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## **A Virtual Tour of African American Places and Spaces in the Inland Empire, CA**

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## Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

### A Virtual Tour of African American Places and Spaces in the Inland Empire, CA

**Speaker 1** [00:00:29] African-Americans have contributed to the development of the Inland Empire since 1851, the year that a caravan of 437 Mormons made their way from Salt Lake City to California, a free state. Of these men and women were 26 enslaved African-Americans. Most of these black pioneers would go on to settle the land and build a community in the San Bernardino Valley. With the exception of Elizabeth, Lizzie Flake, Charles Rowan, Toby and Grief Embers and Biddy Mason, the histories of the first 26 have been lost to us. We know that Billy Mason made her way to Los Angeles and successfully petitioned for freedom from a master intent on taking his slaves back to Texas. Mason stayed in L.A. and became a nurse and real estate entrepreneur. Grief embers became the first black to own land in San Bernardino. Purchasing land at what is now I Street in 1857. Others like Lizzie Flake, Rowan and her husband, Charles Rowan, followed suit. Lizzie was a laundress, while Charles operated a barber shop out of the Southern Hotel near the corner of 4th and D Streets. The couple amassed wealth and acquired property on Rialto and G streets. When Lizzie died in 1908, fellow pioneers of all races attended her funeral. Lizzie and Charles Rowan are interred with their daughter, Alice Rowan Johnson, a Riverside schoolteacher at Pioneer Memorial Cemetery in San Bernardino.

[00:02:12] Post-Civil War, a small wave of blacks made their way to the Inland Empire, including Israel Beal. Born, enslaved and freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, Beal made his way to California, finding work as a miner. Upon moving to Lugonia, now Redlands, he took up work as a house mover. He was involved in the construction of downtown Redlands, hauling supplies and building homes and in the construction of the city's Reservoir and Big Bear Lake Dam. He would become the first black to own property in Redlands, purchasing parcels of land in 1877 and 1878. Today, a park located near the Besar Housing Development and the Santa Ana River Wash is named in honor of the man who helped build the city of Redlands. It was dedicated in February 2011.

[00:03:09] Across the valley, Robert Stokes became the first African-American to settle in Riverside sometime between 1870 and 1873. Stokes was a constable and farmer. His farm sat at what is now Mission Inn Avenue and Market streets. He also owned additional land stretching from Brockton to Magnolia. Stokes is buried alongside other Riverside pioneers at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery. There a marker commemorating some of Riverside's early African-American residents stands. The Riverside African-American Historical Society dedicated the monument in 2012.

[00:03:57] As with many communities and cultures, among the first established organizations for African-Americans in the Inland Empire were churches. Both San Bernardino and Riverside counties lay claim to some of the earliest African-American churches in Southern California. Allen Chapel, African-American Episcopal Church, founded in 1875, is the oldest African-American church in Riverside County. The church was organized by seven men and women. Most were formerly enslaved, who worship together in the Seventh Street home of Mrs. Dobbs. Their first sanctuary was built a few years later on the corner of Sedgwick and 10th Street. In 1972, Allen Chapel moved from its East Side location to its current home on Locust and Tenth streets near Mount Rubiboux. Second Baptist Church is the second oldest African-American church in Riverside, incorporated in 1890. Some of Riverside's first black families were the church's

founding members. Originally located on the corner of Eighth and Main, the church had three additional locations in its first 50 years. It is currently located on 9th Street.

[00:05:14] In 1915, 14 members of the Second Baptist Church formally split from their congregation to form Park Avenue Baptist Church. Meetings were held in the 11th street home of John and Eva Allen until they moved into a building at 1068 Park Avenue, moving in 1925 to the 12th and Park location. The church currently resides at 1910 Martin Luther King Boulevard near Bordwell Park.

[00:05:43] First Baptist Church in the city of Perris. Riverside County was founded in the Seventh and F Street home of Dora Nelson in 1924 and continued there until a formal church was built in 1947. The original building, now a Spanish language church, still stands on the corner of Fifth and F streets, while the church's newest building resides directly across the street. A plaque at the original building site notes First Baptist Founding Fathers. Its founding mother, Dora Nelson, would be honored 50 years later with a namesake museum.

[00:06:23] Second Baptist Church of Redlands, the oldest African-American church in San Bernardino County, was founded in 1892 and incorporated in 1899. From its inception, the church has fellowship with Second Baptist Church of Riverside and First Baptist Church of Redlands. The church's original location was on Orange Street until 1928, when they completed construction on the building at 420 East Stewart Avenue.

