

The Rosewood Massacre and the Women Who Survived It

by MAXINE D. JONES

FANNIE Taylor's screams on the morning of January 1, 1923, shattered the peace of several Levy County communities. Her subsequent accusations of being attacked by a black man set in motion a chain of events that before the end of the week had resulted in at least eight deaths and the destruction of a town called Rosewood. Fewer than four thousand blacks resided in Levy County in 1920. The 3,960 African Americans comprised 39.9% of the county's population, and as long as they remembered the place ascribed to them they lived in relative harmony with area whites.¹

The records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) reveal only one lynching in Levy County, that of Washington Bradley in 1904 for murder, but this did not mean that Levy County blacks were unfamiliar with violence and intimidation. From the turn of the century to 1922 whites in nearby Alachua County had lynched at least sixteen blacks, and five more were lynched in Marion County for various offenses ranging from train wrecking to insulting white women. Florida led the nation in the number of lynchings in 1920 with eleven. Gender offered no protection from mobs fueled by hate and anger. Two black females were tortured and lynched in the Alachua County town of Newberry. The names of Stella Long, the mother of four children, and her friend, Mary Dennis, who was pregnant with her third child, were added to the NAACP's 1916 lynching statistics.²

Observing race relations in surrounding counties, Rosewood's black residents no doubt considered themselves fortunate, but Fannie Taylor ended that. Her accusations destroyed the community and forever affected the lives of the African American women who lived there. The proud mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, aunts and

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1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932*, (Washington, D.C., 1935), 701.
2. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918* (New York, 1919), 24.

nieces in this tightly knit black community were sent into a downward spiral that, for some, continued throughout their lives. The hunt for Jesse Hunter, Fannie Taylor's alleged black attacker, began on Monday, January 1, 1923, in Sumner, three miles west of Rosewood, and when it ended six days later, Rosewood, the community, was gone. The burned-down houses and corpses could be counted, but the psychological damage was almost immeasurable.

Rosewood was a small, predominantly African American community. Precinct 9 in Levy County, of which Rosewood was a part, had a black population of 342 in 1920.³ Approximately eighteen to twenty-five African American families lived in Rosewood proper, and most of them owned their homes and property. Emma and James Carrier lived in a comfortable, well-furnished two-story home with glass windows and a front and back porch. In addition, they owned an organ. Sarah and Heyward Carrier also lived in a two-story house with a piano. Rosewood residents hunted, farmed and successfully lived off the land. Emma Carrier sold eggs and vegetables from her home garden.⁴ Some of the residents, however, worked in nearby Sumner to help make ends meet. The men labored at the Cummer Lumber Mill and the women worked in private homes. Widow Mary Hall supported her children cleaning, washing and ironing for local whites, in addition to working part-time for white store owner John Wright.⁵ Sarah Carrier, the matriarch of the Carrier family, was in fact working for Fannie Taylor on the morning of the alleged attack and disputed Taylor's claims. The man whom Sarah Carrier and her granddaughter, Philomena Goins, witnessed leaving the Taylor's home on that New Year's Day morning was white. Fannie Taylor was white; Sarah Carrier was black. In such a situation Carrier's word counted for little. Before the day ended a mob had visited Rosewood, aroused fear among its

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3. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Population of Florida, Series T, Reel 225, Enumeration District 98, Sheets 6-12, Levy County, Florida, Precinct 9.
 4. Testimony of Wilson Hall, State of Florida, House of Representatives, Public Hearing, Special Master *In the Matter For Relief of Arnett T. Goins, Minnie L. Langley, et. al, Claimants vs. State of Florida, Respondent*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 129-130, 137; Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 36-37; Minnie Lee Langley, interview by Tom Dye, Tallahassee, September 24, 1993, transcript.
 5. Testimony of Wilson Hall, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 137, 166-67; Arnett Doctor, interview by Maxine Jones, Larry Rivers, and William W. Rogers, Tallahassee, September 23, 1993, transcript.

residents, nearly lynched Aaron Carrier and succeeded in killing Sam Carter, a forty-five-year-old blacksmith.⁶

