

A faded, historical black and white photograph of a street scene. In the foreground, there is a large pile of debris, including what appears to be a broken chair and other household items. Several people are visible in the background, some standing and some walking. The scene is set outdoors with trees and buildings in the distance. The overall tone is somber and historical.

The Rosewood Massacre- Then & Now

Martha W. Barnett

Introduction

- My involvement began almost 30 years ago.
- Tell the Rosewood story.
- How we decided to litigate the claims in the Legislature
- Describe the Claim Bill process.
- How against all odds we passed “the most controversial claim bill ever considered by the Florida Legislature.”
- Scope of the win.
- Rosewood’s enduring legacy.
- Close with a few personal vignettes.

A Brief History

- First two decades of 20th century marked by racial violence.
- 1915- The Birth of a Nation based on the book, The Clansmen is released, spurring revival of the Ku Klux Klan.
- 1918-1927-“The Lynching Era”- 47 black lives lost.
- November 1920- Election Day in Ocoee, FL – 2 black citizens attempt to vote.
- December 1922- White school teacher in Perry, FL is murdered by escaped black convict.
- New Years Eve 1922- Tensions explode in Rosewood.

A Chronology of Events

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- 01/07/1923- A mob of 100-150 whites return to Rosewood and burn the remaining structures.
- 01/17/1923- A black man in Newberry is convicted of stealing cattle. He is removed from his cell and lynched by whites.
- 02/11/1923- A Grand Jury convenes in Bronston to investigate the Rosewood Riot.
- 02/15/1923- The Grand Jury finds "insufficient evidence" to prosecute.

Rosewood

- Located near Cedar Key and Gainesville, FL, Rosewood was a small, independent African American community with approximately 120 residents.
- Most residents owned their own homes.
- Rosewood was a vibrant community with 3 Churches, a School, a General Store, and a Masonic Lodge.
- Residents made their livings farming and hunting, as well as working in Sumner.
- There was no history of racial tension. Rosewood and Sumner peacefully coexisted.



Rosewood



- *“Well, Rosewood to me was a good time and place for the black people because each person had their own whatever they needed. Whether it was church, whether it was a large school, whatever it was, we had everything we needed right then. We had our own farm, we had our own sugar mill, we had our own grit mill, cane mill, so we didn’t need nothing... everybody would help everybody else. All we needed was God and God was all around us.”*

--Wilson Hall, then 78, describing the Rosewood of his childhood.

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January 1, 1923

- Fannie Taylor, a young, white housewife, alleges she was attacked by a black man while her husband was at work at the sawmill.
- An opposing story circulates around the black community.
- A posse of white vigilantes is formed in Sumner, FL, looking for perpetrator.
- Tensions escalate dramatically.
- African American blacksmith, Sam Carter, is murdered by lynch mob. A Deputy Sheriff is in earshot of the killing.

An Eyewitness to Murder

- *“When I caught up with the group, they had him strung up on a tree there, and trying to make him tell them where he put this fellow out of the wagon. His tiptoes were still on the ground. They were choking him, and somebody let him down. He fell to the ground. This one particular man had a hold of the rope and was holding a double barrel shotgun. He said if the blood hounds didn’t pick up the trail, he would shoot him. Well, the fellow took them to where he thought he put the man out and the blood hound didn’t pick it up, so the fellow was shot...”*

--Ernest Parham, a 19 year old white man was an eyewitness to Sam Carter’s murder.


6a TIMES ■ SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 1999

TAMPA BAY & STATE

Rosewood shooting described

■ A witness tells a legislative hearing of watching a black man shot during mob violence that destroyed the hamlet.

By BILL MOSES
Times Staff Writer



TALLAHASSEE — Ernest Parham closed up the company store on New Year’s Day, 1923, after hearing rumors of a manhunt: A Sumner mob was searching for a black man who had attacked a white woman.

Parham jumped in a car and caught up with Levy County Deputy Clarence Williams, who had stopped a few hundred yards from where a group of white men excoriated Sam Carter, who was black. The men thought Carter had helped the attacker escape.

“I happened to walk right into it and they had Sam strung up,” Parham recalled on Friday, 71 years later. “They were asking him where he put the black man out of his wagon. I understood they had him strung up about three times and then let him down.”

The noose forced Carter up so his toes choked him. “I said, ‘How can he talk when you’re choking him?’”

