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Amos Isaac

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Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Primary Interviewee:

Amos Isaac

Additional Interviewees:

Lorraine Isaac (Wife)

Estella Isaac-Wells (Daughter)

Nathaniel Wells

Interviewer:

Ratibu Jaccocks

Interview Date:

August 13, 2014

Interview Location:

Redlands, CA

Interview Summary completed by:

Makaley Montano, 2021

Description:

Dr. Amos Isaac was born in Arcadia, Louisiana where he and his family of 10 lived. Eventually his family moved to San Bernardino, California, where Amos attended schools throughout his K-12 education. Following high school, he attended San Bernardino Valley College. He then went on to get his masters from the University of Redlands. While attending the Redlands, Amos did not have access to transportation so he walked from San Bernardino to Redlands. His dedication towards attaining his degree was very telling as Amos dedicated his life to bettering education for the Black community. Post Masters' degree, Amos attended Claremont graduate school where he earned the title, Dr. Amos Isaac. This interview focuses on Amos' passion for education and activism. Not only did he make a difference in the classroom by being the second Black teacher to teach in the Redlands Unified School District, but he also served as a Peace Corps director and NAACP President of his local chapter in Mississippi. Furthermore, Isaac unsuccessfully ran several times for the Redlands Unified School

Board. He believed the presence of a Black board member would bring forth new ideas and more representation.

Subject Topic:

- School Board
- Black educators
- NAACP
- Peace Corps
- Black Churches
- Segregation
- Black Businesses
- Housing
- New Hope Church
- Africa
- Black Voice Foundation
- Dr. Ingram Tougaloo
- University, Redlands
- San Bernardino (Calif.)
- West Side Action Group
- Activism
- Sante Fe Railroad
- Segregation

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
New Hope Baptist Church	1575 West 17th St., San Bernardino, CA 92411
Grandfather's church in San Bernardino	Off of Second Street, near Mill Street

Temporal Coverage:

- 1950s-1980s

Key Events:

- Running as a school board member
- Teaching
- Service work in Africa and various countries

Key Organizations:

- WAG

- Black Voice News
- Peace Corps
- New Hope Church
- Valley Truck Farms
- Redlands Unified School District
- Redlands Department of Social Services
- Black Voice Foundation

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	[00:07:15]	Segregation issues in San Bernardino
Digital Video	[00:11:47]	Lists involvement in several organizations
Digital Video	[00:18:08]	Low Black population in Redlands, Amos among first Black teachers in RUSD
Digital Video	[00:20:40]	Amos' educational journey and the struggles he and his grandchildren have faced in education
Digital Video	[00:23:48]	Amos runs for school board, importance of a Black person as a board member
Digital Video	[00:40:20]	Importance of knowing roots in Africa
Digital Video	[00:42:35]	Family Collection of historical artifacts
Digital Video	[00:47:20]	Importance of serving the community, black churches, black leaders,
Digital Video	00:48:20]	First Black principal in San Bernardino

Digital Video	[00:56:35]	Reflecting on past roots
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Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Ratibu Jacocks [00:00:00] Here and you think we can hear how you want to say hello or something and make sure we got it.

Amos Isaac [00:00:10] Hello, how are you?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:00:13] Then we can hear that, OK? That's OK, just talk about, OK, you ready? Today is August 13, 2014. My name is Ratibu Jacocks and I am interviewing Dr. Amos Isaac. Amos, A.M.O.S. Isaac, I.S.A.A.C.

Amos Isaac [00:00:50] Correct.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:00:51] And we are interviewing him at his home in Redlands. We want to thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today. And the project is called Bridges that Carried us Over. Dr. Isaac, if you were talking to people 150 years from now, what would you tell young people?

Amos Isaac [00:01:17] About today?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:18] Anything. Just what you would say.

Amos Isaac [00:01:23] It's important to know your heritage, to know your purpose and to be committed to being a positive force in that arena.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:40] OK, and where you born?

Amos Isaac [00:01:45] Arcadia.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:46] Arcadia, California?

Amos Isaac [00:01:47] Louisiana.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:01:48] Oh, ok. OK, so. So did you go to school there?

Amos Isaac [00:01:58] Probably started in Briley, Texas and eventually moved to California.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:02:06] And why did you come to California?

Amos Isaac [00:02:15] With my parents I guess.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:02:16] Oh OK. And did you have sisters and brothers.

Amos Isaac [00:02:25] Three brothers, four sisters.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:02:28] OK, so did you go to school here in California? And if so, what city?

Amos Isaac [00:02:35] I believe Redlands. Redlands and San Bernardino, was it? Redlands and San Bernardino.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:02:48] So how was Redlands when you moved here? What year was that? Can you recall?

Amos Isaac [00:02:52] No.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:02:53] Okay. About what year? Around what period?

Amos Isaac [00:02:57] I would imagine the 50s, is that right?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:03:00] Around the 50s. Dr. Isaac is here also with his wife and daughter. So in the 50s, was there many blacks in this area when you came?

Amos Isaac [00:03:14] No. Small number.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:03:15] A small number of blacks. What kind of work were they doing here at Redlands?

Amos Isaac [00:03:24] I taught, I guess there that was one black principal, but she was in San Bernardino, but I guess lived here. But we generally covered the gamut teaching and various professional and un-professional areas.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:03:55] Was there a lot of fruit in Redlands at that time like there was in Rialto and other places? Citrus, I am talking about.