Carter's death had a chilling effect on the Rosewood community. It hoped that the violence had ended with his death, but after three days of deceiving calm, a shootout occurred at the home of Sarah Carrier on Thursday, January 4. Sarah Carrier's son Sylvester, believing that there was safety in numbers, had convinced his relatives to gather at his parents' two-story home for protection. James and Emma Carrier, their children and grandchildren joined Sarah, her children and grandchildren. Sylvester's wife, Gertrude, was also there. That night a group of white men approached the Carrier home and when those inside refused to come out they began shooting. Sylvester Carrier, protecting his relatives barricaded inside the Carrier home, exchanged gunfire with whites for several hours.⁷ Mob members Poly Wilkerson and Henry Andrews were killed and several more were injured. Both Sylvester Carrier and his mother, Sarah, died from gunshot wounds. Others were wounded, including Reubin Mitchell, who lost an eye, and Emma Carrier, who was shot in the hand and wrist. When the whites retreated, those in the house still living escaped to the swamps.⁸

When the whites returned on Friday to collect the bodies of their dead they set fire to the Carrier house. Their anger unspent, the men torched five more houses and a black church and killed Lexie Gordon. When Gordon, a widow in her mid-fifties, left her hiding place under her house once it was set on fire, a member of the mob shot and killed her. Later that same day, Mingo Williams was killed near Bronson. In the meantime, other Rosewood residents, many of them women and children, joined the Carrier clan in the woods and swamps.⁹

6. See Maxine D. Jones, David R. Colburn, R. Tom Dye, Larry E. Rivers and William W. Rogers, *A Documented History of the Incident Which Occurred at Rosewood, Florida, in January 1923*, Report submitted to the Florida Board of Regents, Tallahassee, Fla., December 22, 1993. Cited hereafter as *Rosewood Documented History*.

7. Langley, interview; Arnett T. Goins, interview with Larry Rivers, Tallahassee, September 24, 1993, transcript; *Rosewood Documented History*, 37, 40-41; Testimony of Arnett Goins, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 76-77.

8. *Rosewood Documented History*, 41, 43-44; Langley, interview; Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 47-49; Michael D' Orso, *Like Judgment Day: The Ruin and Redemption of a Town Called Rosewood* (New York, 1994), 67.

9. *Rosewood Documented History*, 44-48.

On Saturday, January 6, James Carrier left his temporary asylum in the swamps and became the sixth African American to die. Twenty-five or thirty white men took Carrier, the victim of two strokes, to the black cemetery and after questioning him, reputedly made him dig his own grave before shooting him.¹⁰ And on the seventh day, Sunday, January 7, instead of resting, whites finished what they had started. They returned to Rosewood and deliberately burned the remaining twelve or thirteen structures. "Masses of twisted steel were all that remained of furniture formerly in the negro homes, [and] several charred bodies of dogs, and firearms left in the hasty retreat, bore evidence to the mob's fury which set fire to the negro section of [Rosewood]. . . ."¹¹ For those keeping score, at least two whites and six blacks were dead, and an African American community was completely destroyed. But more than homes and furniture had gone up in smoke. A legacy, as well as hopes and dreams, had disappeared also.

The violence had a tremendous psychological impact on everyone who lived in Rosewood. The women and children especially suffered. Only nine years old at the time, Minnie Lee Mitchell Langley more than seventy years later vividly recalled the events of that week. She remembered the mob on day one looking for Jesse Hunter and calling for a rope to lynch her Uncle Aaron. And on day four Minnie Lee ended up in the middle of the shootout. When she heard that Sarah had been shot she ran downstairs looking for her grandmother Emma.

So when I got downstairs I met cousin Syl and he pulled me [and said] "come here let me save you," and he carried me in a little old wood house [bin]. The wood house was sitting right up under the stairway, me and him got in that wood house. He got behind me in the wood house, and he put the gun on my shoulder, and them crackers was still shooting and going on. He put his gun on my shoulder.¹²

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

10. *Ibid.*, 51-52; Langley, interview.