[00:06:55] St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded on Easter Sunday 1904 in the city of San Bernardino by Henry and Mary Inghram. Their children Henry, Ben Howard and Ruth and Martha and Ernest Busch, the original charter members. The original location was on 6th Street, but in 1915, the second location for the church was constructed at 6th and Harris. Construction of the current church on 21st Street was completed in 1969. On August 16th 1911, four families, the Andersons, Muckleroy's, Andrews and Dents began the process of organizing New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. This church has gone through many transformations over the years, moving to bigger buildings as their congregation grew. To date they have the largest black congregation in the San Bernardino Valley area. In 1928, the very first meeting of St. Mark's Missionary Baptist Church was held at the home of Sister Nanny Craig. It wasn't until 1932 that the construction of the church was finished. Over time, the need for a larger building grew, and in 1947, the current building on East Central Avenue was completed in 1938. Ten years after St. Mark's had their first meeting, the Temple Missionary Baptist Church was formed. Its members congregated at 732 L St.. The current location on Union Street was built and dedicated in 1955, with Rev. Abraham Schwartz as their leader.

[00:08:53] In addition to churches, African-Americans continued to extend the philosophy of good works through the formation of social organizations. One of the earliest fraternal organizations is the Prince Hall Freemasons, a predominantly black branch of the Freemasons founded by Prince Hall in the 18th century. The group established Prince Hall Lodge number 17 in Redlands, California, in 1909. They requested and were granted permission to relocate to San Bernardino in 1922. The lodge has moved several times, but they have maintained a presence in the city.

[00:09:33] Standing on the shoulders of giants and facing insurmountable odds, a new generation of black pioneers continued the legacy of their predecessors. Like those first settlers, these new pioneers came from the South seeking opportunities and a better life out west. They are educators, doctors, lawyers, business owners, builders and civil

servants. They are average citizens working to better the communities in which they live. Several Inland Empire schools and educational institutions are named for African-Americans, mostly educators who were trailblazers in their field. Others are community leaders, local legends who fought for the lives of children and for the advancement of their community. Dorothy Inghram began her career as the first black school teacher and principal in the San Bernardino area in 1941 and became the first black superintendent in California. She was the first African-American to graduate from University of Redlands with a bachelor's degree in music and received an honorary degree from Cal State San Bernardino in 2003. Inghram was a tremendous influence on this community as a local educator, civic leader, community activist, volunteer and author of five books. She died at the age of 106. Among the many honors she received, having a public library named for her is an unusual recognition for a non librarian.

[00:11:13] During her 37 year career, Georgia F. Morris held many positions as she ascended the educational ladder, among them teacher, counselor, coordinator, director, administrator and assistant superintendent. She achieved a great number of accomplishments and has received honors and awards from many organizations for her inspirational work. She was the first African-American administrator in the Rialto Unified School District, as well as the first African-American female to be named to the Human Relations Commission in Rialto. This school was named after her in June of 1991. Carl and Dora Anderson were not teachers per se, but they were dedicated to nurturing those with developmental disabilities. The Anderson School, named after the founding couple, was built in 1971. It serves students from ages 12 to 22 with a wide range of physical and intellectual disabilities. The school is adjacent to the Center for Individual Development, a recreational center for people with disabilities.

[00:12:29] Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Nobel Peace Prize recipient and leader in the African-American civil rights movement, has no less than four landmarks named in his honor. Because of his tremendous contributions, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School was formerly known as Franklin Junior High. From 1953 until 1974, the school was closed for a decade before the San Bernardino City Unified School District voted to reopen it and change the name to Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. In 1984, Martin Luther King High School, commonly referred to as King High School, opened in 1999 and was the first high school to be built in Riverside since 1973. The first graduating class walked in 2003. This is California's first high school named for King.

[00:13:27] Dr. Howard Inghram, brother to Dorothy Inghram and last charter member of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church before his passing in 1993, was the first black physician in San Bernardino. He attended medical school at Northwestern University in Chicago but returned to San Bernardino, his home since his birth in 1899, to practice medicine. He was a surgeon and physician for over 50 years in honor of his contributions to the community. The Dr. Howard Ingram Elementary School was named in his honor in 1989.

[00:14:09] Dorothy Grant, member of Temple Baptist, moved to Fontana in 1959. She was a pioneer in bringing street lights, traffic signals, sidewalks and essential infrastructure to the northern Fontana area before it was incorporated into the city. Though her initial focus was on that area through the years, her volunteer services expanded throughout the city. Dorothy was instrumental in organizing activities for children of the area as well. She had a strong work ethic and was tirelessly committed to improving her community. In 2000, the Fontana Unified School District opened the Dorothy Grant Elementary School. Miss Grant

visited this school nearly every day to read stories, monitor the lunch yard and encourage the students and parents.

