

Reparations for Descendants of the Rosewood, Florida Massacre of 1923

Who

On January 1, 1923 a white married woman said she was assaulted by a black man in the town of Rosewood, Florida a town of about 120 residents. That day, several white men arrested one black man, and apprehended and killed another, according to a historical account by Florida State University.



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. 8.—A race riot was being in the Negro cemetery at Rosewood, near here today and it is reported that Mulvey placed the body of James Carter, whose death at the hands of armed whites was the opening act of the series of lynchings between the town of Rosewood and the state.

Carter was shot to death while standing on the grave of his four other children who fell in the fighting that followed an attempt of a crowd of whites men to enter a Negro house in search of Jesse Hunter, wanted for



What

Over several days, several whites began scouring the area searching for a suspect, and a gunfight took place. Just five days after the reported assault, the remaining African Americans fled into the swamp and ultimately escaped by train to Gainesville. The following day, a posse of more than 100 men burned down the rest of the town.

Where

Rosewood was a small glimmer of Black independence in the shadow of the Jim Crow South. In the 1910s, Black entrepreneurs there operated a sugar-cane mill, a turpentine distillery and at least two general stores. By 1923, the community had seen better days but was still a peaceful enclave of about 120 people. Many residents were employed at the sawmill in the nearby town of Sumner or served as domestic workers for its white residents. Others farmed or trapped, catching and selling wild animals. Though their homes spread out far among the dense pine trees and Spanish moss of rural Florida, Rosewood residents took pride in their three churches, school, Masonic lodge and amateur baseball team.

When

That led to a law that eventually compensated the elderly victims \$150,000 each and created a scholarship fund. The law, which provided \$2.1m total for the survivors, improbably made Florida one of the only states to create a reparations program for the survivors of racialized violence, placing it among federal programs that provided payments to Holocaust survivors and interned Japanese Americans. On May 4, 1994, a two-year campaign resulted in then-Gov. Lawton Chiles signing a bill to compensate survivors \$1.5 million as well as allotting \$500,000 to cover property damage inflicted in the attack and a \$100,000 scholarship fund for descendants and other minorities. The scholarship is still available today.