southeast and where Republican strongholds are. They won't hear the same news that we hear and we don't hear their news, which may be informing other parts of this [crosstalk 00:53:28] conversation.

Maurice Howard:

Like I said, we are not talking. So we don't-

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. I mean we're missing out on what they hear too. So they might know stuff we don't know.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

So there's a lot of misunderstanding about what it is. Someone didn't want their students to read *Beloved* because it made one boy feel bad about being white. And that's not how you teach that book. You teach it in the context of the Fugitive Slave Law, because that's what the book takes place in.

Maurice Howard:

See, I don't understand people. I mean-

Sharon Sekhon:

I mean, literature's supposed to make all of us feel bad.

Maurice Howard:

You see yourself one way of life, you grow up, your parents tell you, "You're this, you're that." And then you read something and you realize not everybody looks at you like that.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

So you're supposed to feel bad because you didn't know [crosstalk 00:54:17] because they didn't tell you, they only given you half of the information, so how can you feel good about yourself when something else is missing?

Sharon Sekhon:

And if we're a mature society, all of us undergo that self-examination.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. [crosstalk 00:54:32] It's no different for me than anybody else.

Sharon Sekhon:

Right.

Maurice Howard:

Because I'm told different things about myself growing up and then later on I find out different things. I have to deal with that.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Me too. I don't come from a line of heroes.

Maurice Howard:

Neither do I.

Sharon Sekhon:

And none of us do. And that's actually the whole bigger part of this history is... I like how Native Americans tell history because they always have a reflection about when they should have done differently or they were not behaving in the best way they could for their people. They always have that moment because if without that, what's the point? History's supposed to be about survival and how we survive this life. It's not just about Fathers Day gifts. Anyway, so Cal State Fullerton, you graduated from there?

Maurice Howard:

No.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh wow.

Maurice Howard:

I left Cal State Fullerton.

Sharon Sekhon:

Why did you leave?

Maurice Howard:

I got a job in animation.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, at Hanna-Barbera?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And I always wanted to do that. And so, all of a sudden this opportunity came and so I was like, "Let me get out of here. Let me go do something I [crosstalk 00:55:40]."

Sharon Sekhon:

Would you be interested in talking on campus about that?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. It wouldn't bother me.

Sharon Sekhon:

My husband went to Cal State Fullerton and he works at Marvel now.

Maurice Howard:

Oh, okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

And Cal state Fullerton doesn't have the consciousness to recognize they have great students, former students who actually are pioneers in the industry sometime. So at Hanna-Barbera, how long were you there?

Maurice Howard:

I think I was there maybe two, three years. I was an in-betweenener.

Sharon Sekhon:

What did you work on?

Maurice Howard:

Space Ghost, Batman, so many, Jesus. Did I say [Great Babe 00:56:21]?

Sharon Sekhon:

No. Oh, I remember him.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And then we did a special with the regular characters, like Quick Draw McGraw, Yogi Bear, stuff like that. I got a chance to meet... What's this? Kelly, Kelly, Kelly, Gene Kelly, the dancer.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

I got a chance to do a special with him.

Sharon Sekhon:

What was that?

Maurice Howard:

Well, Gene was up in age then. It was at the studio in Burbank and [inaudible 00:56:51] all called in and I had to dress up in this costume, like a Barney Rubble and I had to roller skate. So being that Gene Kelly, when I first seen him, he was just Singin' In The Rain as he's roller skating, so I was sort of fascinated like, "Wow, I got my-"

Sharon Sekhon:

[inaudible 00:57:14].

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. And he was a nice person, he didn't take his status as celebrity that serious. I guess, he's up in age. I don't know if he's maybe in his late 70s or 80s. Which now, I don't really think that's old, but then, I thought it was really old.

Sharon Sekhon:

I think it was old back then.

Maurice Howard:

It was, it was.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. And they acted older.

Maurice Howard:

And they acted older, right? And so, the thing I realized about people and age is that they get to a certain point and then they give up. You no longer take care of yourself anymore, just say, "Oh, okay. I've done it, that's it." But like everything else, I think human beings have to constantly evolve. Constantly taking care of yourself, let it do what it's going to do, but don't force it. Don't force your downfall, just let it happen.

Sharon Sekhon:

So you mentioned in passing that you had been married. Do you have any children?

Maurice Howard:

Yes. I have a daughter.

Sharon Sekhon:

Tell me about her.

