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Abstract:

This thesis provides a comparative analysis of Black Historical Erasure in both the
cases of Ocoee and Rosewood. Ocoee and Rosewood were both cites of racially
motivated programs that led to the exodus of entire African American communities- in
both cases however, the events were erased. Utilizing various post-modern texts, this
project ultimately analyzes erasure as a force that upholds ideologies of white
supremacy. Utilizing the theories of Antonio Gramsci and Karl Marx, this thesis analysis
the modus operandi of violence that resulted in erasure as well as the repercussions of
erasure. This thesis ultimately indicates that in Rosewood and Ocoee the decades long
legacy of erasure propped up narratives of white supremacy in the state.

Keywords: Ideology, Black Historical Erasure, Ocoee, Rosewood

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

Despite the importance of African Americans in America's modern and contemporary history, African American history and the contribution of African Americans in America's history is widely forgotten. From Emancipation to Reconstruction to the 21st century, the plight, the experience, the struggles, the victories and everything in between--has essentially been erased.

The phenomena occur on a nationwide scale. Formally referred to as erasure, according to literary analysts, this happening is particularly relevant to the South. The question of history in the south is both contentious and scandalous. History, for many white southerners, is a point of pride. For many African Americans, history exemplifies struggle and inequity .

The endeavor towards the historical recognition of the struggles of African Americans both during slavery and during Reconstruction has lasted centuries, made difficult by the governmental and hegemonic and cultural institutions that lack both the power and willingness to grapple and accurately portray historical events. Whereas some equivocate the removal of Confederate Statues in the South as historical erasure, academics and historians contend that erasure that actually occurred victimized Black Americans, rather than Southern Whites. This thesis is the culmination of my time at Rollins College and explores

the intersections of the following: race, history, and post-modernity. My paper looks to compare two modern episodes of African American violence and their subsequent erasure in 20th century Florida: the Ocoee election day Massacre and Rosewood Massacre.

The purpose and function of this paper will critically compare both violent episodes as examples of systemic and cultural erasure according to post modern theories of ideologies. This paper is comprised of several parts: a contextual background of African American history from slavery to the mid 20th century, an analysis of literature which will ground the comparative study in a post-modern critical theoretical framework, and a comparative analysis of both episodes as sites of erasure

1.1

"For centuries the African American heritage in Florida has been ignored by a white population unwilling to acknowledge that people of color had been instrumental in the creation of this state, that they governed themselves responsibly as free and independent people, and that they contributed in a variety of meaningful way." (Colburn, 2)

It is imperative to understand the history of Africans in antebellum Florida to properly frame the circumstances that made possible the conditions of black people during the 19th and 20th century. This chapter is dedicated to retelling the salient role of Africans in this state. Historian David Colburn recounts in detail African American history in the state. African Americans have a long and complex relationship with the state of Florida. This relationship at virtually all points in history, has been a determinant between the relations between Africans

and white Americans, from the arrival of the first slaves to carceral institutions and state-sanctioned violence in in Florida

African Americans were among the first to live, settle, and explore Florida alongside the early Spanish explorers. The relationship African Americans possessed with Florida in early America varied, depending heavily on the colonizer that ruled the state. The treatment of African Americans changed during these periods—the treatment of Africans and slaves heavily dependent on the power and presence of either the Spanish, British, or Americans. It should also be noted that Black communities thrived in Florida, independent of any colonial influences.

Interestingly, under Spanish rule both slaves and free Africans prospered by comparison to the British slave institution. The slave system utilized by the Spanish starkly contrasted the British system. Whereas the British restricted autonomy of slaves, and subjected the slaves similar to the "South Carolinian" system, the Spanish slave system likened the relationship between slave and master as one of a "god parent" (6). The Spanish slave system allowed slaves certain moral rights bankrupt from the British and the American systems. Furthermore, freed men could learn skills and were able to compete with whites for skilled labor and employment. Although all slave systems are oppressive and structurally violent, more freedoms were allowed to African Americans under the Spanish than either the English or American. The standard of living for African Americans under this system was by comparison greater- Africans were allowed to form communal bonds, join the military, and even contribute conomically and politically. The experience of African Americans in this

time period, under the Spanish was unfortunately some of the best they would receive for centuries.