Parham was 16 years old that day and soon to become an important witness to a week of violence that ended with eight people dead and the black hamlet of Rosewood razed.

Now 89 years old, Parham, who is white, gave critical testimony during a legislative hearing. The Legislature is considering bills to set up a monument marking the Rosewood massacre and to compensate more than 60 Rosewood survivors and descendants with a payment of \$7.1 million.

Parham’s story was important because it supported other witnesses who said that state and county authorities knew what was happening at Rosewood but did nothing.

While Deputy Williams stayed behind, a man with a rope in one hand and a shotgun in the other ordered Carter to lead the white mob to the place where he supposedly let the fugitive out of his wagon.

“The armed man said, ‘If the dogs don’t pick up the trail where you said, I’m going to shoot you.’” Parham recalled. “The dogs did heard was harbored inside. Parham was back in the hotel at Sumner, sitting in front of a fireplace where townspeople gathered after supper. Deputy Williams also was there.

“The fire started cracking and Clarence Williams said, ‘All hell is breaking loose in Rosewood,’” Parham said. “We wondered why he would not have been up there as a law officer to take care of the situation.”

At the Carrier home, two white men stood on the porch and shouted for Sarah Carrier to come out. Going by what he heard later that night, Parham said they shot and killed a dog that charged them.

C. P. “Poly” Wilkerson hiked in the door, but Sylvester Carrier shot him dead. Also killed was Henry Andrews, another white man. White gunmen shot and killed Sarah Carrier and may have killed Sylvester, too. Family members say he escaped, but no one knows for sure.

News of the white men’s deaths attracted angry outsiders. A group from Cheffand and surrounding towns stopped briefly in Sumner the night of Jan. 5, but W. H. Pillsbury, boss of the Cummer Lumber Co. in Sumner, and other armed men ordered them out of town. Parham said. The mob headed to Rosewood.

“Their intention was to burn down the black town,” he said.

Pillsbury ordered his men to protect black residents in Sumner. Most Sumner folks wanted nothing to do with the vigilante violence, Parham said.

The white mob burned down the houses, churches, Masonic lodge and stores at Rosewood. Parham said as far as he knew no home was left standing.

Assistant Attorney General James Peters, the state’s lawyer, submitted video testimony from the son and grandson of Poly Wilkerson, James and Herbert Wilkerson say Poly Wilkerson was lured to the Carrier home and, once there, ambushed.

Herbert Wilkerson said the full story of Rosewood has not been told.

“This stuff should have been done years ago when people were still alive that could testify to actually what happened,” he said. “It’s gotten to the point now where it’s all hearsay from all sides. Nobody knows first-hand.”

The Legislature probably will decide on the claims bill in early April.

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January 2 -3 Armed whites gather in Sumner

- Coroner's Inquest finds Sam Carter killed by Unknown Party.
- Large numbers of armed whites from surrounding areas gather in Sumner.
- KKK members coming from New Year's parade in Gainesville are likely in the mob.
- Rumors swirl that Sylvester Carrier is protecting the fugitive in Rosewood.

the scene.
The loss on the building and
contents was estimated at \$2,000.

POSSES SEEKING NEGRO CONVICT IN FLORIDA RIOT

(By The Associated Press.)

ROSEWOOD, FLA., Jan. 5.—

Armed posses of white men, number-
ing between 200 and 300, tonight were
scouring the countryside for Jesse
Hunter, escaped negro convict, search
for whom last night, in connection
with an attack on a white girl re-
sulted in the killing of two white men
and four negroes and the wounding
of four other white men.

14 Injured, 3 Seriously, In Texas Gas Blast

BRECKENRIDGE, TEX., Jan. 5.—
... injured, three

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Urge Federa

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WHITES GATHER FOR MILES TO SLAY NEGROES

Men Sought Heavily
Barricaded in
Small Hut

NEGRO LYNCHED ON MOTHER'S GRAVE

Latest Developments in Race
Troubles at Rosewood, Fla.

Rosewood, Fla., Jan. 6—A new grave was dug in the Negro cemetery at Sumner, near here late today and in it Sheriff Elias Walker placed the body of James Carrier, whose death at the hands of several white men this morning was the sequel of the clash between the races at Rosewood Thursday night.

