

Title: Florida's Race Riots and Untold Stories

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: ELA & Social Studies

Keywords: 15th Amendment, Poll tax, Mason-Dixie line, bigotry

Lesson Plan:	Florida's Race Riots and Untold Stories
Subject:	American History
Grade:	9-12
Description/ Abstract of Lesson	The students will study untold Stories about Race Riots that occurred in Florida
SS.912.A.5.12	Examine key events and people in Florida history as they relate to United States history. (Ex. Rosewood, land boom, speculation, impact of climate and natural disasters, invention of modern air conditioning in 1929, Alfred DuPont, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson)
LAFS912.RH.1.1	Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information
LAFS.912.WHST.3 .9	Draw evidence from informational text to support analysis, reflection and research.
Objective(s):	Students will be able to study and recall historical events from Florida's timeline
Materials:	Pen Highlighter Timer Florida's Race Riots Stories: Rosewood Massacre and Ocoee, Florida: 1920's Voting Massacre Graphic Organizer
Duration:	● 2-3class periods ● Block Scheduling (90 min.) 2 class period
Lesson Lead In/ Opening:	1. The teacher will ask the class Does History repeat itself? Give examples 2. The teacher will ask the students what is race?
Activity 1:	Warm up or Do Now: Do you believe the quote – If you don't learn from it, history will repeat itself. Why or why not?
Activity 2:	1. Divide the class and give one side Rosewood, Florida and the other side Ocoee, Florida 1920 Election Day Massacre 2. The teacher will have the students use the close reading strategy when reading the stories about Florida's Race Riots 3. While students are reading on their own have students circle any words they are not familiar with. They may use a highlighter 4. After the students have read the stories alone. Then go to each group and go over circled vocabulary words and give the definition or synonym to the words. have the students write the definition or synonym of words in the margin of the stories. 5. Reread the stories as a whole group 6. Ask questions to check for comprehension with the entire class 7. Have students write their own questions and use peers to answer the questions

Activity 3:	Use the graphic organizer to organize stories (SOAPS Tone)
Activity 4:	Have the students write a brief essay about the cause and effect of any of Florida's Race Riot and how could it have been prevented?
Higher Order Thinking Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most of the black towns mentioned in Florida's History were prospering economically (business) How? 2. What internal problems did whites faced that fueled the race riots? 3. Should Reparations be giving to slave descendants? Rosewood descendants? Ococee descendants?
Suggested Books:	About the massacre, <i>Like Judgment Day</i> by Mike D'Orso
Web Resources	<p>US News.com https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/florida/articles/2020-03-05/senate-oks-bill-to-educate-floridians-about-1920-race-riots</p> <p>Ocoee massacre: https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/ocoe-massacre/</p> <p>"Ocoee on Fire"; https://medium.com/florida-history/ocoe-on-fire-the-1920-election-day-massacre-38adbda9666e</p> <p>Rosewood: https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/rosewood-massacre</p> <p>"Rosewood", (1997) John Singleton's film</p>

Rosewood, Florida

In 1923, Rosewood, Florida was known as a prosperous African American Community. That was before a week-long race riot occurred. After the riot all blacks moved out of the town in fact it was until 1960's when blacks finally relocated back into this small-town west of Ocala and Gainesville. The residents made a promise to never speak of the event. In 1982, Mr. Arnold broke his silence and began a quest to listen to other survivor's stories by traveling where ever the need.

Mr. Arnold wanted legislation to know the "bill was about property rights, not race." He recruited Barnett, a lobbyist to help get legislatures to pass the bill. He told her, "We, the survivors want the state of Florida to say, 'we failed you and we accept responsibility and we're sorry.'" In 1994, Senates voted 26-14 in favor (HB 591) of a \$2.1 million reparations bill to help make amends for the state turning its back on the racial violence that wiped out Rosewood. The package includes \$1.5 million to be divided among the 11 or so survivors of the massacre, \$500,000 to compensate Rosewood families who were run out of town for the property they lost and \$100,000 in college scholarships for Rosewood descendants and other minorities.

FANNIE TAYLOR

On January 1, 1923, 22-year-old Fannie Taylor was heard screaming by a neighbor. The neighbor found Taylor covered in bruises and claiming an unidentified black man had entered the house and assaulted her. Fannie Taylor's husband, James Taylor, a foreman at the local mill, came home to find console his wife. He became belligerent and escalated the situation by gathering an angry mob of white citizens to hunt down the culprit. He also called for help from whites in neighboring counties, among them a group of about 500 Ku Klux Klan members who were in Gainesville for a rally. The white mobs prowled the area woods searching for any black man they might find. Law enforcements found out that a black prisoner named Jesse Hunter had escaped a chain gang, and immediately designated him a suspect. The mobs focused their searches on Hunter, convinced that he was being hidden by the black residents.