African Americans also formed strong social bonds during this time, primarily due to the participation of slaves and freemen in the Church (Colburn, 7). The church offered sanctuary to Black Floridians, providing a philosophical reprieve from constant oppression. The presence of the Church in Florida strengthened familial and extra familial ties, which stabilized African American communities, and would continue to work as a uniting centripetal force for Black Americans in the state before and after slavery and Reconstruction (7).

The relative "prosperity" enjoyed by African Americans during this time period, was starkly contrasted with the treatment of both slaves and freedmen under the British, and later, the Americans. Under the English, slaves adhered to a much stricter slave code; devoid of many of the rights and privileges of the Spanish systems, slaves were brutalized and freedmen were subjected to various restrictions that limited any social, economic, or political freedoms. Furthermore, many fugitive slaves from English colonies, such as the Carolinas, would flee to the then Spanish colony of Florida. Colonies of freed slaves populated Florida- their freedom was honored by the sanctuary policies of the Spanish (26). Freed slave townships began to dot Florida. Fugitive slaves and freed Africans would also join Seminole communities for protection and to form alliances.

Florida had plantation potential, garnering much interest from the English, where they could farm labour intensive crops such as rice, tobacco, and indigo. Under the English,

Florida became plantation country. The English, after realizing that indentured whites were not suited to the agricultural work of Florida's plantations, opted towards chattel slavery for their needs (Colburn and Landers, 1995). American-born slaves were picked specifically by land owners to work on the Florida plantations. These slaves were regarded as more durable, and were deemed more likely suited to the climate in Florida. The experience of slaves during this time differed from plantation to plantation or owner to owner. Some owners would permit slave marriages, some would allow their slaves to attend church, and some were treated tolerably rather than with much cruelty. Ultimately, however, the type of chattel slavery and the treatment of slaves during this period would serve as a model of treatment of slaves until Reconstruction (Colburn and Landers, 1995).

The South Carolinian model proved lucrative for land owners, but severely limited the relative freedom that Africans had in the state under the Spanish. Nevertheless, as plantations proliferated, land owners move down to the state, including their slaves with them- the Black population began to heavily grow in Reconstruction Florida.

1.2

"I think we are bound by every consideration of duty, gratitude and interest, to make these people as enlightened, prosperous and happy as their new situation will admit. For generations past they have been our faithful, contented and happy slaves. They have been attached to our persons and our fortunes, sharing with us all our feelings, rejoicing with us in our prosperity, mourning with us in our adversity." - Governor David S. Walker (1865)

Following the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era saw considerable tensions between white and black populations. Florida was reasonably unscathed compared to other states where battles were fought on the ground. Internally, Florida experienced struggles relating to adjusting back into the Union. Paul Ortiz, an oral historian and scholar on the topic of African American history in the state, outlined the attitudes of southern white democrats and African Americans. Progressive reforms were not popular among the white Democratic majority. Most white democrats favored a system that kept African Americans economically, socially, and politically subjugated. This was reflective of the hesitance of most Floridians to grant African Americans freedom.

Despite a union win, and the subsequent election of a Republican president, Florida remained a culturally southern state. Expansive reforms were attempted in Florida under a Republican (formerly liberal) Federal government. In order to equalize the status of African Americans- legislative reforms aimed to re-enfranchise African Americans in the state and country. Policy reforms included citizenship, voting rights, and women's voting rights. Despite such sweeping attempted reforms, the Southern whites were opposed to most of the legislation-state and local governments worked to revert many of the reforms. There was notable public pushback, wherein even governors stated their disagreement with the Union's decision to free slaves.