11. *Jacksonville Times-Union*, January 8, 1923; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, January 8, 1923; *Gainesville Daily Sun*, January 8, 1923; *Rosewood Documented History*, 54-55.

12. Langley, interview.

Wilkerson, he kicked the door down. When he kicked the door down, Cuz' Syl let him have it.¹³

After seeing her uncle almost lynched, her great-grandmother Sarah killed and her cousin Sylvester kill and wound others to protect his family, the nine-year-old black girl must have been in shock. Then she was forced to run for her life and hide in the woods and swamps.

The beginning of the new year had brought unusually cold weather to the area, and when the men, women and children escaped from the Carrier home on the night of the shootout they had been dressed for bed, not for two days of terror in the cold, wet swamps. "It was cold, man it was cold. Jesus, I will never forget that day," Minnie Lee asserted.¹⁴ From her refuge in the woods she could see the smoke and the flames coming from her family's burning property. "All our houses [were destroyed] they burned every house in that town . . . churches and everything, they left nothing. . . . Took all our chickens and cows and everything from us. . . . We see the fire burning. . . that fire just leaping over the railroad. . ." ¹⁵ She remembered spending at least two nights in the swamps before being rescued. Concerned whites made arrangements to assist the women and children and sent word to those hiding that a train would be sent to take only the women and children to safety. Minnie Lee and her friends, neighbors and relatives were taken to Gainesville by train.¹⁶

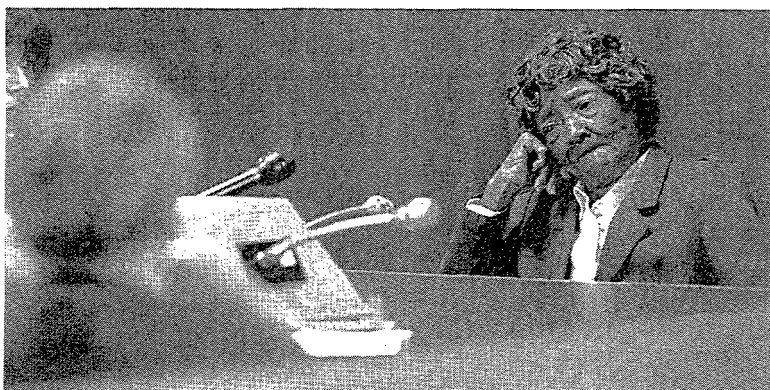
That experience scarred Minnie Lee forever. Her family, the Carriers and the Goins, probably suffered more than any other families in Rosewood. The others endured the same fear and lost their homes and sense of family and community, but those trapped in the Carrier house during the shootout experienced a terror that crippled them for the rest of their lives. Minnie Lee never knew her mother who had died soon after she was born. Her grandmother Emma Carrier took her in and became the mother figure in her life. But Emma was never the same after Rosewood. She had been wounded during the shootout and her husband, James Carrier,

13. Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In The Matter for Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 45-48.

14. Minnie Lee Langley, Sworn Statement, given to Stephen F. Hanlon, Jacksonville, June 2, 1992, 30.

15. Langley, Sworn Statement, 47-49.

16. Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In The Matter for Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 52-53; Langley, interview.



Minnie Lee Langley testifying before the Florida Legislature on Rosewood. *Courtesy of Mark Wallheiser, Tallahassee Democrat.*

had been killed. Minnie Lee recalled years later that her grandmother “ain’t never gotten well. . . . She just took sick over what happened, and she never did get well.”¹⁷ The family reunited in Gainesville but life was different. The security that she had known for nine years was gone. The two-story home with the front porch and an organ, the home filled with love, was gone. Her school and church were no longer a part of her daily life. Her dream of becoming a nurse was now just that— a dream.

The children now had to help support themselves. Minnie Lee and her brother Reubin found work wherever they could. Minnie Lee washed dishes and milked cows to earn money. They survived as best they could, but during the summer of 1924 Emma Carrier died, and with her the promise to help her granddaughter to become a nurse. And so Minnie Lee drifted from Alachua County back to Otter Creek and Wylly in Levy County before ending up in Jacksonville where she managed to get an eighth-grade education.¹⁸ The young woman stored the memories of Rosewood in the inner recesses of her mind and attempted to build a new life.