Amos Isaac [00:04:04] Um my daughter is saying yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:07] Yes, oh, OK, OK. And so did you go to school in Redlands?

Amos Isaac [00:04:15] Did I go to school in Redlands?

Lorraine Isaac [00:04:18] No darling, you taught here.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:04:21] You went to San Bernardino.

Amos Isaac [00:04:21] In San Bernardino

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:22] In San Bernardino.

Amos Isaac [00:04:23] that's my story.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:25] Yeah. What school did you go to in San Bernardino?

Lorraine Isaac [00:04:29] I'm not sure of the high school, but he went to Valley College.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:32] Went to Valley College in San Bernardino. OK, and so your profession is education,.

Amos Isaac [00:04:41] Right.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:42] And what were your parents profession?

Amos Isaac [00:04:45] Oh, my father worked at the Santa Fe Railroads.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:49] In San Bernardino.

Amos Isaac [00:04:52] In San Bernardino.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:55] And mom?

Amos Isaac [00:04:55] I think she basically was a homebody.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:04:56] And how many children was at the house growing up with you?

Amos Isaac [00:05:01] four boys and four girls

Ratibu Jacocks [00:05:03] Oh, eight. So you had a large family that's called a large family. And and were they all focused on education or was all the areas that your sisters and brothers focused on?

Amos Isaac [00:05:20] I tended to be the lead one in going farther in their education, the others spread the gamut.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:05:32] OK, and now where did you say you were born and what town was that in Arkansas?

Amos Isaac [00:05:39] Arcadia, Louisiana.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:05:42] Arcadia, Louisiana. And do you remember anything about that area growing up?

Amos Isaac [00:05:49] Early Elementary was San Bernardino.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:05:54] Oh, OK. And so San Bernardino now, did you move around in this Inland Empire? Redlands, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ontario,

Amos Isaac [00:06:06] I think basically San Bernardino was the early stage and Redlands, basically Redlands,

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:18] OK. Were you in the military?

Amos Isaac [00:06:21] Army, two years.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:23] You was army for two years and where were you stationed?

Amos Isaac [00:06:26] Mannheim, Germany.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:29] Oh, so you were drafted. Or did you volunteer?

Amos Isaac [00:06:33] I don't remember.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:35] OK, do you remember what year that may have been?

Amos Isaac [00:06:41] She's a knowledged person. So I would assume the 50s but I don't.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:06:49] So was any conflicts going on? Was Korea a conflict at that time? It never was considered a war.

Amos Isaac [00:07:02] I don't remember.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:07:03] OK. And do you remember? What do you remember about civil rights?

Amos Isaac [00:07:15] It was an issue of slow change from segregated housing and so on to being able to select where you want to select

Lorraine Isaac [00:07:33] How about your time in Tougaloo College in Mississippi?

Amos Isaac [00:07:37] Say that again

Lorraine Isaac [00:07:40] Tougaloo College in Mississippi.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:07:41] You went to college in Mississippi

Lorraine Isaac [00:07:43] He taught college in Mississippi.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:07:44] Oh, he taught college in Mississippi. Oh, okay. And do you remember what year that was in Mississippi?

Amos Isaac [00:07:53] Good friend...What year was that?

Lorraine Isaac [00:08:00] Tougaloo was early 70s.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:08:02] What was it? The early seventies,

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:08:05] yes. So that would have been like '71 to '73

Ratibu Jacocks [00:08:10] Around seventy one. OK, and what was that experience like every week? If you can recall.

Amos Isaac [00:08:20] Oh, I went to Tougaloo college. That was a private college, historically private. There was still a period of somewhat segregation

Ratibu Jacocks [00:08:37] in the 70s?

Amos Isaac [00:08:38] Yes. That's all I remember.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:08:47] OK, that's good. Doing great. You're doing really good.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:08:50] He was very active in voter registration at that time in the South. NAACP and voter registration going to the courthouse just to assist.

Lorraine Isaac [00:09:00] He was president of the local NAACP and helped with

Ratibu Jacocks [00:09:04] He was the president. OK, but the president of the local NAACP, and voter registration.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:09:11] Yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:09:11] And what town was that?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:09:13] That was in Tougaloo or Jackson. Very close in proximity.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:09:18] So Dr. Isaac would you consider yourself an activist at that time?

Amos Isaac [00:09:24] Somewhat.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:09:28] Are you being modest? You can open up and tell us. We want to know these days, you know, what do you call.. What do you feel when you were doing it?

Amos Isaac [00:09:40] Active in NAACP

Ratibu Jacocks [00:09:42] OK, and you still a member of the NAACP, if I understand correctly. And the was that the major civil rights organizations when you were in Mississippi, or were they are the ones?

Amos Isaac [00:09:56] NAACP was the main.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:09:58] That was a national organization.

Amos Isaac [00:10:01] Yes, of course there were local branches

Ratibu Jacocks [00:10:06] and you deal with that. So what are the towns have you worked in? Lived in?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:10:13] Birmingham, Alabama. Dakar, Senegal. He was a Peace Core director in Dakar, Senegal, for five years, also in Cameroon.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:10:30] Do you think she's being heard? Can you think the tape is picking her up OK. Alright.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:10:37] In the Cameroons he lived there. Also let's see, Washington, D.C.. the Washington, D.C. and Uganda. And Liberia to the King mission in Liberia certainly spent some time in Monrovia and has visited numerous African countries.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:11:08] That's not time to give up. Time to keep going, it's getting interesting. So uh you spend time in Africa, what made you want to do something like that?