In Florida, southern democratic Governor Walker outwardly opposed the enfranchising of African Americans (Pierce, 2). In an 1865 speech, Walker referred to African Americans as "faithful, contented, and happy slaves" who benefitted from the protection and generosity of a "superior race" (Pierce, 5). Walker also revealed his disdain and seeming refusal to allow newly freedmen from voting in elections. Walker's speech illuminated the climate of the South. His sentiments demonstrated the prevalent notion that slavery could be perceived as having economic and social benefits to African Americans. His speech also echoed the sentiment that the Northern imposition in Southern affairs was unnecessary as slaves were happy, prosperous, and grateful under the institution of slavery. Furthermore, the governor revealed in this speech the intention of many white Floridians to prevent "negro suffrage," among other freedoms reformists attempted to grant African

Americans. Ultimately, Walker was a spokesperson for most Floridian whites- he was a strong defendant of slavery and strongly opposed to black voting rights.

Union attempts at honoring the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments were undermined by many southern democrats and whites. Florida was even found to have participated in corrupt activities to hinder black and Republican voters. In the election of 1876, Florida was among several southern states that utilized intimidation techniques such as physical threats and violence to intimidate minority and Republican voters. African Americans were even abducted and used as an intimidation technique. Eye witnesses stated police officers would carry guns to polling stations, and white Democrats would crowd station to intimidate blacks from voting.

Furthermore, the rise of the Klu Klux Klan led to more intimidation of Black and Republican voters. The group routinely utilized violence to "instill fear into local communities in Florida" (Pierce, 3).

According to Ortiz, a scholar on the struggles of African American suffrage in both Florida and the nation, the Klu Klux Klan held extreme power within the state. Surging in 1920, the Klan was the "most powerful paramilitary force in the United States" (98). The group was "deified" (68). "Tales of political violence were told and retold" in order to solidify the white rule in the area (68). Violence within the state also did not solely affect blacks. Both during and after Reconstruction, whites who were deemed potential threats to systems of social orders were often targeted by white supremacists (68). A white, ex-Confederate veteran was even kidnapped by the Klu Klux Klan because of his political and social views.

The veteran, C. M Hooper, was deemed a danger because of alliance with African Americans in the state. During his abduction, the Klu Klux Klan attempted to lynch, but he luckily escaped into nearby swamp land. Despite this ordeal, Hooper was never able to testify his experience to state leaders.

The Jim Crow era was tumultuous in the state. The continued rise of white supremacy and extremist groups seemed to invite corruption. The presence of corruption "became generalized," according to Ortiz, and the rule of law within the state began to decay. Public officials often acted with impunity, terrorizing white and black communities alike. Law enforcement officers in one Florida county threatened the lynching of African Americans and also drove out white citizens; a resident stated the sheriff started a "civil war" within the county (69).

The violence primarily meant to suppress and target the newly freed African Americans from enjoying the various freedoms granted to them in the constitution (62). "The goal of racial violence was to sever all African American claims to basic rights, dignity, and protection from the state," states Ortiz (63). Blacks were persecuted for banal offenses, such as attempting to vote, unionizing, owning land, and failing to show "deference" to whites (62). Florida possessed the highest lynching rate in the United States from 1882 to 1930, aligning closely with organizational efforts of blacks in the state.

1.3

"There is no way of estimating the power and influence we would have if we act in union for common interest of our ten million people and use the same methods that are used by other intelligent interests… it is for this reason that I strongly endorse the movement for the friendly society union or anything else that has for its object the bringing of better conditions for us as a people." (Ortiz, 103)

Despite the many challenges faced by African Americans in reconstruction Florida, they made considerable strides in their own organization of communities in an effort to establish relative freedom and autonomy. According to Ortiz, the vast majority of successes in the Florida Civil Rights and the Florida Voting Movement was because of organizational successes. African Americans were eager to unify against white violence and suppression. Groups of freedmen corroborated, assessing the best ways to enfranchise themselves (72). Many advocated for legislative protections; others advocated for armed defensive techniques. African Americans even decided that one of the best ways to stand up to white supremacy was to appeal to the Church (73). The final two decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century laid the beginnings of an organized civil rights movement within the state. The organizational efforts of freedmen and women worked to restore rights and dignities outlined in the constitution.