Minnie Lee Mitchell arrived in Jacksonville in 1926. Initially she worked in the homes of white women caring for their children. Later she secured a job with a brush and switch broom manufactur-

17. D’Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 67.

18. *Ibid.*; Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In The Matter for Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 54-55.

ing company where she remained for thirty-two years, her salary increasing from 75 cents an hour to \$3.75 an hour when she retired in 1980 with no pension.¹⁹ She gave birth to a daughter in 1930 and married Clifford Langley in 1936. They managed to purchase a home in 1956, but Clifford died before they moved in. Minnie Lee never forgot about her life in Rosewood, or the violence that killed her relatives and destroyed her world. She never talked about it either, not even to her husband or daughter Dorothy. In 1994 she explained why she never talked about it. "It hurt me. It was just building up in me to just think about how my folks went down and how they killed them and everything. Took everything we had."²⁰

Minnie Lee never understood why the violence had occurred. "We ain't had no problems back there, not with the white folks, not with no one. Ain't had a bit of problems. I don't understand why them peoples did us like that."²¹ She never understood the attack on Rosewood, and though the fear may have diminished over the years, the fear that "those crackers might just come up there [Jacksonville] and find me and kill me up there" never went away completely.²² But she was determined to get on with her life. Described as feisty, spunky, independent and free-spirited, Minnie Lee was a survivor. More than anything she wanted her daughter and her adopted son to have a better life than she did, telling them "I don't want y'all to come up like I come up."²³

She worked hard and provided as stable a life for her children as she could. When the story of Rosewood was belatedly made public in 1993-94, Minnie Lee Mitchell Langley was finally ready to tell her story. It was as if she had been preparing for this moment since her world had come crashing down around her in January 1923. In hearings held by the State of Florida, Langley's painful and poignant description of what had happened the first week of 1923 left her listeners spellbound. This frail but dignified woman, now eighty years old, relinquished at last the terrible secret she had har-

19. Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In The Matter for Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 57-58; D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 64, 67.

20. Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In The Matter for Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 58; D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 64.

21. D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 64.

22. Testimony of Minnie Lee Langley, Florida House of Representatives, *In The Matter for Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 59.

23. D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 64.

bored for seventy years. Through it all, Langley claimed, "I never lost my faith."²⁴ Langley's friend and attorney, Stephen F. Hanlon, believed that the enormity of what had happened at Rosewood, especially being in the middle of the shootout, was still very real for her. Minnie Lee Mitchell Langley may have been the most seriously damaged person to have survived the experience. She died December 15, 1995.²⁵

There was plenty of suffering and pain to go around, and Minnie Lee Langley by no means had a monopoly on it. Others, both men and women, adults and children, experienced the same fear and carried the burden of Rosewood with them. Their lives, too, were transformed by that week of violence. As a young girl growing up in Rosewood, Philomena Goins dreamed of becoming a teacher and a jazz and opera singer. The Rosewood incident, however, placed her dreams on hold. Eleven-year-old Philomena accompanied her grandmother Sarah Carrier to do laundry for Fannie Taylor on January 1, 1923. She saw a white man enter and later leave Taylor's house that morning. She also watched as Fannie Taylor convinced Sumner whites that she had been assaulted by a black man. Philomena's experience was similar to that of Minnie Lee. She too was trapped in the Carrier house during the shootout and sought refuge in the swamps. She strongly believed that God heard their prayers for help and delivered them safely from the white mob. Through it all her faith never wavered. However, she never trusted whites again, and she was afraid until the day she died.²⁶

Philomena's parents, who were not in Rosewood at the time of the violence, found Philomena and her brothers, Arnett and George, in Gainesville and took them to Tampa.²⁷ When her mother died in 1930, Philomena dropped out of school to care for her brothers and sister. Scarred by Rosewood, she nevertheless continued to chase her dreams of becoming a professional singer. In Florida she became the featured singer for the Charles Bradley Band. She performed on stage with Ella Fitzgerald and Chick

24. *Tallahassee Democrat*, December 18, 1995; Stephen F. Hanlon, interview by author, June 26, 1997.