Amos Isaac [00:11:29] Service and Peace Corps.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:11:29] Service and Peace Corps. So you're in the Peace Corps during that time? And I'm still trying to figure out what made you want to serve in the Peace Corps.

Amos Isaac [00:11:47] I was historically active in service and equality for everyone, and so I was active in NAACP and. Also interesting in Peace Corps, because there was the major international service organization.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:12:21] And what were your highest ranking again, do you introduce yourself for the tape? Tell us your name and how you spell it.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:12:29] My name is Estella Isaac Wells, ESTELLA, Isaac ISAAC. And Wells is my last name. I'm Dr. Isaac's daughter.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:12:40] Alright and what rank did he have in the Peace Corps?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:12:45] He was he started out as a Peace Corps volunteer in the early in the late 60s and then in the 80s from 1985 through, I'm sorry, 80 to 85. He was a Peace Corps director

Ratibu Jacocks [00:13:01] And what area did that cover?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:13:03] That was Dakar, Senegal. So for the entire country. And he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Liberia for two years

Ratibu Jacocks [00:13:11] So now just tell me a little about that experience. You know, a lot of us African-Americans have not even visited Africa. Number one, we don't know the language of his mother, but we don't know of. Well, what do you remember about Mother Africa that impressed you?

Amos Isaac [00:13:32] Liberia, the national language was English and of course, the area languages, local languages, depended on where you were. And that would be generally the primary language for the local areas.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:13:50] So do you speak any other languages while you were there? Was it all English for you?

Amos Isaac [00:13:55] Yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:13:56] And the people you worked with spoke English, by and large too.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:14:02] In Liberia. But when he was Peace Corps director, he learned French. Oh, he had to be bilingual and speak French and conduct business both in English and in French.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:14:11] So you do you did speak French. OK, so that's another language. French and English. And you were able to conduct business in those language. Who was over you? Who was the president at that time.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:14:27] Senghor.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:14:29] No, in America.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:14:30] Oh, was it Car-? Regan came into office and intially was it. It was right during Reagan's administration.

Lorraine Isaac [00:14:43] We went in under Jimmy Carter.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:14:46] Yeah under Jimmy Carter,

Lorraine Isaac [00:14:48] But he was only in office for a short time when we went into Peace Corps.

Amos Isaac [00:14:54] Repeat what she said.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:14:56] Jimmy Carter was only in office for a very short time during their initial move to Senegal. And then Reagan, President Reagan, was the last president.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:15:06] OK, so where were you born?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:15:08] I was born here in Loma Linda. Right at Loma Linda University.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:15:16] Oh you were born here. But did you travel with your father and all the other areas?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:15:22] Yes, yes. From Mississippi to Dakar, Senegal to Georgia. And then in 2000, in 2000, I moved back to the Inland Empire.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:15:30] And you moved back to the Inland Empire. OK, and what you said that a local NAACP. But I met you at WAG, the West Side Action Group. When did you join the West Side Action Group? Do you recall?

Amos Isaac [00:15:47] No, I would have to depend on you for it. For that.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:15:51] Well, I don't remember when you came, it seemed like you were always there.

Amos Isaac [00:16:00] Well when you get into your 80s....

Ratibu Jacocks [00:16:01] Well, that's a good question. So you are 80 what? What was your age?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:16:07] 80 exactly.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:16:08] He is exactly 80. OK. And so that's the greatest generation. So what I'm finding out from my interview is it was great. And would you agree with

that? Same as though you had less to work with, but you got more done. Is that true, though? Or is that my romanticized in that period?

Amos Isaac [00:16:41] We got a great deal done. But the NAACP and the black churches were involved and committed and willing to put forth a substantive effort

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:00] So did the communities support the NAACP financially?

Amos Isaac [00:17:09] They gave some financial support. The black community substantially has been not overly endowed with financial resources.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:26] OK, but with what they had, they gave.

Amos Isaac [00:17:33] They gave substantially

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:35] from what they had. And at the time, how about their time and talents?

Amos Isaac [00:17:44] They gave their time and their talent.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:17:47] But so was the schools. Since you were in education, was the school an issue with integration. During that time, do you recall? So you went to school where? Which?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:18:01] I started out in elementary school here but didn't come back until I graduated from college, but from what I can remember in there in the 60s or yeah, I guess it was the 60s, very, very few blacks were in definitely. And in the Redlands area, probably they would have been more so in the San Bernardino Realto area. But my father was one of the probably one of the first elementary school black teachers or one of the very few at that time.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:18:38] And what did you teach? Well, what subject?

Amos Isaac [00:18:42] Elementary school.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:18:45] Elementary school. So you had little children that you were teaching?

Amos Isaac [00:18:47] Yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:18:48] Oh, OK. And that's really interesting in itself because I don't see him with the little kids. But I didn't know him then so that's good to know.

Amos Isaac [00:19:09] I taught at Tougaloo College. So I did kind of the range in teaching.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:19:13] So you taught college, college too. So that was older people. And you told the young people How about high school did you ever teach high school?

Amos Isaac [00:19:21] Don't recall high school.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:19:25] Not high school.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:19:26] oh yeah, started out with the elementary school. And then I guess he said, now it's time to graduate. So he taught at the college, at the collegiate level.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:19:34] Oh, OK. Now, look Dr. Isaac what is the most trying period you ever had, there's a saying that says "out of the trying experiences, leaders are chosen" so what was one of your most important trying experience? Can you recall?