Carrier was shot to death while standing on the graves of the four other Negroes who fell in the fighting that followed an attempt of a crowd of white men to enter a Negro house in search of Jesse Hunter, wanted for

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January 4 - Intense Violence

- The mob surrounds the home of Sarah Carrier in Rosewood, demanding that Sylvester come out and turn over the fugitive.
- Sylvester kills 2 of the men in the posse, Poly Wilkerson and Henry Andrews, when they kick down the door to his mother's house.
- The Carrier House is burned. Sarah Carrier and Sylvester are found dead inside and others wounded.



Sarah Carrier, Sylvester Carrier, Willie Carrier

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Revenge- January 5, 1923

- Seeking justice for Fannie Taylor was replaced with a desire for revenge in deaths of 2 white men. Wholesale violence erupts.
- 3 more Rosewood residents are murdered- Lexie Gordon, James Carrier and Mingo Williams. Official Death Toll was now 6 blacks and 2 whites.
- Governor Hardee is notified, and the Sheriff reports he fears “no further disturbance.”
- Children sheltered at the Carrier home escape into the bitter cold swamp.



Governor Hardee (Center)

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Revenge – January 6-7, 1923

- Remaining Rosewood residents are evacuated, never to return.
- Some moved North, others relocated to cities in Florida, and many settled in the small community of Ladoochee.
- A mob of 100- 150 whites return to Rosewood and burn all remaining structures other than the home of John Wright, the white owner of the general store.



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LAST NEGRO HOMES RAZED IN ROSEWOOD

Florida Mob Deliberately Fires
One House After Another
in Block Section.

NEGROES HIDE IN WOODS

Authorities Now Believe Race Riots
Which Caused Seven Deaths
Have Come to an End.

ROSEWOOD, Fla., Jan. 7 (Associated Press).—Twelve houses, all that remained of the negro section of Rosewood following the clash between whites and blacks on Thursday night, in which

yesterday a fire
death in Sumner
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other negro vict
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New York Times Article



Rosewood Cabin Burning



The Ruins of Rosewood



The Last House Remaining- The John Wright House

After the violence

- February 1923, a Grand Jury was convened but found “insufficient evidence” to prosecute.
- No state or local law enforcement officials ever investigated the incident. No one was ever held accountable for deaths, destruction, and loss of property.
- Today, all that remains on the site is an official green Rosewood road sign, a historical marker, and the John Wright house.





Road sign on S.R. 24

1923 - 1982

- For the next 60 years, the survivors and descendants still fearing for their lives kept a “Vow of Silence.”
- Many kept the secret from their children.
- Rosewood fades into history and our collective amnesia.

Bad memories haunt survivor

By Michael Patterson
Staff writer

Minnie Lee Langley was just 9 years old when her grandfather and her aunt were gunned down by a mob of angry whites during a six-day race riot in Rosewood.

That was in 1923. Langley, who currently resides on Jacksonville's Northside, is now a frail, ailing 80-year-old great-grandmother with a head filled with bad memories that she has been trying desperately to forget almost all her life.

"I think about my grandfather and my aunt a lot. I pray to the Lord to help me forget," Langley said. "I really don't want to talk about it anymore. I've been to Tallahassee and all the way to New York City talking about Rosewood."

Her comments came as the state Legislature was giving final approval to a bill authorizing financial compensation of up to \$150,000 each to elderly survivors of the massacre.

"I think about what we lost to get the money, but I'll get over it," she said yesterday.

In addition to the money, Langley will be honored tomorrow with a legislative resolution commending her for her courage in escaping the attack. State Rep. Willye Dennis, D-Jacksonville, will present the resolution at Langley's home.

The violence that destroyed Rosewood in 1923 started New Year's Day after a white woman named Fannie