Maurice Howard:

Miss [Nisha 00:58:24]. I wanted to have a lot of children. I wanted to at least have five children, that didn't happen, but the one I got, she's a gem, she's a gem. She's really a gem. Growing up, me and her were buddies. So I took her everywhere with me. I remember we used to get up in the morning about eight, nine o'clock and I'd put her on my shoulders. And at that time, I lived in Hollywood, so we'd walk all over Hollywood. So we got pretty well known, they would see us and she didn't walk. So what she would do is she would grab me in my hair like this and hold on. And so, we'll be walking and all of a sudden I would go like this and people, "Oh my God, she's going to fall." I said, "She's not going to fall." And what I realized is that she was so connected with me, that she knew exactly what to do.

Sharon Sekhon:

She could sense your-

Maurice Howard:

She could sense it. So to her, it wasn't dangerous, it was just, "I got to hold on, I got to hold on." So we walked over Hollywood and people took pictures of us, and those are some really, really nice times. And even when I did my first mural in Hollywood, which was a clown, this clown here, and later, it was in a music video.

Sharon Sekhon:

Where was this mural?

Maurice Howard:

On Melrose and Vista, right on the corner. There was a liquor store. And actually, the mural was on Vista. And like I said, later on, it was part of a movie. Then it was in a music video, that kind of thing.

Sharon Sekhon:

What music video?

Maurice Howard:

DeBarge, Rhythm of the Night.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, how cool is that?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. So-

Sharon Sekhon:

That's a great song.

Maurice Howard:

So, my daughter would come up there with me when I was painting and I would give her a brush and let her do little things. So she was my little buddy, and we're still like that to this day. And she said to me, one day... I said, "What you going to do when you get big, mama?" She said, "I'm going to travel." I said, "Okay, you going to travel?" She said, "Yeah, I'm going to travel." And she got up in age, got out of college and she went and traveled. So she teaches English to Asian countries.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh, wow.

Maurice Howard:

So she's been to Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Vietnam.

Sharon Sekhon:

That's tough as a African American sometimes there, isn't it?

Maurice Howard:

No.

Sharon Sekhon:

Oh.

Maurice Howard:

She says she gets treated better there than she does here in this country.

Sharon Sekhon:

Doesn't that say something.

Maurice Howard:

See, but here, again, it's really not about being black, it's about being human. People respond to you being human more than they respond to you being from another culture. And that's what I taught her is you can mix with anybody, but you just have to know how to do it, you cannot be offended by what they say and how they do this, you just observe how things go and so you know how to fit in.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Maurice Howard:

That's all.

Sharon Sekhon:

And try to fit in.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. It doesn't change anything about you, it's just something else you learned. That's all, just more wealth of information.

Sharon Sekhon:

How long did you live in Hollywood?

Maurice Howard:

Oh, wow. See, I came there out of 70... See, I think 13 years, 13, 14 years.

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you remember where you lived?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

Where?

Maurice Howard:
441 North Gardner.

Sharon Sekhon:
Okay.

Maurice Howard:
I just went back there about two weeks ago.

Sharon Sekhon:
Did you ever go to the Holiday Bowl on Crenshaw? It was a bowling alley.

Maurice Howard:
No.

Sharon Sekhon:
Okay.

Maurice Howard:
No.

Sharon Sekhon:
I have to ask. That was my first public history project.

Maurice Howard:
No.

Sharon Sekhon:
I noticed that you teach art. When did you start teaching art?

Maurice Howard:
Well, my first job teaching art was a friend of mine invited me to his class. And I got there and the kids, I guess, they were maybe eight, nine, something like that, I think I was in high school and I was just showing them different things I drew. So then he invited me back to sort of teach. And that's how I kind of got into that. Currently, I have a class in San Bernardino right now. I teach at this nonprofit and the nonprofit's evolved around... It's called Fighting Chance. And so, these are kids from the neighborhood and they teach them how to box, girls, boys, it doesn't matter. And then to sort of give them some kind of another feel for something, because as a physical and all this, they wanted to sort of get their brains relaxed now. So we're starting the art class. And so, I've been doing this now, I think, maybe two or three years.

Sharon Sekhon:
I can tell you after interviewing people who are artists, those examples of what you're doing are often the thread that creates artists for their lifetime, that Saturday art class that was available to them, where they could see if it was what they wanted or that even knew about it.

Maurice Howard:

Well, see, that also gives you a chance to realize that I'm just a human being, because people have stereotypes about you. So they treat you based on your stereotypes. So once they get to know me, then they realize I'm not what they think I am.

Sharon Sekhon:

What do you think they think you are?

Maurice Howard:

Just sort of hostile black guy, because you go through so much in life, like you say, like with the police and then how people treat you, so they think maybe I'm going to have this aggression in me and I'm just like a little kid.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. Sometimes we have to have an era of intimidation about us, or at least I feel, just to protect ourselves from [crosstalk 01:04:38] picked on.