Amos Isaac [00:20:03] I'd have to rely on my wife and daughter for that.

Lorraine Isaac [00:20:07] I'm sorry, I wasn't.

Amos Isaac [00:20:08] what were the most trying experiences or experience

Ratibu Jacocks [00:20:13] Yeah that he went through the most difficult ones too, you know, out of adversity, you know, always bring out solutions and betterment.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:20:25] Well, from what I can see, would probably have been his quest for education. Living in San Bernardino, he went to undergraduate school at Valley College and then transitioned from Valley to University of Redlands. At that time, I'm not sure of the public transportation system was like. But he did walk from San Bernardino to University of Redlands to get his education. After he got his bachelor's degree, he went on to Claremont Graduate School and got his doctorate from Claremont and continue to feel that education was critical. And so hence, hence he became a teacher and eventually he ran for the Redlands Unified School District consistently has fought to be a leader and to bring up the community, and particularly

the African-American community, being active not only in the school district, but also within the church, working within the church to promote education. So that has been his his mantra, and it certainly could not have been easy at that time. It's difficult now, even with my son, who's both my my children, all three of my children went to school within the Redlands Unified School District, and it has been a challenge. So it had to have been even that much more challenging at that time than that.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:21:47] So where did you meet your wife? Let's get on a different subject right now.

Amos Isaac [00:21:54] Good friend Nana [asking wife to help answer]

Lorraine Isaac [00:21:56] We met in in Africa.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:21:58] You met in Africa? Which part? Which country?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:22:02] In Togo.

Lorraine Isaac [00:22:03] I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.

Lorraine Isaac [00:22:07] Oh yeah in Togo. He was doing, he was on a project that the Phelps Stokes fund was sponsoring to bring professors from small black colleges and Indian colleges to Africa to upgrade their their curriculum. And so he was one of the professors and I was one of the leaders of that program. And we met and we had so much in common as far as how we felt about about West Africa in particular and how we felt about the role of African-Americans in the United States. And so we we've been on that. We've been on that journey for the last forty one years. Yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:22:57] That's what I was going to ask you, how long has that relationship last? 41 years. Again, can you repeat what she said, just to make sure we get it on the camera.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:23:05] OK, they met in Togo. My mother was one of the organizers of the Phelps Stokes Funds Educational Program. The focus was to bring professors from historically black colleges and Indian colleges and to help them advance their curriculum and expose them to the African culture, particularly in Togo. And so that's where they met, they married, and both of them still have education as a primary goal and being integral in that aspect and their love of Africa. So for them to be here, meet in Africa and then come back here is really an awesome thing.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:23:42] Right, I couldn't believe it. So,

Lorraine Isaac [00:23:45] You know one of the things that I think Amos has struggled with. He has run for the Redlands School Board for, what, three or four times. Right. Because he felt that there needed to be a black voice in education, and particularly here in Redlands, where children were growing up. But it was just very hard at that time to find support. And so, you know, he worked and worked and worked and still was not discouraged and. I think that has been one of his greatest challenges.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:24:26] OK, so so has there ever been an African-American on the Redlands school board?

Lorraine Isaac [00:24:34] I don't think so. No, no.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:24:36] Still is not know an elected board member on the Redlands school board.

Amos Isaac [00:24:44] Correct.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:24:45] As of today, the 13th of August 2014.

Amos Isaac [00:24:50] Correct.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:24:51] OK. So talk to me a minute about how you think it can happen, but how do you think a person can win? What needs to take place?

Amos Isaac [00:25:06] I think it would be a difficult challenge, but. The small number of blacks in Redlands have been fairly active and there's always a possibility of building increasing outreach and one day possibly, but we're small, the numbers.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:25:34] You're small in numbers. Do you know how many what percentage of African-Americans and Latinos now what it was? Because it has grown. It has grown since he moved there.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:25:48] I'm not sure of the demographic composition at this point.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:25:52] Well we'll find that out, we can find that out. So it's small amount. But how about the population of the African-American students? We have more children.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:26:05] Yeah. There they're definitely more children.

Lorraine Isaac [00:26:11] But you know it's often that our children and grandchildren say that they may be the only African-American in their class still today. Still today. Maybe one or two others. But we are still in the minority and still having to speak up.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:26:30] Can you repeat that?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:26:30] Still to this day that the grandchildren still indicate that they are probably the only one or one of two African-American children within the classroom. So even though the numbers have grown, it's there's still a disparity, a large disparity.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:26:47] And Dr. Isaac you feel that an African American on the board would help, how? What would be the advantage?

Amos Isaac [00:27:00] Well, there would be a number of barriers that would need to be broken. But over a period of time, the board would become more balanced, integrated and blacks would and the community would see that change and change would continue to occur.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:27:29] So how about businesses in Redlands? Are there are a lot of African-American businesses established here in the city of Redlands?

Amos Isaac [00:27:40] Good friend, Doty or Nana?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:27:43] I would say there are very, very few. The ones that we do see are within the beauty salon, barber shop type of thing. But as far as affluent businesses...