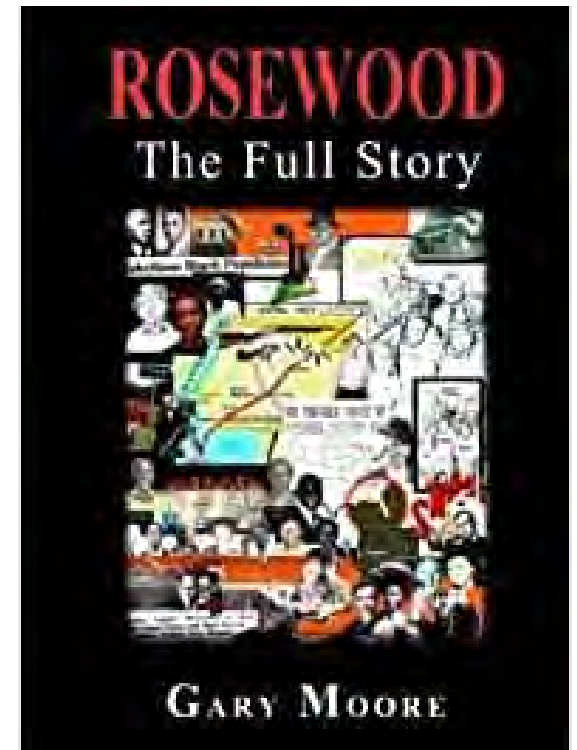
— Bob Self/staff

Rosewood survivor Minnie Lee Langley, 80, sits with two of her great-grandchildren, Matthew Jeffery (left), 3, and Charles Jeffery Jr., 4.

(See COMPENSATION, Page A-5)

1982-1983

- Investigative Journalist, Gary Moore, publishes article in St. Petersburg Times.
- Article prompts a “60 Minutes” report by Ed. Bradley.
- Survivors start to speak out.
- Another decade passes before Holland & Knight becomes involved.



ROSEWOOD

Story by GARY MOORE

"I was in it to start with. Me and a fella named Dorsett . . . I said, 'Ed, I ain't goin' to do it. I don't believe in killin' innocent people . . . They were burnin' houses and killin' innocent people — women and children. . . . People comin' from as far away as Jacksonville takin' wrappers off brand new guns."

Rosewood.

"They went to killin' everything — babies and all. Dogs, cats — everything. . . ."

Rosewood.

"He showed that ear to many a person . . . He kept it in a little old pouch . . . It was kind of brown . . . He

had two ears. . . . He just walked up with a knife and clipped 'em off."

"I happened to be one of those children those crackers shot at . . . Like we were rabbits, out in that swamp! And us little children! Hunted us like we were rabbits!"

Rosewood.

"The deads was a secret."
"Stacked 'em like railroad ties."
"Let a sleeping dog lie."
"They don't want it told."

"For the next six years, every now and then, somebody would find a skull or something — nigger head or something — all out in the swamp."

Rosewood.

History has reserved no special monstrosity for the name. For 58 years, the terrible secret of a vanished town named Rosewood, Florida, has stayed buried.

For 59 years a number of grieving, frightened or bitter people scattered across the state have known the secret. But they have kept silent.

They lived in Rosewood.

They watched a whole town get wiped from the map.

Their names are Besley, Blocker, Carter and Carrier, King, Coleman, Guins, Mulberry, McCoy, Gordon. And many other names. Many still refuse to talk.

They have dispersed to Jacksonville, Chicago, Orlando, New York, St. Augustine, Miami, Pensacola, Deland, Chisland, Daytona, Gainesville, Tampa, St. Petersburg.

Once, they were hunted like animals. Since, they hardly dared wonder which of the disappeared from among them may have been tortured or killed. What they suffered, what they saw — all made it clear to them: They must never tell the tale.

Rosewood.

It was a special town.

Almost all its inhabitants were black.

A world unto itself, it was a village deep in the Suwannee River swamps and wilderness of Levy County, 46 miles southeast of Gainesville, nine miles from the Gulf of Mexico at Cedar Key.

Then came New Year's week, 1923.

The black settlement of Rosewood was utterly destroyed.

Sudden and savage, the destruction briefly made a splash in newspapers, not only in Florida but in New York and Chicago. However, published counts of the dead and descriptions of what took place concealed the real extent and nature of the violence. The newspaper accounts were "doctored," as one participant in the violence now says.

After a week of sensation, the events of January, 1923, seem to have dropped completely from Florida's consciousness, like some unmentionable skeleton in the family closet.

To blacks, the hidden story of Rosewood may seem like only the tip of an iceberg of cultural violence.

To whites, it must remind that upon the Good Old Days there often lay a savage abean.

Rosewood stands as a symbol of the countless secret deaths and tortures that took place in an era that has slipped from view.

Rosewood.

The people who remember often disagree in their recollections. They agree on this:

Rosewood, Florida, was a village beside the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, at a spot on Section 29 of the map of Levy County. In Rosewood lived between 150 and 200 souls, in 20 to 40 houses. A few of the houses were large, two-story buildings, with fruit groves and shady grape arbors. There were several churches, two of which were fitted out with organs and steeple bells. There was a school, a store, a water mill, a turpentine still, and a

black fraternal lodge hall. All tucked away deep in the swamps.