African Americans began to strive towards uniting in their efforts of enfranchising themselves. Various organizations, such as the Colored Knights of Pythias and other "lodges and fraternities" pledged mutual support and aid to members. These mutual aid organizations as well as black churches were able to render support to members; services provided

included burial assistance and sick benefits. Mutual aid societies granted members and organizers political experiences that would characterize later "political insurgencies" (103). Secret societies in the south would draw upon ideals of "civic fraternalism" and mutual aid organizations in attempt to regain power against white supremacist groups. Laborers organized heavily for reasons that included fair hours, decent wages, leave, and dignified burial. Due to the often dangerous industries within which African Americans were involved in, such as railroads, cotton, and turpentine, black laborers had unusually high mortality rates. Laborers and their families were poor and could not afford dignified burial services; this prompted robust mutual solidarity to ensure dignified burial and proper funerals. (101). Some laborers, including north Florida's longshoremen, were able to effectively unionize, organizing a tradition of respect for dead laborers, where the entire port would shut down to honor fallen "brothers" (105).

Black secret societies also proliferated during this era (101). According to Ortiz, nearly 1 in 6 black men were part of secret societies. These institutions provided both economic and social benefits. In times of crisis, they "kept families intact" and "delivered benefits in emergencies" (111). Strategies utilized seemed to resemble an early attempt at civil rights solidarity (103). The brotherhoods and unified strategies continued well after reconstruction and were in fact heightened after World War I. Black brotherhoods, mutual aid agencies, civil fraternities, and churches each formed important pillars in Floridian African American society.

1.4

"But suffrage for the negro, while easily sustained upon abstract principles, demands consideration upon what are recognized as the urgent necessities of the case. It is a measure of relief–a shield to break the force of a blow already descending with violence, and render it harmless. The work of destruction has already been set in motion all over the South. Peace to the country has literally meant war to the loyal men of the South, white and black; and negro suffrage is the measure to arrest and put an end to that dreadful strife". - Frederick Douglass

The early 20th century saw the considerable unification of African Americans in their pursuit of voting rights. In 1919, after the return of many veterans, a voter registration movement took place in Florida. The election of 1920 was widely believed to be "one of the most important elections since the civil war" and African Americans organized based upon the circumstance. Furthermore, most African Americans in the South believed that the most salient way to defeat white supremacy in Florida was via the abolition of the one-party system.

Notable Floridians including Mary McLeod Bethune advocated for the unhindered suffrage of African Americans. Furthermore, after the ratification of the 19th Aendment, voter movements gained new life as African American women began to register to vote en-masse (191). Black women rallied, urging other members of their community to save where they can in order to pay the poll tax. Black women were considered formidable voting forces

according to scholars (191). In many cases, black women were registered to vote at higher numbers than white women. Again, the primary drive behind most registered black voters at this time was the dissolution of one party rule in Florida. According to scholar Paul Ortiz, if this dissolution was to occur, so would the loosening of white supremacy and Jim Crow Laws.

It should be noted that the unification and solidarity of black Americans at this time threatened the sustained hegemony of white supremacists in the state. The continued unification and organization of black communities to vote appeared much to the consternation and the mounting anxiety of white supremacists. It is for this reason hat suffrage was firmly fought against (Ortiz, 191).

In 1934, the lynching of Claude Neal was an incident that further incentivized the continued mobilization of black women and black female voters. Neal, a 23 -year old farmhand, was lynched in Jacksonville after a body of a young white woman, Lola Cannady was found. Neal's death was particularly gruesome. He was lynched after an alleged confession of the murder. A mob of thousands abducted Neal from prison. He was later tortured and killed. This lynching is widely regarded as one of the most brutal, and prompted advocates and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) to directly appeal to President Roosevelt. Mary McLeod Bethune, a suffrage advocate in Florida, appealed to both the governor and the president at the time stating that Federal action was needed, as states had proven they were yet to solve the lynching problem within the borders of the state.