25. Hanlon, interview.

26. Arnett Doctor, interview by author, June 29, 1997; Doctor, interview with Jones, Rivers, Rogers; Arnett Turner Goins, Sworn Statement, given to Stephen F. Hanlon, Orlando, February 25, 1993, 16-18.

27. Philomena's parents were George and Willie Retha Carrier Goins. Goins, Sworn Statement, 3-5.

Webb and traveled to New York, Chicago, and other major cities. She eventually married and settled down briefly in Jacksonville before relocating to Lacooshee, in Pasco County. She was no longer on stage, but Philomena Goins Doctor gained a reputation as an amateur producer and promoter, successfully bringing top-rate entertainment to the small mill town.²⁸

On the surface all was well, but Philomena was extremely protective of her children, Arnett and Yvonne. She shielded them from whites and refused to allow her children to get too close to them. She instilled in her children her own distrust and fear of whites.²⁹ Clinical psychologist Carolyn Tucker, who interviewed several of the Rosewood survivors, gave a name to Philomena Goins' over-protectiveness. Her "hyper-vigilance" as far as her children were concerned and her fear of whites were classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome.³⁰ According to her son Arnett, financial circumstances compelled his mother to work for whites whom she in reality hated. Hatred and fear was the legacy from Rosewood that she passed on to her children. The week of white violence so traumatized Philomena that she never recovered. She lost her grandmother Sarah and her uncle Sylvester as well as a secure home environment. She never forgot the two-story house with lace curtains and the grand piano, things she should have been able to pass on to her children.³¹

White hatred and violence took away her "ability to positively interact with people irregardless of their ethnicity," as well as her dignity. Once a member of two of the leading families in Rosewood— the Carriers and Goins— Philomena Goins in one week's time had nothing tangible to give to Arnett and Yvonne. But she did give them a strong sense of their historical past. She taught them about James Weldon Johnson, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and her favorite, Marian Anderson. She taught them the Negro National Anthem and insisted that they sing it for her on a reg-

28. Testimony of Arnett Goins, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume I, 82; Doctor, interview by author, June 29, 1997.

29. Doctor, interview by author, June 29, 1997; Testimony of Arnett Doctor, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, March 4, 1994, Volume V, 502, 527.

30. Testimony of Dr. Carolyn Tucker, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 177, 188,224.

31. Doctor, interview by author, June 29, 1997.

ular basis.³² Every Christmas Philomena told her son and daughter about Rosewood. Arnett recalled that this was the season “when my mother would really become somewhat depressed, and she would recount the events that occurred at Rosewood. And there has not been a Christmas that I can remember that my mother has not recounted what happened at Rosewood with her immediate family.”³³

In spite of the hatred and fear that festered inside her, Philomena Goins maintained her faith in God and became an active member of the AME Church. She served on the board of trustees, the usher board and was chief soloist in the choir. Annette Goins Shaker, who spent every summer with her aunt in Lacoochee, remembers a woman who took pleasure in dressing nicely. She wore make-up, perfume, hats and jewelry. But she was hard to read at times: affectionate one minute, chilly the next, threatening one moment and protective the next. At times, Philomena could be domineering and stubborn, and at others, a very giving and loving woman.³⁴

Philomena Goins Doctor emerged as matriarch of the family, and she insisted that what had happened at Rosewood remain within the family. The fear and anger she experienced in January 1923 permanently embittered her and she demanded silence not only from her relatives, but also from friends who had survived the incident. Rosewood was to be discussed only among family. Philomena Goins Doctor died in January 1991. According to her only son, she was “a happy person with a tormented past.”³⁵

Lee Ruth Bradley also survived the Rosewood massacre. One month shy of her eighth birthday, Lee Ruth’s experience differed from those of Minnie Lee and Philomena. On the night of January 4, while Minnie Lee and Philomena were barricaded inside the Carrier homestead, Lee Ruth and three of her siblings were sheltered by merchant John Wright, one of the few whites residing in Rosewood. Wright warned Lee Ruth’s father, John Wesley Bradley, to take the older boys and to “hit the woods.”³⁶ John and Mary Jo