Maurice Howard:

Whenever I walk the streets, I walk the streets differently because I have to let people know I'm not a pushover.

Sharon Sekhon:

I use my doctor, my PhD, among academics for that purpose.

Maurice Howard:

Oh, okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

I always say, "Don't make me pull out my dick, it's so big."

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

I don't want to talk to you like that, but if you make me do it, I'll do it.

Maurice Howard:

Right. Right, right.

Sharon Sekhon:

It's not who I want to be, but we have to be, in this world.

Maurice Howard:

Well, you got to protect yourself. Like you said, you wouldn't hurt anybody, but you're not going to let them hurt you.

Sharon Sekhon:

Exactly.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah [crosstalk 01:05:13].

Sharon Sekhon:

Exactly. And you don't want to mess with me because there's a reserve of anger underneath that.

Maurice Howard:

And that's the way it should be. I mean, if you look at all the creatures of the world, you mess with them, you got a problem.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. I think that's where a lot of women get messed up or at least in my generation, we're always taught to be nice, to be sweet, to get along with everybody. When really, in reality, we should never be sweet to people who don't deserve that and not-

Maurice Howard:

You have to know when to be who you need to be.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah.

Maurice Howard:

And that's not what's taught. Well, that [inaudible 01:05:43] wasn't taught in your generation.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-mm (negative).

Maurice Howard:

You were designed to basically perform for a man.

Sharon Sekhon:

Very colonized.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

Not just a man, but this concept of being a woman that was super human.

Maurice Howard:

Well, I'm a man, so that's why I'm talking to you like this. I seen it as you guys were sort of designed for us.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. Well, it also will work in interviews in different ways, the feminine stuff. Sometimes I can [inaudible 01:06:07] things out of men that men can't get out of men. It's weird.

Maurice Howard:

Interesting.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. I just wish that people could be as honest as they could be when we talk to each other because why else would we be that way? But this is a circle conversation because the world's cruel.

Maurice Howard:

No, I think a lot of times you can tell something about a man from the way his mother related to him

Sharon Sekhon:

100%.

Maurice Howard:

So if she's honest with you about who you are, then you tend to be a little bit more well-rounded. But if you don't really have talks with your mother, then I don't think you're going to understand life very well. You won't get it from the man, it comes from the mother.

Sharon Sekhon:

I agree. This will be the last thing I say. And I'll ask you my last question. This world is teaching men to hate their mothers and women. And that's just kind of counter to the human species.

Maurice Howard:

I'll be honest with you [crosstalk 01:07:20], you don't have to teach a man to hate his mother, it's just circumstances will do it. I mean, serious. It's like not all people are nice, and when people are not nice, it's hell, it's really hell and it's really hell when you get it from a woman, even worse than a man, you guys are something else. Your energy is way higher than ours. Your passion's way higher than ours. It's just that society has dumb you down because they know how powerful you are.

Sharon Sekhon:

I agree with you.

Maurice Howard:

See. So me being a man and being having a opportunity to talk to my mother and her tell me things, and then actually having lady friends and talking to them. I want to know secrets, I want to know really what's on your mind when you say, "Oh, I think you're cute." What does that mean? What does that mean? What are we saying? What are you saying? That kind of thing. So, my thing is this, women are very important to this life. You guys bring the life, you take care of the life, but you're not given any respect for that. And

so the man can go out, he can go to war, he comes back, he's a hero. You guys raise armies, nobody says anything that's about a woman.

Sharon Sekhon:

Isn't that because it just goes back to labor, right? The most valuable labor is always going to be the ones that's the least valued, like where we get our food.

Maurice Howard:

I know, but, see, me being a product that comes from this woman, I should never forget that. That's my point.

Sharon Sekhon:

I love that you have that.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. So-

Sharon Sekhon:

It's something you have to teach, because so many women don't know that about themselves to begin with.

Maurice Howard:

Right. Right. That's the thing that kind of gets me, is a lot of women don't know who they are.

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). And women are the best keepers of women back.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. If you have a woman best friend, opposed to man best friend, believe me, you can depend on that woman a lot more than that man.

Sharon Sekhon:

Absolutely.

Maurice Howard:

It's just the nature, you guys being that you're maternal, your thing is to take care. You're constantly making sure everything is kept together.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. I do define my happiness in the happiness of others too.

Maurice Howard:

That piece in there you asked me about is called Children of Humility.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yes. Tell me about that.

Maurice Howard:

Okay. That lot to do with slaves or ex-slaves that came to this country. And so, when they depict it, they always have us in chains and stuff like that. But really in our minds, that's not how we came here. We came here as a unit and we understood that those women, they was the one that's really leading. The men was to protect the women, that was their job. Wasn't to be this and that, it was to protect the women because that's what it's all about. They are the ones that going to make sure that everything is nurtured, but we stopped doing that. And we got into our own heads and we thought we was [inaudible 01:10:40]. And so we left the women on the side and [inaudible 01:10:43] how all this energy is not being used.