The continued presence of Jim Crow laws in the Florida south activated women's organizations in particular to lobby on behalf of victimized men and women. The brutal lynching of Claude Neal in central Florida prompted various organizations to mobilize and contact the Federal government (Correa, 2018). Walter White, the functioning president of the NAACP would often reach out to women in these organizations, asking for help in respect to the organization's national strategies. The events of the early 20th century often empowered women to act, whether it be via lobbying against lynching or mobilizing en masse communities of African Americans to vote.

It should be noted that the mobilization of black women and the NAACP after the lynching of Claude Neal did not result in a Federal law against lynching. Only in 2020 did Congress pass an anti-lynching act (British Broadcast Channel, 2020).

Conclusion:

Each of these time periods sets the tone for the political, social, economic, and cultural atmosphere that made possible the extreme violence against African Americans in Florida.

Chapter 2: CRITICAL FRAMEWORKS

"The tendency to ignore the Negro's contribution to American life and to strip him of his personhood is as old as the earliest history books and as contemporary as the morning's newspaper. To upset this cultural homicide, the Negro must rise up with an affirmation of his own Olympian manhood. Any movement for the Negro's freedom that overlooks this necessity is only waiting to be buried. As long as the mind is enslaved, the body can never be free."

- *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr*

"Where Do We Go From Here"

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the well-known Civil Rights Activists in American history, and arguably, one of the most well-known revolutionaries in contemporary history. In 1967, Dr. King delivered the speech "Where Do We Go from Here"; the speech, given just a year before Dr. King's passing, occurs at the heels of major riots in the United States. In this speech, Dr. King contemplates work that needs to take place. He contended, despite strides taken during the Civil Rights Movement, that further work was necessary to ensure continued economic, political, and social realization of African Americans in the United States (King, 1967). This speech argues that the struggle of African Americans is symbolized by the erasure of African American history. In this speech, one of his last major sermons, Dr. King refers to the continued erasure of African American contributions to the United States as "cultural homicide"- one that must be reckoned with by

the "affirmation" of African Americans (King, 1967). Dr. King's speech succinctly sets the

tone and describes the functionality and repercussions of erasure in the contemporary

movement (King, 1967). This literature review will work to expand these definitions of

erasure, and build upon Dr. King's contentions of the invisibility of African American

contributions in the modern era. My work focuses on the erasure of black history as a result

of white supremacy, and specifically focuses on the invisibility of violence against African

Americans, enabled by white supremacist bodies and organization.

Parul Sehgal, a critic at and columnist at the *New York Times Book Review* posts that

black historical erasure in the United States is by no means an isolated phenomenon. Since

ruling slavery illegal in 1863, America has fallen short of addressing African American

History in the United States. Reckoning with the past continues to be a source of great

difficulty for American institutions and American citizens, often due to a failure of

addressing injustices faced by African Americans at the hands of the American government,

and by white Americans (Sehgal, 2016). Sehgal asserts that on both a societal and individual

basis, there is great discomfort in appraising the historical treatment of African Americans

during slavery, reconstruction, and the American Jim Crow era. Historical erasure is evident

in the invisibility of historical narratives of both slaves and African Americans in the present

day. Black historical erasure is an institutional problem, one that leaves an entire

demographic without a full and nuanced understanding of their positioning within a pre-

modern, modern, and post-modern America (Sehgal, 2016). Furthermore, historical erasure

has been cited as a form of structural and intellectual violence (Sehgal, 2016).

Defining Frameworks:

This theoretical and critical context provides insights into the previous failure of communities in Florida to reckon with the histories of violence against African American communities. Black historical erasure in Florida hinders a complete and complex understanding of the relationship of African Americans to their communities, to Florida, and to the country at large. The incidents at Rosewood and Ocoee are telling case studies of the occurrence of historical erasure. Understanding these events will likely provide a context of understanding to the lack of reckoning of contemporary events of state sanctioned violence against African Americans.