AARON CARRIER

Searchers were led by dogs to the home of Aaron Carrier in Rosewood. Carrier was the nephew of Sarah Carrier, who did the laundry for Fannie Taylor. The horde of white men dragged Carrier out of his house, tied him to a car and dragged him to Sumner, a mile away from Rosewood, where he was cut loose and beaten. Sheriff Walker intervened, putting Carrier in his car and driving him to Gainesville, where he was placed under the protective custody of the sheriff there.

SARAH CARRIER

As many as 25 people, mostly children, had taken refuge in the home of Sarah Carrier when, on the night of January 4, armed whites surrounded the house in the belief that Jesse Hunter was hiding there. Shots were fired in the ensuing confrontation: Sarah Carrier was shot in the head and died, and her son Sylvester was also killed by a gun wound. Two white attackers were also killed. The gun battle and standoff lasted overnight. It ended when the door was broken down by white attackers. The children inside the house escaped through the back and made their way to safety through the woods, where they hid.

SAM CARTER

Another mob showed up at the home of blacksmith Sam Carter, torturing him until he admitted that he was hiding Hunter and agreed to take them to the hiding spot. Carter led them into the woods, but when Hunter failed to appear, someone in the mob shot him. His body was hung on a tree before the mob moved on.

ROSEWOOD VIOLENCE ESCALATES

News of the standoff at the Carrier house spread, with newspapers inflating the number dead and falsely reporting bands of armed black citizens going on a rampage. Even more white men poured into the area believing that a race war had broken out. Some of the first targets of this influx were the churches in Rosewood, which were burned down. Houses were then attacked, first setting fire to them and then shooting people as they escaped from the burning buildings. Lexie Gordon was one of those murdered, taking a gunshot to her face as she hid under her burning house. Gordon had sent her children fleeing when white attackers approached but suffering from typhoid fever, she stayed behind.

Many Rosewood citizens fled to the nearby swamps for safety, spending days hiding in them. Some attempted to leave the swamps but were turned back by men working for the sheriff. James Carrier, brother of Sylvester and son of Sarah, did manage to get out of the swamp and take refuge with the help of a local turpentine factory manager. A white mob found him anyhow and forced him to dig a grave for himself before murdering him.

Others found help from white families willing to shelter them.

JOHN AND WILLIAM BRYCE

Some black women and children escaped thanks to John and William Bryce, two wealthy brothers who owned a train. Aware of the violence in Rosewood and familiar with the population, the brothers drove their train to the area and invited escapees. Many of those who fled by train had been hidden in the home of the white general store owner, John Wright, and continued to do so throughout the violence. Sheriff Walker helped terrified residents make their way to Wright, who would then arrange escape with the help of the Bryce brothers.

FLORIDA'S REACTION

Florida Governor Cary Hardee offered to send the National Guard to help, but Sheriff Walker declined the help, believing he had the situation under control. Mobs began to disperse after several days, but on January 7, many returned to finish off the town, burning what little remained of it to the ground, except for the home of John Wright.

THE COURTS

A special grand jury and a special prosecutor were appointed by the governor to investigate the violence. The jury heard the testimonies of nearly 30 witnesses, mostly white, over several days, but claimed to not find enough evidence for prosecution. The surviving citizens of Rosewood did not return, fearful that the horrific bloodshed would recur.

Ocoee, Florida: The 1920 Election Day Massacre

Arrived in Ocoee, Florida with enthusiasm and two best friends determined to make their dream and strong work ethic become reality. July and his traveling companions, Mose Norma and Valentine Hightower came from South Carolina in the 1880s with very little, Ocoee was a model of post slavery economically integrated Central Florida Confederate town. In 1990s there was a common bit of wisdom passed down among black families not to be caught in Ocoee after sundown.

By 1920 there were just over 1,000 residents of the unincorporated town. Almost half of them were black. In fact, the African American population grew so large that two distinct black communities developed, sandwiching the white-dominated downtown district. The southern black community — known locally as the Baptist Quarters, and Methodist Quarters, which we know today as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). It was the northern Methodist Quarters, the older of the two neighborhoods, where the three built their homesteads. They were next-door neighbors. They were not prepared for the fear and bigotry that can cause history to repeat itself.