So she's doing stupid stuff. And then you're wondering why you're this and you're that, you ain't this. No, she ain't that because you don't allow her to be that. That's the only reason she's not there. If you leave her alone, everything will work perfectly. No, really. I remember being a little kid, my mom would go around, she'd clean the house and everything, possibly come in and kick off her shoes and she would bitch, "I just cleaned this, [inaudible 01:11:11] blah, blah." And he would laugh, it was a big thing. We sitting there, because we know mama was no joke. So I remember she said, "I'm going back to Texas to see my relatives," or whatever. And I'm thinking, "Oh, okay." Man, that house went to hell, it went completely hell. He didn't do anything. "I'll be glad when your mama get back." I'm like, "Wow. She runs everything?"

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, it seems like he refuses to work too.

Maurice Howard:

She ran everything. I didn't realize that. When she left, everything went to hell. So she comes back in, and she's like, "Oh my God, I got put everything back together again and stuff like that." So, she runs everybody out the house and stuff. She starts doing her thing, getting it back in order. She's like an ant, you tear up her hill, she comes back and fixes it.

Sharon Sekhon:

Like a bee.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. I have a lot of respect for women. Not that I haven't did my share of darkness, and to be quite honest, I have a lot of respect for you creatures.

Sharon Sekhon:

Thank you. I have a lot of respect for you, as you know, I love you. I want to ask you a last question and just ask, have I forgotten something that I should have asked you?

Maurice Howard:

I don't know.

Sharon Sekhon:

Okay.

Maurice Howard:

I don't know what you want to ask me.

Sharon Sekhon:

Well, if there's something I should ask you about your time at Cal State Fullerton and I haven't.

Maurice Howard:

No, not really because most stuff you asked me relates more to what I was going through at that time. So I think you pretty much hit that on the [inaudible 01:12:51].

Sharon Sekhon:

I think you're absolutely amazing.

Maurice Howard:

[crosstalk 01:12:55] Do you, really?

Sharon Sekhon:

Yeah. I think this finding you, or you calling me back is a gift. I don't leave the house just so you know, Maurice.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

And you're a big deal to me.

Maurice Howard:

Okay.

Sharon Sekhon:

You've survived hell on earth and you were awake the whole time. I know that you're saying you just let it [inaudible 01:13:17]. You're a human sentient human being and not... I mean, human at the highest level, and you put an assumption out there that everyone else is as great as you are and they're not, or as elevated or as caring or as present. So I'm very grateful and your art, it's amazing. I want to support you and I want the world to see you. I mean, you're amazing.

Maurice Howard:

When I was a little kid, I used to draw and I would put my pictures on the wall and I'd keep it in my room. And when people would come over, they never came in my room and they would in the room and look and say, "Oh, you should do this. And you should do that." And it wasn't until I got older and I realized, maybe I should share this with everybody because I didn't used to share it.

Sharon Sekhon:

They're precious, they're sacred.

Maurice Howard:
They're my children.

Sharon Sekhon:
Yeah. I get that.

Maurice Howard:
Let me show you a piece I did. It's called Mother's Nature. Get in my garage [inaudible 01:14:24]. You like ice cream?

Sharon Sekhon:
I love ice cream, but-

Maurice Howard:
You don't want any, I got-

Sharon Sekhon:
[crosstalk 01:14:32] I can't eat any.

Maurice Howard:
You can't eat.

Sharon Sekhon:
[crosstalk 01:14:34] No, but you eat, if you're hungry.

Maurice Howard:
No, I'm good.

Sharon Sekhon:
No, I can't. I'm sorry.

Maurice Howard:
Okay. Anyway, anyway.

Sharon Sekhon:
I have to save my calories [crosstalk 01:14:40] for my husband.

Maurice Howard:
Mother's Nature.

Sharon Sekhon:
Oh my gosh.

Maurice Howard:

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And then this one here.

Sharon Sekhon:

You painted them on plywood?

Maurice Howard:

Yeah. [inaudible 01:14:51] upside down? No.

Sharon Sekhon:

[crosstalk 01:14:52] No. Oh my gosh. So what inspired these?

Maurice Howard:

My understanding of women. See, I paint it different now because I understand more about them. It's not just the beauty, it's what they represent. It's the maternal, it's the whole thing about life.

Sharon Sekhon:

It's the universe.

Maurice Howard:

Yeah.

Sharon Sekhon:

Wow.