More importantly, this chapter looks to elucidate the following: definitions of erasure, repercussions of erasure, and erasure as violence. Following these definitions and explanations, the literature reviewed explains how erasure is utilized to prop up narratives of white supremacy. I then explore explore erasure as a repercussion of ideology, and will be explained via post-modernist philosophy. The ideologies that perpetuate erasure are connected to ruling ideologies that replicate the "white historical superstructure." These ideologies render the injustices of the Jim Crow and slave era as without offender. The victims are without voice, and the aggressors without guilt.

This chapter provides a theoretical and critical context as to why black historical erasure occurred and continues to occur. Utilizing the works of Karl Marx, Noam Chomsky,

and Louis Althusser, this literature review consolidates their writings to illuminate how

erasure functions. Furthermore, this paper defines the parameters of erasure, the problems

with defining history, and the advantages of erasure to white imperialist historical narratives.

Furthermore, the literature reviewed finds that historical erasure is a form of structural

violence.

Defining Erasure

Erasure essentially works to render an "other", invisible. According to *Identity and*

Erasure: Finding the Elusive Caribbean, erasure is defined as the act of "neglecting, looking

past, minimizing, ignoring, or rendering an invisible other (Allahar, 125)." Erasure victimizes

minorities and forces groups and demographics silent-ultimately erasure ends up affecting

already oppressed groups. In most cases, it most deeply affects the queer community,

Indigenous community, the African American community and women. The author, in this

work, elucidates examples of erasure in primarily Caribbean countries and nations, with

erasure primarily affecting indigenous communities in Guyana, ethnic sub-communities in

Barbados, and Chinese persons in Jamaica. Erasure is widely viewed as an attack on identity

(Allahar, 127)- and it attempts to recover history and reclaim historical narratives as a means

to recognize collective identity, and also can be presented as a way to hold formerly guilty

institutions accountable. Erasure also occurs because of the unequal power in different social

groups (125). Historical erasure in America has often targeted people of color. Some groups

have the privilege of denoting and defining their history and identity, while other, oppressed

groups are unable to provide input on their own narrative, experience, and identity (125).

Erasure is also often the effect of imperialism and colonization (125). Furthermore, erasure

occurs heavily in Eurocentric contexts.

Erasure also works to corrode ideas of identity and eliminates the records the

narratives of minority groups from the collective history of a society (125). Erasure is an arm

of the totalizing narrative that is borne and runs parallel to colonization, imperialism, and

white supremacy. The failure of the both the American government and internal American

institutions to consider the inclusion of African Americans in the US historical narrative is

telling in two ways: what *is* said and what *is not* said. There has been an institutional

blindness in both government and academia in regards to answering the questions of the

reasons behind historical erasure (Lynn, 2018). This narrative exclusion of the black

American experience is related to the foundational philosophy of post-modern critical

theory. The study of erasure is directly related to modern and post-modern works by Karl

Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser. The terms ideology, hegemony, and

superstructure aid in the understanding of the reasonings behind the continued occurrence

of erasure.

Erasure as Violence: Examples in History and the Contemporary

Before delving into the philosophy and definitions of the frameworks that cause erasure, this section provides examples of Black Historical erasure and the invisibility of the contributions of African Americans in the contemporary. This section aims to give examples of erasure beyond the scope of Rosewood and Ocoee.

In the examples of sexual assaults against black women, for instance, academic studies and "white feminists" have overlooked the phenomenon of sexual assault as both a gendered and racial issue (Lynn, 2018). The modern #MeToo movement was birthed by African American activist, Tarana Burke, in 2006 in an attempt to reconcile the disproportionate effects of sexual violence and assault against black women. The contemporary "#MeToo" movements origins also evolved to eventually ignore the contributions of black and poor women (Riley, 2018). Tarana Burke the founder of the movement, recently pushed for the remembering of poor, black, and indigenous women- as the media framed the #MeToo movement as primarily affecting women in Hollywood (Riley, 2018).