Today, the spot is marked by vine-covered chimney brick.



MASSACRE

Art by JOE TONELLI

Tales of what happened there are not often told to outsiders, but they still whisper through sparsely-settled Levy County. Varying with the teller's outlook, the event has different names: the Rosewood Riot, the Rosewood Massacre. Or just "Rosewood."

Estimates of the dead range from seven, in the sanitized newspaper accounts of 1923; to 17 or 18 reported by reliable witnesses as having been interred in a single mass grave; to "30 or 40" recalled by a still-living participant in the violence; to "150, maximum," that other witnesses, perhaps exaggerating, tend to agree upon.

For a week, in January, 1923, as witnesses recall and old clippings verify, white men came into Levy County in droves — by train, horseback, in Model-T cars — bent on destroying a town.

New Year's Day opened cold and hard on Monday, Jan. 1, 1923, in a once-thriving but now-deserted deep woods milltown named Sumner, in North Florida. Sumner was three miles down the Seaboard Air Line Railroad from the smaller village of Rosewood.

In Sumner, the icy, swamp-wet morning was shattered by a scream.

Fannie Taylor, a young white woman, sobbed for her indignant neighbors that her small company-owned house in Sumner had suddenly been invaded by an unidentified man. He had knocked her

to the floor, she said, had stolen her money and fled out the back door.

She said he was black.

That day a number of white men gathered with Fannie Taylor's husband James, and followed a tracking dog out the Taylors' back door. The dog led them to a nearby railroad track, and thence three miles down the track to the town — black world unto itself — of Rosewood.

And then . . .

The story of what happened next is a maze of conflicting tales, twisting downward into rooms which our prevailing culture endeavors to keep tightly shut.

Rosewood.

Who attacked Fannie Taylor?

Even around this beginning of the violence mysteries swirl.

At least two people are still alive who say they were present at the time. Both say they stood near the house where Fannie Taylor lived, at the moment she said she was attacked.

Both witnesses, having lived through mob violence, are afraid it could happen again, that it could reach out from the past to strike them if they talk about it. Both insist on anonymity. One is white. One is black.

Call them Ellen Baker and Eugenia Day.

Ellen Baker, the white woman, was an adult in 1923. She has remained a close friend of many of

the whites involved. She skirts around the edges of some parts of the story. Her account essentially backs up most of the legends told among whites in Levy County about what happened that morning, though her story seems more accurate about time and place, and is more convincingly detailed than the legends. She says she would prefer not to go into it all. She says many things would be better off forgotten.

Ellen Baker tells it thus:

Fannie Taylor was "very peculiar, kind of," though Ellen Baker liked her. They were neighbors. Fannie was young, had married very young, when she was about 14. She was from a poor but proud family far out in the country. Her husband James was from a venerable, well-respected family of carpenters and shipbuilders at Cedar Key.

With their two small children, James and Fannie Taylor lived in Sumner, in the double row of weathered, four-room houses that were the sawmill "quarters" — rent-free housing for white employees of the Cummer & Sons Cypress Company. Beyond the mill stood a separate quarters for blacks.

The white quarters ran along a street paved in true sawmill fashion, with the saw-stripped, discarded bark of the cypress tree. Edged with plank boardwalks to foil the summer rains, hemmed by stout picket fences against wayward cows and pigs, shaded by laurel and cedar, the street ran from the howling mill to the brooding woods. Several doors

Continued



Pioneer Florida: Turpentine still in the 1920s.

1992- Holland & Knight meets Minnie Lee Langley



- Minnie Lee Langley and Ruth Davis become Holland & Knight's first clients.
- Arnett Doctor, Philomena Goins's son, reaches out identifying other survivors.
- Doctor spends the rest of his life seeking justice for Rosewood.