Julius “July” Perry

The next three decades went well for Julius he owned multiple large tracts of farmland on the north side of town. He was a well-respected peeler of the community. “It was said that anyone seeking to employ black laborers needed to speak with him first. July was admired, brave, rational thinker, a civil rights leader before there was a civil right movement. He encouraged young blacks to be educated and stand up for themselves as first-class citizens. Perry’s wife (Estelle), his three sons and daughter (Coretha Perry Caldwell) lived on a large estate that included their home and several barns and outbuildings. They

regularly opened their doors to anyone in need. If anyone was in trouble, they knew they could find advice and sanctuary in the Perry home.

Mose Norman

He liked to live a more a little more lavishly, enjoying the fruits of the years of hard work farming the 100-acre family orange grove. He drove around the brick-paved streets of downtown proudly sporting a fancy six-cylinder Columbia convertible with white sidewall tires, silver spokes, and elegant “storm curtains” instead of side windows. It was said that he was once offered \$10,000 for his groves — a huge sum for the time — but refused to take it.

Valentine Hightower

Valentine Hightower was a humble man with a low-key personality. He knew well the dangers “negroes” opened up for themselves when they got too “uppity” in the still very white supremacist society of the time. He and his wife Jane lived a modest lifestyle and raised their kids to mainly keep to themselves.

The 1920's Election

Republicans were looking forward to their first Florida senate win. Opposite of today's party paradigm, the political arena in the South of the early 20th Century was dominated by white Democrats — sometimes known as “Dixiecrats”. Conversely, the states north of the Mason-Dixon Line were Republican strongholds. Blacks, if involved in politics at all, were almost exclusively Republican. The party's influence slowly began to creep into the Deep South. These Republicans sought to work with the black population to empower them and more importantly register them to vote!

Though blacks were granted the right to vote under the 15th Amendment to the Constitution in 1870, most did not exercise the freedom for decades. Reasons for this vary from intimidation to indifference to voter suppression techniques, such as the poll tax.

For the first time in the 1920 elections women would also have the right to vote — including black women. Throughout the South the Republicans worked with prominent local black leaders on voter registration drives within their communities. They spread the word, signed people up (in some cases paying the poll tax for those who could not afford it), and encouraged them to turn out on Election Day.

John Moses Cheney

He was a powerful Republican, he formed the Orlando Power and Light Company. The former judge was a major contributor to the get-out-the-vote campaign around Orange County. These voter registration efforts intensified approaching the 1920 elections. Cheney, He would need a major helping hand from black voters if his campaign were to have any hope. In the weeks leading up to the 1920 election, the Klan sent threatening letters to Cheney, fellow attorney William O'Neal, and other Republican leaders. They ordered them to stop the voter registration campaign or face the consequences. With the warnings ignored, the Klan was only further enraged.

The KKK held rallies in the streets of cities like Orlando, Daytona, Miami, and Jacksonville. On November 1st, the day before the election, with robes and crosses, the Klan paraded through the streets of the two black communities in Ocoee late into the night. With megaphones they warned that “not a single Negro will be permitted to vote” and if any of them dared to do so there would be dire consequences.

Election Day came and at least some blacks did attempt to vote in Orange County; however, none were permitted to enter their respective polling places. White enforcers camped out around the centers and poll workers were given instructions to deflect their attempts. One-by-one would-be black voters were turned away either by threats of violence or by poll workers who found their names “mysteriously” absent from the voter registration rolls. With little other option, most returned to their homes without casting their ballots.

Mose Norman would not be so easily deterred. After being turned away that morning in his Ocoee precinct, he rode to Orlando to seek the council of Judge Cheney. The attorney instructed him to write down the names of any African Americans who were not permitted to vote and also the names of the poll workers who had denied their Constitutional right. Cheney said a lawsuit against the County could be brought to contest this violation.

Norman returned to Ocoee with these instructions, along with a handful of black citizens again seeking to vote. After again being forcibly turned away, he demanded the poll workers names and exclaimed: “We will vote, by God!” At that time Norman was revealed to have a loaded shotgun (either on his person or in his car) and an altercation ensued. Overpowered and beaten by the butt of his own gun, he escaped from the scene with help from friends. As Norman fled, the now inflamed group of whites — largely Klansmen — convened about what to do about the situation. They determined that they had to bring Mose Norman to justice and set an example for any other blacks who dared threaten their white Democratic monopoly on local authority.

The Massacre

Outraged yet fearful, Norman visited the home of his good friend and neighbor July Perry. The battered farmer showed Perry a note he had from Cheney about their legal rights and recounted what happened that day. There was a tense urgency as the two sensed something terrible was about to go down.