The #MeToo movement was partly inspired by the widespread sexual violence experienced by slave women and men. Violence against black women was ubiquitous in the forced labor industry, as slaves did not have the power to give consent. In the Jim Crow era, African American women faced similar circumstances. Post-emancipation, despite slaves gaining freedom, saw laws still disproportionately harmed people of color. In certain states, "laws regarding rape protected only white women" (Prather et al., 2018). Furthermore,

because of the failure of laws to "protect African American women" "rape served to control them" (Prather et. Al, 2018). Rape was another tool of violence and dominance. Obviously, black women had no agency to resist their slave masters, or to even have their narratives or stories reported or recounted. Black women in the Jim Crow era also faced gang rapes before public lynchings (Prather et. Al, 2018).

African American men were not immune to sexual violence in this era. Reflective of the power dynamics prevalent during this time, many black men were also castrated by white masters or mobs in a show of dominance. African American men would also at times undergo castration, "restricting their opportunities to reproduce with a partner of their choosing (Prather et. Al, 2018)."

When recounting the advancements of various specialties in medicine, the non-consensual role of black women's bodies are also widely ignored (Zellars, 2018). Slave and slave women in particular, were used by physicians, as slaves "became experimental subjects in the development of the field" (Owens and Fett, 2019). Gynecology was specifically developed because of the work conducted on slaves. James Marion Sims, widely regarded as the father of gynecology, was successful in part because he was able to develop surgical processes to repair "obstetrical fistula[s]". This successful procedure was developed because he was free to operate on "a group of Alabama slave women" (Owens and Fett, 2019). Other advancements in medical care occurred because of the desire of slaveowners to preserve the reproductive capabilities of their slaves.

Due to the end of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, slaveowners were invested in the continued creation of slaves via the reproductive capabilities of current slaves (Owens and Fett, 2019). Furthermore, in "white medical schools" black bodies were often used as cadavers and "medical specimens." The role black people and black bodies have played in the advancements of fields within the medical profession were also often deemed as "devoid of the toxicity of racism" (Owens and Fett, 2019). Physicians and medical professionals in the 18th century would practice and "perfect" experimental procedures such as caesarian sections on black slaves, that would later be used to treat "all" women (Prather et. Al, 2018).

Tulsa, the site of one of America's most notorious race riots, faced a similar kind of erasure (Chang, 2019). Tulsa, Oklahoma, was once the cite of an affluent and majority African American town. Residents of "Black Wall Street," a nickname for Greenwood, were prosperous. They owned businesses, cars, and property. Oklahoma proved to be a relative safe haven for former slaves migrating post-emancipation. Due to urban divisions, the town was geographically and culturally isolated from whites. Tulsa was founded by wealthy black land-owning entrepreneurs (Clark, 2019). This portion of Tulsa, known as Greenwood functioned as a hub for black business and businessman. Segregated by a train line, black businesses functioned relatively isolated from Oklahoma's white populations. Greenwood, the main avenue in Black Wall Street, had "luxury shops, restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, jewelry and clothing stores, night clubs and offices," all owned by African Americans. Furthermore, Greenwood was self-sufficient to the point of having a separate school system, post office, banks, and hospital.

The prosperity of Greenwood attracted negative attention. The prosperity of the Black residents garnered resentment from white Oklahomans, as many did not like the seeming lavish lifestyle enjoyed by those they deemed "inferior" (Clark, 2019). Tensions between African Americans and whites were also fraught with tension, because of a resurgence of the presence of the Klu Klux Klan in the community. Following the alleged sexual assault of white woman by a black man, white Oklahomans descended upon Greenwood, razing the community, and leaving hundreds dead and millions of dollars worth of property damages (Clark, 2019).