[00:15:03] Wilmer Amina Carter was a member of the Rialto Unified School District Board of Education for 16 years. She recently served three terms in the California State Assembly and now serves as a director of Creative Business Services Incorporated archiving the African-American presence in the Inland Empire. This state of the art high school was named in her honor at the groundbreaking ceremony on June 4th of 2001. It opened its doors on August 31st, 2004, with 2200 students in grades nine through 11. She is the first living African-American woman in California for whom a high school has been named.

[00:15:51] Two years later, on July 31st, 2006, the Juanita Blakely Jones Elementary School opened. This school is named for a prominent African-American woman who contributed to her community throughout her lifetime. Blakely Jones was also classmates with Dorothy Ingram at the University of Redlands.

[00:16:16] Mildred Dalton, Henry, or Doc, as she is affectionately known, has made it her life's mission to break down barriers so young people could obtain a solid education that leads to meaningful employment. As founder and director of the Provisional Accelerated Learning, or Powell Center and Charter Academy in San Bernardino, Dr. Henry has provided educational and employment opportunities for countless youngsters in the community. She is the first African-American to attain tenure year associate professor and full professor status in the School of Education at California State University San Bernardino. The Dr. Mildred Dalton Henry Elementary School, named in her honor, opened its doors in 2013.

[00:17:09] Hardy Brown, chairman of Brown Publishing Company, founding president of California Black Media and publisher emeritus of the Black Voice News, is well known for his contributions to the publishing industry and his commitment to the community. He and his wife, Assembly member Cheryl Brown, started the family newspaper business in 1980 when they purchased the Black Voice. Thirty years later, in 2010, Hardy Brown College Prep opened its doors. The school serves grades K through eight and strives to provide a curriculum that equips students for higher education and encourages parent student involvement. To date, Hardy Brown College Prep is the highest performing charter school in the San Bernardino Unified School District.

[00:18:01] Curtis T. Winton, a parent, advocate and longtime education volunteer, worked ceaselessly to open the channels of communication between the school board, the superintendents office, the directors, the principals and, most of all, the parents in the district. Winton founded the parent institute in 2009 in an attempt to increase parent involvement within the district. It was hugely successful. Since its launch, more than 700 parents and grandparents have graduated. In October of 2014, the Rialto Unified School District dedicated the institute to its inspirational founder. After his passing.

[00:18:49] The Dora Nelson Museum was founded by Alberta and Charles Kierney in 1997. Conceived in 1979, it is the culmination of tireless efforts to create a museum dedicated to collecting, documenting and preserving the history of African-Americans in the Perris Valley. Its namesake, Dora Nelson, was one of the first African-Americans in Perris, settling there in 1920, able to attend but not become members of the local Congregational Church. African-Americans instead attended prayer meetings in Nelson's home on the corner of 7th and F streets. These meetings would foment into First Baptist

Church that this home was the first black church in Perris was unknown to Alberta Kierney when she supervised the demolition of the home. Upon hearing the history of the building, a devastated Alberta sought to learn about the community's history and strove to preserve it. The museum stands as a testament to First Baptist founding mother and to the storied history of Perris.

[00:20:03] Anne Shirelles, a long time member of St. Marks, was affectionately referred to as mama because of her nurturing nature. She was involved in numerous organizations throughout her lifetime, most of which were community based. She had lived in San Bernardino since 1944 and worked for the Parks and Recreation department for more than 20 years. In addition, she organized the first Girl Scout troop for minorities on the West Side and formed a leadership council to advise and work with youth in education, employment and housing even after her retirement. She was still working for the city when she died at the age of 68 in 1983. She is recognized throughout her community for her stature as a beloved humanitarian. With deepest concern for the problems and difficulties of her fellow citizens. In 1987, Councilman Daniel Frazier sought approval to rename Rio Vista Park in honor of Anne Shirelles councilman and civic leader.

[00:21:09] Roosevelt Williams was the first African-American city councilman in Banning California. Williams was first appointed to City Council in November 1981, filling a vacant seat. He served 19 consecutive years, a record for any Banning politician. Williams was a proud Banning Chamber of Commerce ambassador and was also credited with helping to maintain race relations on Banning's East Side. In May 2000, Pass Valley Park was renamed Roosevelt Williams Park. The East Banning Park is now home to the Banning Boys and Girls Club.

[00:21:57] Thomas R. Yarborough has the distinction of being California's first African-American city councilman and California's first African-American mayor. Yarborough, a businessman, real estate investor and property manager, entered into politics in 1948 when he ran for and won a seat on Lake Elsinore City Council. His fellow councilman elected him mayor in 1966. Yarborough retired two years later in 1968. That year, the city named a park in his honor. Thomas R. Yarborough Park, located at 419 North Pole, sits on three acres of land in downtown Lake Elsinore.