By that time it was early afternoon, the increasingly angry white mob headed toward the home of Mose Norman but were tipped off that he was hiding out at the home of July Perry. The “justice seekers” surrounded Perry’s home, from which Norman had long since left.

The group’s leader, a military veteran and former police chief of Orlando named Sam Salisbury, knocked on the door of the wood-framed home. Perry knew they were cornered and reluctantly answered the door. The officer insisted that Perry come with him to which the 51-year-old replied “Yes suh, boss, let me get my coat.” At that moment Salisbury grabbed Perry by the arm and put him in a headlock, thinking he might run. Perry’s daughter Coretha responded by putting a rifle in the officer’s belly. Salisbury instinctively brushed the weapon aside. In that intense moment the gun fired, shooting the officer in the right arm; he retreated out of the door and rolled on the ground to escape.

With only Perry’s family inside, a hail of gunfire erupted in both directions. Two of Salisbury’s men, Elmer McDaniels and Leo Borgard, were killed when they tried to storm the house by kicking in the backdoor. Coretha was also shot in the arm, possibly by a stray bullet from her father’s gun. Though the wound was not life threatening, she had a scar for the rest of her life.

The story goes that the family so valiantly defended their home that some were convinced there was a large group inside. The mob retreated temporarily to get reinforcements and additional manpower from Klan members in surrounding cities.

The Perry family used the two or three hour respite to escape the house. July had been seriously wounded during the incident and fled, with the help of his wife, into a nearby sugar cane patch. Coretha remained in the house to tend her injuries alone, while his two young sons hid in the barn.

Around 50 cars full of Klan members flooded into Ocoee from towns such as Winter Garden, Orlando, and Sanford. The growing ad hoc militia was more largely populated by outsiders than Ocoee townspeople themselves. Finding only 22-year-old Coretha in the house, a manhunt ensued, and Perry was soon arrested. After being taken to Orlando General Hospital for treatment of the gunshot wound to his arm, Perry was released into sheriff custody and taken to the jail in Orlando that night. A lynch mob descended upon the jail just before dawn to which Sheriff Frank Gordon handed over the keys to Perry's cell. They wasted no time in seizing and beating him. They dragged him through the streets behind a car before arriving at the entrance to Orlando Country Club near Lake Concord, where Judge Cheney's home stood. The crowd strung a now near-dead victim to a telephone pole along the highway. His hanging body was riddled with bullets.

Their vengeful lust not yet satisfied, the crowd moved on to the Methodist Quarters without a shred of mercy. As mob mentality built, they trounced from one house to another getting increasingly emboldened and vicious as they went.

They fired guns and torched homes, creating panic for the dozens of fleeing families. While some tried to fight back, out-manned and out-gunned, it was largely in vain. Throughout the day and into the early morning hours of November 4th (as late as 4:45 AM), the vile gang terrorized the northern community.

While some had already escaped into the surrounding countryside, others hunkered down in their homes and barns hoping to avoid the onslaught. Some even hid out in the crawl space under their homes. As the structures were set ablaze, entire families including pregnant women and children had to decide whether they would rather burn to death or be shot. Any of them that attempted to flee the flames were dropped by bullets from the hordes surrounding them.

All of the Methodist Quarter's 25 homes, the masonic lodge, school, and the Ocoee African Methodist Episcopal Church were set ablaze. The eery glow of memories and properties fading to ashes lit up the night sky, screams and gunshots rang out, and the smell of smoke and death poisoned the air.

The blacks that survived by hiding out into swamps, orange groves almost all would never again return to their hometown. And those refugees were the lucky ones. Estimates vary wildly but upwards of 56 of them lost their lives that night.

Decades later the childhood victims still recalled the horrors of that gruesome Election Day. The Hightowers family ended up relocating to Plymouth, just south of Mount Dora. Coretha Perry Caldwell, who escaped with her mom and brothers to Tampa, was asked years later if she had ever been back to Ocoee. She replied, "No, God, I don't ever want to see it — not even on a map." Mose Norman never returned to Florida. After visiting with friends in Apopka and Stuckey on November 3–4, 1920, he left town for New York City (presumably with his wife) where he lived out the rest of his life until his death in 1949.

The third of Ocoee's black population who owned their own land were never able to return to their properties. Those who were offered any compensation at all were forced to sell their land for pennies on the dollar. Hightower, for example, was paid only \$10 for a 37-acre tract of pine land.