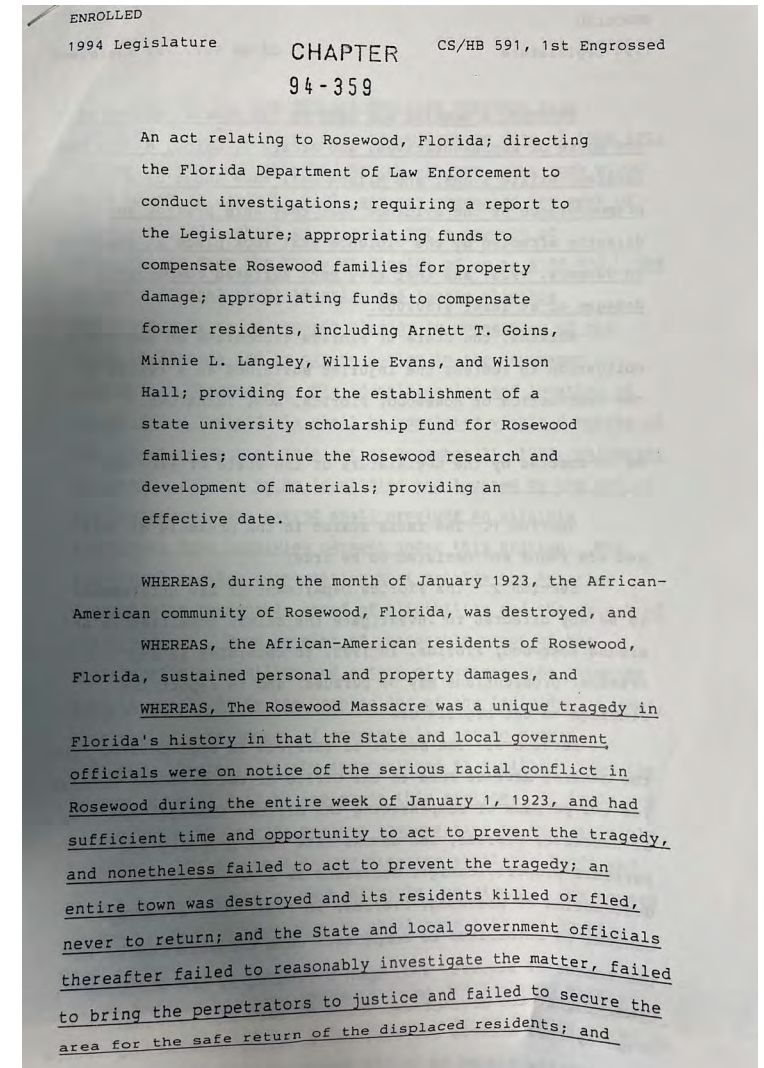
Holland & Knight

- Clients wanted 2 things from the State - an apology and atonement.
- Threshold question was where to file claims.
- Time was a legal and practical problem.
- Records were incomplete or non-existent.
- Statue of Limitations and laches.
- Judicial Branch vs. Legislative Branch.



House Bill 591, An Act Relating to Rosewood

- House and Senate bills were filed as claim bills on January 4, 1994, 71 years almost to the day after the destruction of Rosewood.
- Representatives Miguel De Grandy, Al Lawson and Senator Darrell Jones were responsible for sponsoring the bill.
- Supporters brought together factions often at odds.
- Sought \$7.2 Million for damages resulting from the 1923 destruction of Rosewood.
- Opening a Pandora's Box?



What is a Claim Bill?

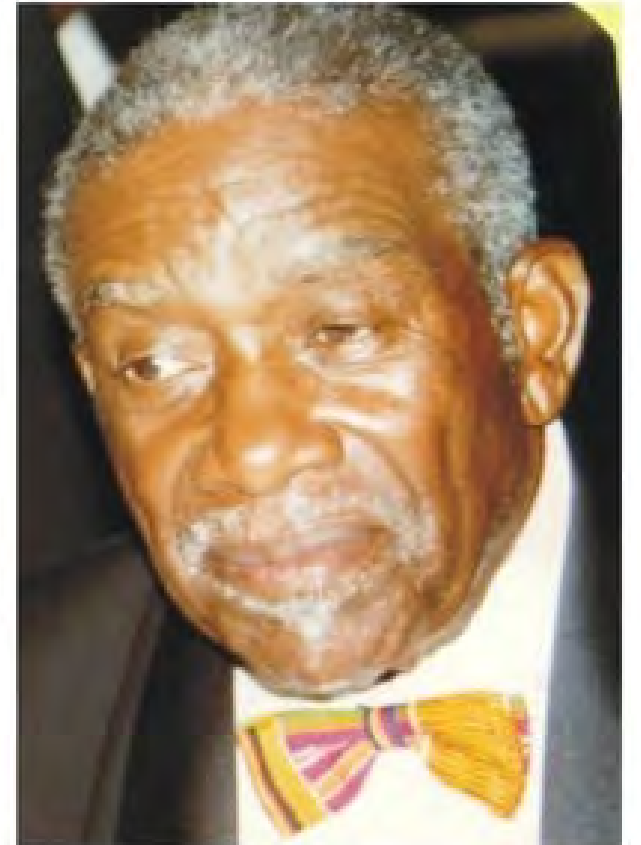
- Claim bills are a purely legislative process that provide a forum for those who have been injured by an act or omission of the state to seek compensation.
- 2 types of claims: excess judgement and “moral” obligation.
- Hearings before a special master to gather evidence are required.
- Mini trial in the state house, rather than the courthouse.
- At conclusion of hearings, findings of fact and conclusions are issued as well as specific recommendations to the legislature on whether the bill should be supported.
- Those recommendations proved critical to our success.