32. *Ibid.*

33. Testimony of Arnett Doctor, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, March 4, 1994, Volume V, 473.

34. Doctor, interview by author, June 29, 1997; Annette Goins Shaker, interview by author, June 16, 1997.

35. Doctor, interview by author, June 29, 1997.

36. Lee Ruth Davis, Sworn Statement, given to Stephen F. Hanlon, Miami, May 4, 1992, 25-27.

Wright ensured that the Bradley children were protected from the violence they speculated would take place that night. The children were fed and put to bed. After feeding the four youngsters breakfast on Friday morning, the Wrights left them alone while they attended Poly Wilkerson's funeral in Sumner.³⁷

Even though instructed to remain in the house, Lee Ruth, her sister and two brothers left soon after the Wrights departed. She led her siblings to nearby Wylly to their brother's house, but they were not permitted to stay. It was too dangerous. Lee Ruth reported that they were led into the woods: "We walked through water. We sat on a log on the trail. . . . We sat there all day long." Later, Hoyt, her oldest brother, convinced her to return with the others to the Wrights. On their way back they saw men with guns and so they crawled most of the way back. John and Mary Jo Wright were out searching for the Bradley kids and were pleased when they answered their calls. They were soon placed on a train with other black women and children and sent to Gainesville for safety.³⁸

The Bradley children remained in Gainesville for about three weeks. They were then taken to a paternal aunt. Their father, a widower, reclaimed his kids and relocated to Palatka. Although shielded somewhat from the violence in Rosewood, Lee Ruth remembered that "they killed everything in Rosewood. They didn't want anything living in there. They killed everything."³⁹

The Bradleys, like the many other Rosewood families, were uprooted. They lost both their land and their strong sense of community. After a few years in Palatka, the Bradleys moved to Miami where Lee Ruth came of age. Over the years she worked as a private nurse, a mail and receiving clerk at Lane Bryant, and was hired to do various tasks by the Dade County School Board. She retired in 1981. In 1992, at age seventy-seven, Lee Ruth recalled how "rough and hard" it had been those last days in Rosewood. "It is sometimes a nightmare to me," she said and credited the Lord for getting her through it all. Lee Ruth Bradley Davis was a strong-willed woman of great religious faith who spent all day at church on Sundays. Arriving at seven o'clock in the morning, she helped prepare break-

37. *Ibid.*, 27-28.

38. *Ibid.*, 31-32.

39. *Ibid.*, 44.

fast for 350 people before attending Sunday School and the eleven o'clock morning service; she rarely returned home before three o'clock in the afternoon.⁴⁰ Lee Ruth Bradley Davis died in 1993, but not before sharing with millions of viewers her Rosewood horror story on the Maury Povich show from her hospital room in Miami. Unlike Philomena, she felt "very strongly" that this story should be made public, and it was, in part, because of her "boldness and persistence" that the world was made aware of what had happened the first week of January 1923.⁴¹

At one time Mary and Charles Bacchus Hall owned 140 acres in Rosewood. They lived in a two-story house and operated a store and farm. When Charles died around 1920, Mary worked even harder to take care of her family. Wilson Hall, born April 10, 1915, remembered that his mother, a mentally and physically strong woman, worked in Sumner as a domestic, "dogged logs" at the mill and "worked for a while on the railroad . . . stripping crossties."⁴² When whites went on the rampage in Rosewood, Mary Hall made every effort to protect her children. Wilson Hall described how his mother, assisted by her male friend, Henry Price, helped them to escape:

[W]hen they started to coming you [could] see the automobiles, see for miles, but when my mother looked out the window upstairs she saw the cars coming then she went and got all the kids up said, "yall lets go, cause they are coming.

[Y]ou know we were all [a]sleep, so quite naturally she went around and got us all up cause the house we were living in was pretty good size, but after she went around and got all of the kids up she brought [them] to the back door, then she took them all downstairs to the back gate . . . we all headed for the swamps, but then before we got started, she started to counting her kids and find out there was one missing, and so she said well, she had Charles in her arms,

40. *Ibid.*, 70.