[00:22:57] Clyde Alexander, a well-known contractor and developer of many local projects, was a leader in bringing professional opportunities to his fellow black business owners. He paved the way for local black workers to be allowed to join unions, which up to this point was unheard of in remembrance of the advancements he helped make in his community. There is a street named Clyde in the Orange Wood Estates, built in 1980.

[00:23:28] Art Townsend, founder of the Precinct Reporting Group Newspapers dedicated to the African-American communities they serve, is known for his tireless efforts to better the conditions of blacks, Hispanics, laborers and women. He started the Precinct Reporting Group in 1965. And today it is the oldest black owned publication in the Inland Empire. He was also one of the founding members of the San Bernardino Boys and Girls Club and was known for being a tremendous influence on young professionals and entrepreneurs. Mr. Townsend has the honor of having two streets named after him. On April 17th, 1990, the city of Rialto held an official dedication ceremony for Townsend Street, honoring one of their most respected citizens. The other street art, Townsend Drive, resides on the corner of Del Rosa in San Bernardino.

[00:24:28] In 1986, Jack B. Clarke Senior became the first African-American elected to Riverside City Council, taking fifty six point nine percent of the vote. In 1993, the Riverside Planning Commission unanimously approved a plan to rename Bircher Way to Jack B. Clarke Way in honor of the councilman who represented the 2nd Ward, which includes the East Side Canyon Crest and areas neighboring UC Riverside. The street provides access from University Avenue to the Riverside Marketplace Development adjacent to downtown Riverside.

[00:25:16] On August 11th, 2012, on her 100th birthday, the [San Bernardino] City Council voted to name an as of yet unnamed street in honor of one of their oldest and most loved citizens, Emma Shaw. In 1944, Emma and her husband George, moved to San Bernardino with their children. They joined New Hope, and over time she came to be known as Mother Shaw to more than just her 11 children. She has a reputation for always opening her doors to the less fortunate.

[00:25:51] Talmadge Hughes was a well-known West Side real estate broker whose vision made this structure, formerly known as the Hughes Building possible in conjunction with Councilwoman Valerie Pope Ludlum. It was constructed and utilized for various community projects over the years. In 2004, it was remodeled and dedicated to Temple Missionary Baptist Church programs. Since that time, it has been renamed the Woodward Leadership Academy. Also in 2004, the New Hope Family Life Public Enterprise Center was established. Formerly, the Public Enterprise Center. It was sold to New Hope by the City of San Bernardino, which has an extended history of hosting community based services. The center was built in 1977 by Francis Grice, who ran a successful job training program out of the building for many years.

[00:26:51] Jesse Turner was a community activist in North Fontana before it was incorporated into the city along with Dorothy Grant. Turner advocated for area planning and was a huge influence in putting North Fontana on the map. Helping the less fortunate was her passion, as well as making sure her community was thriving. She was also the first black development specialist at the Employment Development Department. The original community center, named in Jesse Turner's honor, was torn down for commercial needs. But in 2006, the groundbreaking ceremony for this new and improved center was performed.

[00:27:32] Two years later, in 2008, the Rosa Parks Memorial building, a 13 storey high rise located in downtown San Bernardino, was renamed in the civil rights leaders Honor built in the 1990s. It serves as government headquarters for San Bernardino County and California's Inland Empire Region. The building is the second tallest in the city of San Bernardino and fourth tallest in the Inland Empire. In downtown Riverside, a seven foot tall bronze statue pays tribute to the peaceful, visionary Dr. King, wearing ministerial robes at the base of the sculpture are the simple words I have a dream. The statue is a landmark on the historic riverside walking tour and was dedicated in 1999. In San Bernardino, an 11 foot tall, one ton bronze replica of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stands at the entrance to City Hall. It is the largest life-size statue in the United States. A separate plaque with text titled The Dreamer is installed nearby. The long running efforts of community members, including Reverend Gertrude Wetzel, the Prince Hall Lodge #17 and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Statue Committee, an Ad Hoc Citizen's Group, made the memorial possible. The statue was originally unveiled at a dedication ceremony on November eight, 1981. This community is rich with stories of those who have paved the way against adversity for the success of future generations. With this video and archive, we honor the accomplishments of local heroes and hope to inspire the youth of today to reach such levels of respect and

reverence. We encourage others to share with our archiving project photos and newspaper clippings of African-American families and community members who have made significant contributions to the Inland Empire.