

Tampa Bay Times

ARCHIVE

Rosewood scholarship fund less than expected

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Survivors of the 1923 Rosewood massacre say the state has partly reneged on a promise to provide \$100,000 in scholarships to their descendants.

Lawmakers approved more than \$2.1-million in compensation this spring for the racial violence that destroyed the small black settlement nine miles east of Cedar Key.

A white mob descended on Rosewood after an unsuccessful search for a black man accused of assaulting a white woman.

The law establishes a \$1.5-million fund to pay up to \$150,000 apiece to people who prove they lived in Rosewood in January 1923 and fled the weeklong rampage that left at least six black and two white people dead.

It also provides \$500,000 to reimburse residents whose families lost property during the violence and \$100,000 a year for college scholarships for Rosewood family descendants and other members of minority groups.

Arnett Doctor, head of the Rosewood Family Advisory Committee, said Saturday that only \$60,000 was set aside for scholarships this year.

"I'm really dissatisfied and very upset about the educational scholarship fund," he said. "For them to say we're going to allocate \$60,000 (this year) is going directly against what was legally approved by the state Legislature."

Doctor said survivors were told the state would give 25 scholarships for \$4,000 each. Rosewood descendants would get first crack at them, and leftovers would go to minority students.

State officials said the survivors misunderstood the law. The provision calls for 25 scholarships for up to \$4,000 to cover tuition and fees at state universities, community colleges and vocational-technical schools.

Legislators failed to provide money for the scholarships this spring. The Department of Education came up with \$60,000 for the 1994-95 academic year from a surplus in another financial aid fund.

"We're not taking any money away. We only really needed \$60,000," said state Rep. Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee.

"The staff made an error in that we didn't need \$100,000 for 25 scholarships. It just slipped through."

Tuition and fees at those schools are no more than \$2,300 a year, meaning \$60,000 will pay for 25 students, according to staff analysis.

Doctor also criticized state officials for setting a Dec. 31 deadline for survivors to apply for compensation before making any money available.

He said eight people have proved they lived there. Doctor wants those eight, who are in their 70s and 80s, to get their money right away. Two are hospitalized, he said.

Four of eight known Rosewood survivors were given certificates of appreciation during commencement at Bethune-Cookman College on Saturday honoring them "for perseverance of God-given human rights" and their commitment "to endure until the victory was won."