41. D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 52; Testimony of Arnett Doctor, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, March 4, 1994, Volume V, 495,497.

42. Testimony of Wilson Hall, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 35-137, 165; D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day*, 154-55.

she thought it was Mary, she had me by my hand, I was standing by her. . . . So then she said to Henry, said ah “we got a child missing,” said who do you have? He looked and said, “I got Charles.” He said, “well Mary is left in the house, we can’t leave her.” Mr. Henry said, “well, I’ll go back and get her,” so he dropped Charles and went back in the house and got Mary, and brought Mary out, and then she counted all the kids and said well they are all here now and [we] all started out to the swamp.⁴³

Mary Hall and her “barefeet and pretty naked” children remained in the swamps for a day and a half before catching the train to Gainesville. Mary Hall arrived in Gainesville with her “naked, tired and hungry” children and managed to find her brother who operated a fish market there. He took them in for a month and helped his sister find a three-room shack where they lived for six or seven years.⁴⁴

The violence at Rosewood traumatized Mary Hall. With little education, it was impossible to get a decent paying job, so she did a lot of begging that first year. Then her brother relocated his business to Crystal River in Citrus County, in effect stranding her. Eventually Hall found work as a maid and cook, often bringing leftover food home to feed her children. When her children were old enough they sought employment too. Mary had to depend on whites to earn a living, but she never trusted them again. Even when John Wright and others came to Gainesville to convince her to move back to Rosewood, she refused. She also refused to sign papers transferring ownership of her property.⁴⁵ Her children were forbidden to speak of Rosewood.

Mary Hall’s daughters, Margie and Mary Magdalene, were fourteen and three, respectively, when they were forced to leave their home. Margie remembered that “we were forced to leave our home at night wearing on[ly] night clothes. We escaped by way of the swamps and bedded there one night. The next night, my family boarded a train headed towards Gainesville. We arrived in Gaines-

43. Wilson Hall, interview by author, Tallahassee, September 24, 1993.

44. Hall, interview by author; Testimony of Wilson Hall, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 156.

45. Hall, interview by author; Testimony of Wilson Hall, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 155, 165-66, 164; Mary Hall, interview by Tom Dye, Tallahassee, September 24, 1993, transcript.

ville destitute & wondered [sic] aimlessly until rescued by my Uncle Joe Davis."⁴⁶ When Mary Magdalene was old enough, her mother explained to her why they did not have a home, and how "the white mob drove us away [from Rosewood] leaving us the Hall family with nothing. . . ."⁴⁷ Mary Hall took another husband, Henry Price, but she never recovered all that she lost in Rosewood. She hoped, however, that her children might one day want to reclaim their land.⁴⁸

Those who survived Rosewood were held prisoner by their memories of that week of terror. Rosewood haunted them and refused to let go and many of them suffered in silence. It was a subject too painful to discuss for those who survived it and "a mistake" not to for many of their sons and daughters. But Philomena Goins Doctor had issued her edict and Rosewood was not to be discussed publicly. Other family members, while respecting her wishes, disagreed with Philomena. They believed that what had happened at Rosewood should be made public so that all the world could know. In 1993, after Philomena's death, Lee Ruth Bradley Davis and Minnie Lee Mitchell Langley appeared on national television and shared their stories. Philomena's son, Arnett Doctor, had been obsessed with what had happened to his family in Rosewood and had been secretly gathering information for years. He wanted Rosewood to become a public issue and wanted the state of Florida to address it. Under his leadership and the counsel of the law firm of Holland and Knight, the men and women who had survived the violence at Rosewood sought compensation from the state.⁴⁹

In 1994 the Florida House of Representatives held hearings *In the Matter For Relief Of Arnett T. Goins, Minnie L. Langley, Et. AL, Claimants vs. State of Florida, Respondent*. At the hearings Minnie Lee Langley recounted her life in Rosewood and the violence that ended it. Lee Ruth Bradley Davis had died several months before the hearings began. Philomena's brother Arnett T. Goins and her son Arnett

46. Margie Hall Johnson, Rosewood Survivor Affidavit, August 1994, Office of the Attorney General, Hollywood, Florida; Margie Hall Johnson, interview by Larry Rivers, Tallahassee, September 24, 1993.