The Hearings

- Special Master Hearings began on March 4 and continued until March 18.
- Hearings were standing room only with extensive national and international media coverage.
- Claimants traveled to the Florida Capitol to tell their story.
- There was not a dry eye in the room.
- Our case was not centered on the reckless acts of mob, but on the government officials who did nothing to stop it.

The Hearings

- Arnett Goins, then 79, and Minnie Lee Langley, then 80, described how as children they were hidden upstairs in the Carrier house.
- They recalled seeing the bodies of the white men.
- They told how they and other children hid in the swamps dressed only in night clothes.



Arnett Goins



Minnie Lee Langley testifying at hearing.

The Hearings



- *“Cuz’ Syl grabbed me, come here baby, let me save you....and this old sheriff come in there. He called Aunt Sarah, Sarah, come out here. Aunt Sarah wouldn’t go.... he had done killed her. He shot in through the window first and that killed her. This old cracker comes looking. Come on out of there. Syl got up under the wood bin, put the gun on my shoulder, told me to lean this way. I leaned over, and then Poly Wilkerson, he kicked down the door. When he kicked the door down, Cuz’ Syl let him have it.... he killed him right in that door.”*

--Minnie Lee Langley, then 80, telling how her cousin Sylvester pulled her to safety when she ventured downstairs to find her mother.

The Hearings

- The State admitted the “sad” facts of the case were true.
- *“Make no mistake about it...this is a claim about a societal wrong, one of too many...I admit this is a sorry damn period in Florida’s history. We should be ashamed of that. We are.”*
- The State asserted there was no legal basis for the claims, and that any claims were barred by statute of limitations.
- After 2 weeks, the hearings concluded.
- Special Masters Final Report was filed with the Legislature on March 30.



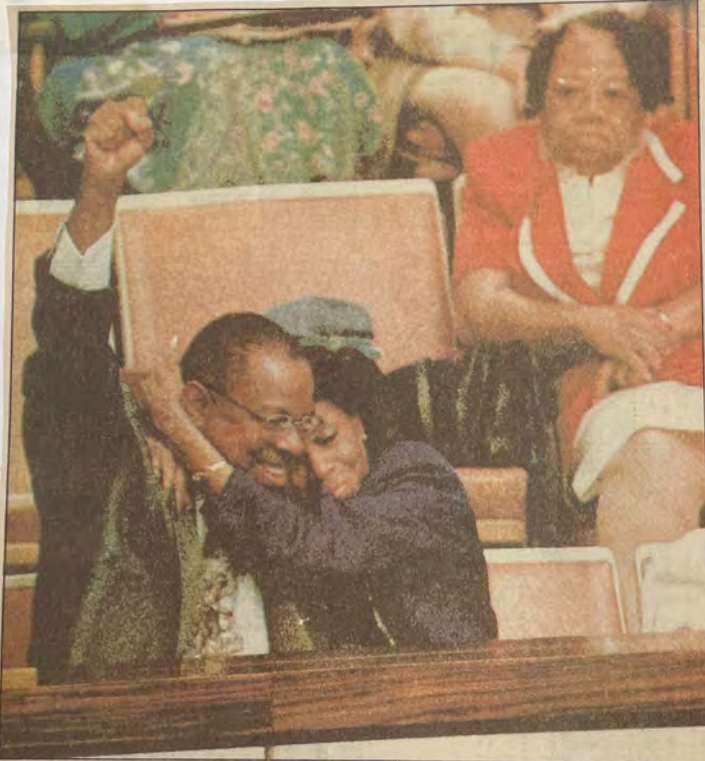
"Hope Prevails" painting depicting Rosewood survivors.

