



**A Bermuda-born son of slave descendants...  
Stricken with chronic breathing issues...  
Raised by hard-working parents during segregation...  
Education was the key to freedom...**

### **A Bermuda-born son of slave descendants**

With the end of World War II, around the planet couples were settling down to raise their families. Marvin, born on the little subtropical island of Bermuda, was a part of one of the largest human explosions on record — the Baby Boomers.

Less than one hundred and fifty years out of slavery, people of African Descent such as his parents worked hard in their early lives and some eventually became business owners. This for his Dad was a form of independence as it was for many other offspring of slaves; Mansfield Brock gained a reputation as a photographer and Barber in the Black community. Later he and wife Mary founded Brock's Self-Service, a neighborhood grocery. As he gained some success he was able to purchase taxi licenses and had a Taxi business as well. With all the hard work, the children became the main focus of their lives. Their primary goal was for their children to be college graduates. They achieved their goal when Marvin, the last of their three children graduated from Shaw University in the early seventies. It can be said without a doubt that they were successful in achieving their goal.

### **Stricken with chronic breathing issues**

While still a small child, Asthma defined the first sixteen years of the young boy's life as he struggled to breath and doctors were a regular part of his life. Challenged with this chronic illness one of young Marvin's physicians, Dr. Barbara Ball a pediatrician, advised his parents to send him to her Judo school. He began at age eleven. It was the beginning of a lifelong involvement in the martial arts. It also opened the door for Marvin to participate in school sports, such as football, (that's what it's called in Bermuda, the UK and many other countries. In America and some other countries it is also known as soccer.) He dabbled in cricket and track and field as well. Family members, especially cousins, were outstanding in football and Cricket he longed be a part of that tradition but that wasn't to be. Marvin's chronic asthmatic condition, and winters in Bermuda, without central heat, were too challenging and he became too ill every winter even to go to school.



Kerosene heaters and fireplaces warmed many homes on “the Rock”, as the island is sometimes called. For the first decade or more of Marvin’s life that is how he spent most winters. He was indoors in their heated home with caregivers to avoid the illness which was brought on by the damp and cold. He was not able to attend school on a regular basis in the winter months so his parents arranged for his cousin, an elementary school teacher, to tutor him from winter to spring. Next-door neighbors, the Martins, would tell of Marvin being one of the first children in the neighborhood to have a television. The TV was his entertainment. Other times were spent looking out of the windows and playing games.



Top row: *Parents: Mansfield and Mary Brock*  
Bottom row: *The three siblings: Jimmy, Merle and Marvin*

convention and therefore sought, through education, for the students to be unshackled from racism and segregation on the island. The government was determined to close the school. Eventually it was shut down but only after its board and educators fought a protracted battle to keep the school open. They lost that fight in the early 60s. Just prior to the closure of the school Marvin’s parents decided to send him abroad to a seventh day Adventist boarding school in the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania to finish his high school education. They thought that the drier climate of America, particularly the mountains of Pennsylvania, would be better for Marvin’s asthmatic condition than the humid island he was born on. Twenty-one square miles, nineteen miles long and two and a half miles at its widest, surrounded by over six hundred miles of ocean created high humidity!

### **Raised by Hard-working parents during segregation...**

History tells of slavery on the island from near its discovery, lasting until the mid-eighteen hundreds through its abolition. The segregation that followed was only outlawed in the 70s. Like the US and other former slave-holding countries, Bermuda wrestled with racism and segregation. Black Bermudians who made up the majority of the Population, attended schools exclusively for them. Whites attended their own schools which were deemed better. The little island, 600 miles off the coast of America, is not alone in this historical circumstance. Marvin would later find later that, as with its distant southern neighbor, North Carolina, many conditions—not just in education—were quite similar to those in Bermuda. The distance however provided a natural barrier between the two and Bermudian's were filtered from what the ruling class didn't want to be seen or heard on the island. Marvin's lifestyle, conditioned by illness and lulled by the accepted segregation was like somewhat of a bubble.

### **Education was the Key to Freedom...**

However high school began to thrust this young boy into a greater awareness of his island country. Howard Academy where he attended high school for two years was deemed a rebel school by those in power in the country. The educators and students were not accepting of