Ratibu Jacocks [00:27:57] How about doctors, dentists?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:27:59] Oh, OK. There are there are several doctors. OK, so that that that is growing. And but as far as private businesses, I know of at least two, two African-American. Oh, three so far. And I'm sure there are more, but I just know of those personal because my family has gone to them. So there is an increasing number of doctors/buisnesses.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:28:21] Okay what I want to do is move and let the wife sit here and introduce herself. I'm going to sit down still, and ask some more questions, but I would like to have you as well on the camera so if you can make sure that she's on it, too, if we will exchange places here, some of this will be spice and dice. So I don't worry about it.

Amos Isaac [00:28:47] Now is where the real action that counts.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:28:57] Ok I'll do get it right from here. So we have a new person on camera. Will you introduce yourself and tell us how to spell your name?

Lorraine Isaac [00:29:06] OK, I'm Lorraine Isaac, LORRAINE. Isaac, ISAAC.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:29:15] and you are the wife

Lorraine Isaac [00:29:18] I'm Amos' wife. And we've been married for 41 years and we have three children, grandchildren.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:29:27] And so where were you born?

Lorraine Isaac [00:29:30] I was born in Michigan. I moved on. Yes, I'm from Detroit, OK. And went to school there, went to college there, became a teacher there. And after a while I felt, you know, I I'm I'm interested in our culture. I need to find out something about what's going on in West Africa, where we're from. So I got a I had two different experiences. One was as an exchange teacher. And then the next time it was I taught in in France for the American School of Paris. And after a while and lots and lots of West Africans there and I said, well, why are you teaching in France? Why not come in and teach with us? And that's how I got to to Africa. And I taught for the government of Togo for three years. And they said when they hired me, well, we can't give you a big salary. We'll pay you on the local scale. And what you'll have to do is we'll give you a house to share with another teacher. And so I was provided with housing and with a stipend that just paid a small amount. And that was where I met Amos. It was while I was in Togo and and he was on this exchange program was an exchange program. It was a an educational program, as he said, sponsored by this helps to stocks. And and so we've gone from there. And Amos always been a community activist . When we married, which is after a few months, I went back to Mississippi with him to to go and even there he was always he was always sharing and supporting. And there were sometimes children who were being displaced. Maybe displaced is not the right word. But in any case, they were having problems with the school system. And Amos was always going

to their defense and showing another view of why a particular incident had happened so well,

Ratibu Jacocks [00:32:05] Was that in Africa or here?

Lorraine Isaac [00:32:07] No, that's in Mississippi.

Lorraine Isaac [00:32:10] So we've gotten you. Yeah, we're moving on.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:32:12] You're moving. Oh, yeah. Oh, I'll keep up.

Lorraine Isaac [00:32:16] So he was an activist there. And then we we moved to Washington, D.C. and then from there to Alabama. And while we were in Alabama, we got the position as Peace Corps directors to Senegal. And part of that was because there were not very many people who spoke French. And so that was a strong point for us.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:32:49] So how did you get to come you to meet him here? OK. I thought you met Dr. Isaac in Redlands but that's not the case. You came through him back here and but you grew up the Detroit and Michigan area. Oh, OK. So do you think you and your family made sacrifices for what you love?

Lorraine Isaac [00:33:20] When you say my family, that means Amos and and.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:33:22] The children.

Lorraine Isaac [00:33:25] Well, yes, absolutely, because we were always sharing what we had and when we got positions, it wasn't necessarily a position that then made very much money. OK, so Amos was always concerned with causes and where he could make the most impact. And when we married, he said to me, well, you know, I was committed that I would teach in elementary school for I think he said seven years. And then he said and then I would go to secondary school and then I would go to college to teach. These are all teaching levels. And he says, you know, we're not ever have much money. And this is but we'll make an impact. It will make a difference.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:34:19] And so I want to ask the daughter one question on this. Did you feel on the scale 1 being the poorest, 10 the richest, where do you feel you were growing up?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:34:35] I think Middle Class.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:34:36] 5 or so?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:34:37] Yeah,.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:34:38] OK. All right. Well, that's good. Now, what kind of life did you have in Michigan? I want to get a frame of reference of who you are.

Lorraine Isaac [00:34:58] Oh I guess in Michigan, I was always about the business getting getting an education. My parents were not able to support us going to to college. And I was one of the reasons why we didn't want our children to have to struggle the way Amos and I had to in order to get an education. And so I know I was working during the day and going to school at night. And this went on for real for quite some time during the, when I was at university. And then assisting family members, you know, we were always told, now you've got you've got to give back. And I guess that's what Amos and I have been about you have to give back and give back to the black community and you have to know from where you came. And so. We saw West Africa,

Ratibu Jacocks [00:35:58] So you you really had a lot in common when you didn't know each other, you were doing some of the same things, but you don't know each other then and then you met. And tell me, when did you and how do you find out that you and Dr. Isaac had a lot in common, not just love, but common commonality?

Lorraine Isaac [00:36:24] Well. When we decide on how we wanted to spend our money, what would our role be in church activities? Are we going to tithe or not? What other kinds of organizations are we going to support support with ourselves, but also support monetarily? Where do we want to live and where do we want our children to grow up? And.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:37:08] That would be the commonality between the two.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:37:10] Yes, she's speaking about it.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:37:13] What she did not mention is that she also is a teacher, worked for Colton Unified School District, retired from there. So they have both had that educational theme throughout. And my father retired from DPSS, Redlands DPSS, Department of Social Services. So transitioning from education to public service.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:37:36] But you mentioned church. Dr. Isaac, I know you're a member of New Hope, where you are a member of New Hope before you met your wife or after?