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

- The evidence compelled the conclusion that a moral obligation existed on the part of the State.
- Distinguished the claim bill process from a judicial proceeding and found, as a matter of law, that any consideration of our claims in the later would have been precluded by the rules of evidentiary hearsay and statute of limitations.
- An equitable basis existed for the Legislature to consider the survivors claim bill, and that as a matter of law, laches and other evidentiary rules did not stop its consideration of those claims.
- There was no clear remedy for the emotional and mental anguish damages and there was no “taking.”

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

- The responsibility for emotional suffering and property related damages stemmed from the State's failure to act.
- Recommended that the bill be reported favorably by the Legislature, and include:
 - \$150,000 in direct compensation for each of the elderly survivors;
 - Creation of two funds, one to compensate Rosewood families for property losses and another to establish a state university scholarship for descendants of Rosewood; and
 - Require law enforcement officials to conduct a complete investigation to determine if any criminal proceedings could still be pursued.
 - CS/HB 591, as passed, mirrored these recommendations.



— Associated Press

Rosewood descendant Arnett Doctor gets a hug from Annette Goins Shakir, a survivor's daughter.

Senate passes Rosewood bill

By David Hosansky
Staff writer

TALLAHASSEE — Cheering, holding hands and saying a prayer of gratitude, survivors of the 1923 Rosewood massacre and their descendants hailed the Senate passage yesterday of a historic measure to compensate them for their losses.

"Thank God," said Helen Crockett-Taylor of St. Petersburg, 56, whose mother survived the racially charged riots. "This is it. ... Justice was done."

Five generations of Rosewood families watched from legislative galleries as the Florida Senate fiercely debated the measure for an hour, then approved it, 26-14. The \$2.1 million compensation package passed the House last week, and Gov. Lawton Chiles promised to sign it into law.

Supporters of the measure, which has drawn national media attention, predicted on the Senate floor it will be a major step in closing lingering wounds from Florida's racially troubled past.

"Today signals a new beginning," said Sen. Daryl Jones, D-Miami, sponsor of the Senate bill. "Rosewood has become a symbol of the countless secret deaths and atrocities that took place throughout our nation in an era that has slipped from view. ..."

"That era has continued to burden us, to hamper our relationships, and keep us from being fair to each other. We have a choice here today to remove some of that

(See ROSEWOOD, Page A-5)



The Rosewood Claim Bill was passed by Florida Legislature on April 9 and signed by Governor Lawton Chiles on May 4, 1994.



Rosewood Survivors

“Now because of the strength and commitment of these survivors and their families, the long silence has finally been broken and the shadow has been lifted... instead of being forgotten, because of their testimony, the Rosewood story is known across our state and across our nation. The Legislation assures that the tragedy of Rosewood will never be forgotten by generations to come.”

--Former Governor Lawton Chiles on Rosewood

Rosewood - 2021

- Historic in 1994 and more so today.
- Impact on the nine living survivors. Most tithed before spending a penny.
- Money is not the only way to make injured people whole.
- First time Florida or any state had taken responsibility for its failure to protect its citizens because of their race.
- Reparations- what is owed.
- First time in modern U.S. history that a government not only acknowledged its role in systemic racism, but also compensated the victims for it.
- Created ways other than direct cash payments.
- Scholarship fund established for Survivors.
 - At least 297 descendants have received financial support for education.

The Rosewood Legacy

- Model for other states. Recent example of “Bruce’s Beach.”
- Highlighted the role of legislatures in addressing claims related racial prejudice.
 - 2020 claim bill related to Ocoee incident in 1920.
 - 2021 bill to remove barriers to compensation for the wrongfully convicted.
 - HB 30, filed by Congressman John Conyers, proposing a federal reparations committee.

Current Events

- Rosewood did not begin in 1923 and it did not end in 1994.
- In the second decade of the twenty first century current events make it seem like we are reliving a modern version of the tensions and violence that marked the second decade of the twentieth century.
- Black Lives Matter, Anti-riot bills, climate gentrification, critical race theory, and more
- Mirror to some extent the environment that led to an Ocoee or a Tulsa or a Rosewood.

Centennial Commemoration

- 2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the Rosewood Massacre
- Steve Hanlon and I hope to attend.
- We will then be the same ages as our “elderly” clients were 30 years ago.



Rosewood Descendants



Rosewood Descendants



Rosewood Descendants



Rosewood Descendants

A Personal Vignette