47. Mary Hall Daniels, Rosewood Survivor Affidavit, August 1994, Office of the Attorney General, Hollywood, Florida.

48. Testimony of Wilson Hall, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 166; Hall, interview by author, September 24, 1993.

49. Doctor, interview by Jones, Rivers, and Rogers, September 23, 1993.

Doctor, told the story that she had labored so hard to keep hidden. Margie and Mary Magdalene Hall shared their memories with a group of college professors commissioned by the legislature to study the week of violence. The suffering, pain, and loss that had been kept buried for more than seventy years was finally exhumed.

Dr. Carolyn Tucker testified that the survivors exhibited symptoms associated with a post-traumatic stress disorder. Such symptoms included fear, avoidance, hyper-vigilance, recurring memories, denial, and emotional numbness. Dr. Tucker also suggested that the mob violence at Rosewood had a negative impact on the parenting and social skills, as well as the economic viability, of the survivors and their descendants. She concluded that Rosewood "disrupted the passing down of tradition."⁵⁰ Minnie Lee, Lee Ruth, Philomena and the other Rosewood residents failed to inherit their families' businesses and property and were denied the positive role models that had been abundant in their community. Instead of fulfilling their dreams of becoming entrepreneurs, landowners, teachers and musicians, they became maids, and cooks and boot blacks. They were unable to pass the proud tradition of Rosewood on to their children.

After listening to hours of testimony from the survivors, their descendants and expert witnesses, hearing officer Richard Hixson recommended to the Florida legislature that the survivors who sustained emotional trauma be compensated in the amount of \$150,000 each, that families who could demonstrate a property loss be compensated, and that a scholarship fund be established for the Rosewood families and their descendants. Hixson also recommended that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigate the incident that occurred at Rosewood to determine if charges could be brought against those responsible for the violence.⁵¹ On April 4, 1994, the Florida House of Representatives passed the Rosewood Compensation Bill by thirty-one votes. The Senate followed suit, voting 24-16, on April 8. Governor Lawton Chiles signed the Rosewood Compensation Bill into law on May 4, 1994. More than two million dollars were distributed to nine Rosewood survivors and their descendants. Minnie Lee Mitchell Lan-

50. Testimony of Dr. Carolyn Tucker, Florida House of Representatives, *In the Matter For Relief*, February 25, 1994, Volume II, 180.

51. Florida House of Representatives, Special Master's Final Report, March 21, 1994.

gley, Robie Robinson Mortin, Mary Magdalene Hall, Margie Hall Johnson and Dorothy Goins Hosey were the only women who survived Rosewood willing to stake their claim to the money. They each received a check for \$150,000.⁵²

The money, of course, could never erase their memories, heal their scars, or replace the loss of family members and property. Nor could the money restore the sense of community and the legacy that they were unable to pass down to their children. But it was an acknowledgment from the state that it had not done all it could to protect its African American citizens. For the elderly survivors, the money could help to insure adequate health care and security. Perhaps the money and the scholarships could even help break the cycle of poverty in which these families were trapped. Philomena Goins Doctor probably would have disapproved of the public hearings and the resulting publicity, but she would have agreed with Governor Chiles when he proclaimed on the day he signed the Rosewood Compensation Bill, "Ignorance and racial hatred can lead to death and destruction. Let us use the lesson of Rosewood to promote healing."⁵³

52. The State of Florida compensated nine survivors of the Rosewood Massacre.

They are Minnie Lee Mitchell Langley, Arnett T. Goins, Wilson Hall, Willie Evans, Dorothy Goins Hosey, Mary Magdalene Hall Daniels, Margie Hall Johnson, Lonnie Carroll and Robie Robinson Mortin. Arnett Doctor, however, claims that there are others still alive who survived the violence at Rosewood, but who are afraid and thus unwilling to go public.

53. *Tallahassee Democrat*, May 5, 1994.