Amos Isaac [00:37:50] I think before, wasn't it?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:37:51] He grew up there, they grew up.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:37:52] You grew up in New Hope, so. You bet. Now, do you remember when you were baptized at New Hope? Do you know the year?

Lorraine Isaac [00:38:01] I think he was baptized in his grandfather's church because his grandfather was a minister in San Bernardino. As we go past that that area he said that that's that's the street where my grandfather's church is

Ratibu Jacocks [00:38:17] What was the grandfather's name?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:38:20] What was the grandfather's name? Or the church's name?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:38:27] I know it was second, second street.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:38:32] That he was a member of Second Street for a while. Second Street Baptist Church,

Ratibu Jacocks [00:38:36] Is that the Greater Bethel now?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:38:39] No, it's a little bitty church right here in Redlands.

Lorraine Isaac [00:38:45] Oh, no that wasn't where his grandfather was. His grandfather his grandfather was a minister in San Bernardino. And when you said, well, it's near a second street off of Second Street as we go down there, when we come back from the WAG meeting, sometimes we do go in that and that's the direction. Oh. You know. Is it off of Waterman?

Amos Isaac [00:39:13] No, it seems to me it was off of Mill street where the first black principal in San Bernardino.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:39:24] Dr. Ingram I mean, Ingram. It was a Methodist church then. Because I think they were they were one of the some of the founders of St. Paul near

there. They've been in St. Paul method. AME a long time. So was that an AME church before Baptists. Or do you recall?

Amos Isaac [00:39:51] I don't recall.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:39:52] You don't recall. OK,.

Lorraine Isaac [00:39:53] But you know, we can go down that street and find out the name of the church. We just always say, yeah, we said that's what I was sure it was OK. OK. And so it's it's part of his history and part of his memory. Yeah. And what we want our children, we always said we want our children to have their feet in both worlds,

Lorraine Isaac [00:40:16] Both worlds. In in in Africa. Know your history, know where your roots have some pride in where you come from. So you have to know about where your ancestors came from. Goree Island, you know, where the people who were going to become slaves were housed. And then here in the United States, you know, we want our children to be proud of who they are and, you know, and our grandson just came in and, you know, we want him. To know where he's from and to know about the history.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:41:01] You sound like you said some point, to know your history and to have your feet in both worlds, but why would that be important?

Lorraine Isaac [00:41:13] Well, when they show documentaries of Africa or they talk about Africa, they don't necessarily show the true Africa. What visions do you have about where this came from? And so we know we wanted our children to go there and see and have a look. And then we want them to be comfortable being blacks here in the United States. You know, you got to look, you got to know who you are. And so, you know, Amos and I wer that was part of our mission for our children and our grandchildren and my daughter continues it, you know.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:42:00] I understand that Dr. Isaac that you loaned or gave the Black Voice Foundation some artifacts from Africa

Amos Isaac [00:42:12] Yes we had quite a bit and she is our resource person organizer and so she could tell about what we gave to Black Voice and and so

Ratibu Jacocks [00:42:27] and you were shaking your head. so everybody seems to know about this

Lorraine Isaac [00:42:32] We had Amos, when we moved here, Amos had a room built in our garage with shelves. And this is where we had made a vast collection of art of African artifacts, not just art, but also everyday tools, everyday items that the Africans used. And so we wanted our paintings or pictures are tools. We wanted to keep them in good condition. And so, you know, this picture right here came from Gabon, the one over there of the drummers Amos got that in Tanzania and then the one over

Amos Isaac [00:43:27] there too the two ladies.

Lorraine Isaac [00:43:29] Oh, yes.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:43:29] And I want to take some of those pictures before we leave so we can put them in. That's OK.

Lorraine Isaac [00:43:36] Well, most of the things that we had, we came we gave to the Black Voice Foundation because we wanted to have those seen they were not doing anything in the in the storage room that we called our Africa room. You know that. And they needed to be they needed to be shown. And we thought, well, black voice would put it to good use. They would display it and then they would go. They had been touring. So it's going to some some colleges. And there's a young man, Arthur Smith, who was doing a lot of work with with telling what each piece represents. And so we we had done some some cataloging and then he just continued what we had done. So we had fabrics. We had. Art pieces. Drums, help me remember the

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:44:47] instruments, jewelry

Ratibu Jacocks [00:44:51] and all of those you gave to the Black Voice News. So what did you keep?

Lorraine Isaac [00:44:59] Very little. You know, I have a few statues and paintings and one of our favorite ones we kept this in the other room over there is like take a picture with cloth. And so, anyway, it must have a huge collection that he had gotten from various parts of Africa, from East Africa. You know, we've got things from Tanzania, from Kenya, from Uganda. He was in Uganda before Idi Amin. Right. And then in West Africa, I hid some things from West Africa and he, he and others. And so we I don't know how many pieces we gave to them, but they have mounted many of those pieces and. And they're showing them and they're still in the process.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:46:02] That's why I saw it to them. Oh, yeah, I didn't see it. Do you? I saw it through them and they said who donated it to them? And I still remember that. And I thought that was a good fight.

Lorraine Isaac [00:46:17] Yeah. You know, people said to me, you mean you didn't sell it. No, no. You're giving it back to the black community and for others to want to see it. But it's primarily so that there would be something tangible that would get them to go into depth. Why? Why why was this used? What does this painting mean? What are those butterfly wings come from? And so.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:46:50] So the quote by Franz Fanon said, each generation must discover his mission and life. What was your mission or did you already describe it? What was your mission as a couple and family? You describe it. Re-describe it for me would you?

Amos Isaac [00:47:20] Probably serving the community, especially the black community, and opening doors, and eyes so that we see our presence and our contributions both in the US and in Africa.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:47:43] So let me ask you this, do you think that you have been recognized for your mission? In a broader sense.

Amos Isaac [00:48:02] I think we have been that's a substantive minority that I saw, but in numbers, in reference to our numbers, we have had some major impacts. So there was a lady, Dorothy Ingram, who was the first principle, I guess, in San Bernardino City Unified School District and who had some major impacts. And so I think we've had some major impacts as well and. Been members of the various. Black organizations such as WAG and the Hope Missionary Baptist Church and Lorraine's Church.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:49:02] Did you have a position at New Hope? Usher boy, the choir, the auxiliaries did you participate in, any of those at New Hope?

Amos Isaac [00:49:17] Just been active members and in the various organizations. Lorraine, though, they may be able to talk about what my

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:49:28] He was very active in the Layman's ministry and at one point was president of the laymen in, probably after 2008. So I don't remember the exact year, but probably, probably at least a year was president of the Layman ministry. And I was still a very active member attending various functions and services.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:49:55] And so so when going to the church what spiritual benefit did you receive from your participation at New Hope Baptist Church, spiritual, and that encourage you to continue to do your work?

Amos Isaac [00:50:15] Well, the church in general is a challenge. Has the vision and outreach and challenges each of us and the minister and the deacons, the lay people or about the business so. Helping the church, serve, and to have a vision.

Lorraine Isaac [00:50:51] You know, even in the difficulties, some in our family, the church has always been supportive, you know, and when one of Amos's brothers died, you know, they were just supportive in many different ways. And because of their outreach, there have been other family members who have come to the church who joined the church. So the New Hope has been supportive.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:51:22] So how long have you been a member of.

Lorraine Isaac [00:51:26] I'm not a member?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:51:27] You're not a member.

Lorraine Isaac [00:51:27] No.

Amos Isaac [00:51:28] Amos and I have come up with a way of going to both churches. So we go to New Hope at least twice a month and we go to my church, which is Messiah Lutheran Church

Ratibu Jacocks [00:51:44] Messiah Lutheran Church in San Bernardino?

Lorraine Isaac [00:51:48] No, it's in Highland.

Lorraine Isaac [00:51:52] And so we make sure that we're at New Hope on the first Sunday when they give communion.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:51:58] OK.

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:51:59] And then we make sure that we're at Messiah on the third Sunday Communion. And so it's you know, we've tried to be supportive of one another. And yet getting, the good things from his church and also from mine. So, you know, I'm just anxious to go to Men's Day. I heard some of the men's singing just recently, and I said, oh Amos, we have to make sure we are at new hope that Sunday.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:52:28] So do you know anything else about other churches like Temple Church that we're a member of Temple Baptist all over the church. He mentioned St. Paul, Saint Mark in the Valley. Do you remember those churches in the early days

Amos Isaac [00:52:50] The one in the valley? I remember from our early days, we lived in the valley farm area and so that church was very important and my grandfather was the minister there for a period of time.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:53:17] So so you say you live in the Valley Farm area for a while? Yes. And where did you farm? Because there was a lot of farm farming going on that one time over there was that.

Amos Isaac [00:53:35] No, we did our little private vegetable gardens. Vegetable garden.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:53:41] OK. All right. And so the question that I really is still missing, what I want to know how the trying times of segregation and even traveling in Africa, how did that raise you up and strengthen you from those activities?

Amos Isaac [00:54:08] Oh, I would say probably the church was very important and probably the black leadership, but in the community was also found in church and that outreach and that helped us have a sense of what our outreach needed to be. And so from Valley Truck Farm and New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, which has a pretty strong sense. And that making a difference.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:54:43] Well, I know you almost every week attend The West Side Action Group with me. And I do know from time to time when we need someone to speak intelligently about an issue, we always volunteered Dr. Isaac to do that. Whether you see, how would you describe WAG from what you have seen? Because you are a very good observer observer, as you say.

Amos Isaac [00:55:15] Well, WAG has a sense of mission being relevant. Looking at the community and what the needs of the community are and reaching out, reaching inward, looking at ourselves and reaching out to be a resource to the community as well.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:55:49] Is there anything else you would like to tell us for the project that we're doing now? Any directions and encouragement any money? And what will

you said to us? This is a major endeavor. We get information from other groups who are doing likewise. And this is the only organized activity where blacks are actively conscious every day working on this. Well, what will you tell us? What type of encouragement could you give those of us who are working on this project?

Amos Isaac [00:56:35] I would say that there's always the need to reflect out a presence of historical black roots and the contributions that we've made and so. Having a presence in the black church would be one example of a major contribution that I would think is it's very useful. What's the second thing?

Ratibu Jacocks [00:57:17] Well, how about you?

Estella Isaac-Wells [00:57:20] I would say to increasingly market your efforts. We do, of course, have the Black Voice. But social media is something that my generation is very it's at our fingertips. And the more we can reach out and make our our community aware, aware of the needs and the activities that are going on in the research efforts and just even educating our youth, that will be phenomenal so that it is transgenerational effort and that will be awesome. I'm sure that all sorts of resources are available.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:58:00] All right. Thank you. And also another gentleman I interviewed, Jack Hill. Do you know him? I know he's a member of New Hope. Do you know him personally?

Amos Isaac [00:58:14] Over a period of time, I've known him and he's been a significant presence and contributions.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:58:26] And just one last question. I know Redlands from the research that we've done, some of the early Africans who came here settled in Redlands and been here a long time and a lot of people may not know the historical longevity of Africans and readdressed. Is there any type of documentation of some of the early settlers that, you know of, in Redlands

Lorraine Isaac [00:59:01] You I don't remember all the details as well.

Amos Isaac [00:59:07] Isreal Bael.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:59:08] Do we have any papers or any? We have some, but we're still searching for more.

Lorraine Isaac [00:59:17] As I recall, the same as was gathering material Israel Bael when they were going to name a park in his memory. And I think he contacted Israel Beal's nephew and he had a lot he a lot of material.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:59:43] Do you know where it is?

Lorraine Isaac [00:59:44] it is with with his relative.

Ratibu Jacocks [00:59:46] Oh the relative has this? Dr. Isaac didn't have this.

Lorraine Isaac [00:59:51] The relative had a display at one point. There was seems to me there was a display at the city hall when they gave him over and they gave a plaque in memory of Israel Beal. But I know Amos did some some work on trying to gather things together, gather people together. And I just don't know but

Ratibu Jacocks [01:00:19] You think you all might be help us to track down some of that early information.

Lorraine Isaac [01:00:26] He would be able to. Yeah, I'll see what

Ratibu Jacocks [01:00:29] we're going to contact you to follow up on and gathering more of that early. Mr. Beal, B-E-A-L right? Was he an enslaved african when it came or was he a free man when he came?

Amos Isaac [01:00:48] Oh, I'm not sure. I would imagine a free man.

Ratibu Jacocks [01:00:53] Oh, OK.

Amos Isaac [01:00:55] There's a park named after in Redlands

Ratibu Jacocks [01:01:00] So, OK, so we come from here and. All right, so what else do you have to tell me? Want to tell me before we finish our interview

Amos Isaac [01:01:21] that we know an outstanding individual who's a member of WAG and who does programs like this, Ratibu.

Lorraine Isaac [01:01:37] He's talking about you.

Amos Isaac [01:01:44] I know great people.

Ratibu Jacocks [01:01:47] Well, he has always seemed to support me, my wife, our efforts and WAG in general, or whatever we do and I've never heard you say, Wag, you are the wrong track that you may have thought, but I just have to say. And so we really honor you. And we feel proud to have you as a member of. Well, we want to thank you that I think for this interview. And we also want to say that after we review this, we may need a second interview. Oftentimes that happens with the first interview and we don't have all the information that we needed to get. So if that's OK, we'd like to be invited at another time, if we may.

Lorraine Isaac [01:02:45] Well, we thought you were coming in November. OK, well, we've got material together.

Ratibu Jacocks [01:02:54] OK, well, thank you again so much. Social studies. OK, size you like. He likes you. Do you plan to become a scientist one day? Yes. This interview will be saying at least one hundred and some years from now. What will you say to the people? We're going to look at that little boy. He's what he is. What are you 100 years from now?

Nathaniel Wells [01:03:22] What would your job be? I'm probably a scientist or I got a gerontologist. Oh, OK. What did you do this summer? Program where you in?

Nathaniel Wells [01:03:36] I was in Algebra camp.

Estella Isaac-Wells [01:03:39] Cal State's Algebra's camp

Ratibu Jacocks [01:03:41] Oh, that was held at the Boys Club. Yes. Yes. Oh yes. Well, we talked about that. Well, that's good. Good.

Ratibu Jacocks [01:03:49] Did you say your name again? Please spell your name

Amos Isaac [01:03:51] name for us in

Nathaniel Wells [01:03:52] Nathaniel

Ratibu Jacocks [01:03:55] And your last name was spell that

Nathaniel Wells [01:03:59] WELLS. All right. Nathaniel Wells.

Nathaniel Wells [01:04:04] Thank you so much. All right. That's good.

Lorraine Isaac [01:04:08] Why was it done? It was done in memory of a of a of someone in the family who meet someone like you. So, you know, So, you know, and, you know, it's beautifully done. And so often in, you know, in the West African culture, East Africa and also.

[01:04:36] I open up that think shade and that shade over there is helpful.

[01:04:41] That's good. I got it. Thank you.

Lorraine Isaac [01:04:44] They they have a piece of sculpture made a bust madeto to remind them of the family member. Yeah. I was really pleased with that piece and this tapestry here that everything around came from Ivory Coast

[01:05:13] Do you want me to move the flower away and the picture of the family members. It was right.

Lorraine Isaac [01:05:27] One of the things that we did for the for the group that was that Amos was with was to take them up to the village where these are and some of the villages called Courigal, and this made the Corrigal cloth. And it was a cloth that they used there and also significant animals. And it's made with mud. It's a mud cloth. And so we kept that and we kept the bust and then we'd kept some of the mats. My little grandson been in here like this one and this one over here, you know, the mats used for just a variety of different things. And all over Africa, you'll find them decorated differently, woven differently, but which so we just kept a few more things. But, you know, I especially want you to see that those that would in the archives, too. So we have another interview with Mr. Crawford at Sunrise Senior Apartment.

End of Interview:

[01:06:58]