The Massacre in Greenwood, Oklahoma is a primary example of black erasure. Oklahoma whites essentially decimated the town, forcing the survivors to flee, bereft of their homes, business, and savings. Despite "Black Wall Street" being a particularly violent episode in America's past it is oft forgotten.

Following the massacre on the primarily black community, there were no reparations offered. Current residents possess anger over the lack official attempts for "reconciliation"- despite damages estimated up to 50 million dollars occurring (Chang, 2019). While Greenwood has seen revitalization efforts, there is little memory left honoring the 20th century residents of Greenwood, Oklahoma (Chang, 2019).

Only in the 21st century was an inquiry conducted, but this year popular culture been alerted to the occurrence, via the feature on Watchmen, an HBO original. Despite being one of the most violent episodes in America's past, little is known about the event in contemporary culture.

Black historical erasure is also observed in the social curricula of K-12 schools (King, 2017). Historically, the social studies curriculum in primary and secondary school settings "either largely ignored black history or misrepresented the subject" (King, 14). In the 20th century, textbooks and curricula often defined black people in history books as "docile, uncivilized, and place" (King, 14). With the civil rights movements in the 1960's, there was an intentional movement to include African American history in the curriculum. It is only in the modern day that significant strides were made to create a curriculum at least partly constructed to tell the stories of African Americans (14). Names such as Harriet Tubman and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are universally recognized by students, for instance. Unfortunately, however, this is often the extent of popular knowledge on African American history in American schools.

Despite these strides in the telling of history, many schools are "falling short" in teaching curriculum related to slavery. According to a study conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center showed that classrooms were not equipping their students with a historical understanding of slavery. In a 1,000-participant study targeting high school seniors "only one third of the respondents knew that the 13th Amendment ended slavery, less than half knew about the Middle Passage, and only eight percent answered that slavery was the primary reason the South seceded from the Union" (Daley, 2018).

Studies conducted in K-12, showed that despite teachers' belief that a nuanced understanding of Black History in America, African American history took up about "8-9%" of total class time. Furthermore, some teachers expressed difficulties and discomfort at

having to teach about slavery. Teachers and curriculum were also disproportionately focused upon the economics and politics of slavery, rather than the "lived experiences of enslaves people" (Turner, 2018). Despite the basic knowledge students may have had in regard to Black History, understanding was extremely surface level.

The failure of black history to be taught in schools is a large contributing factor to African American historical erasure. Most students, of all demographics, have very little understanding of the significance of African Americans and slavery have in the United States (Turner, 2018).

Toni Morrison, one of the most prolific African American authors of the 20th and 21st centuries referred to the collective amnesia of the public in confronting slavery in her most famous work, *Beloved*. She referred to the failure of remembering as "national amnesia" because "I don't want to remember it, black people don't want to remember it, white people don't want to remember" (Randolph, 105).

Overall, examples of historical erasure are common in modern American history. It is prevalent and observed in the absence of understanding the institutions of slavery, the role of the African American body in medicine, and the invisibility of African American history in primary and secondary curriculum.

History as Ideology: A Post-Modern Framework

History, despite one's potential assumption that it is an objective study, is vulnerable to ideologies that further replicate a guilt-less white historical legacy. In order to best understand this, one must frame history within the context of ideology and hegemony. Ideology, a term used by both Karl Marx and radical modernists and post-modernists, explains the relationships held between people and their conditions of existence. Ideologies or belief systems are exemplified in various ways; the most totalizing of these ideologies include religion and capitalism. Marxists and Neo-Marxists wrote prolifically on the role of ideology in society. Although ideology was not necessarily physical, it did determine the ways in which individuals interacted in both society and within institutions in society.

Louis Althusser, a post-modernist French philosopher, wrote prolifically on the topic of ideology and its function within society. Ideology, borne from the ideological state apparatus, exists within the private domain and contrasts heavily with repressive state apparatuses. Ideologies are "multiple, distinct, and relatively autonomous" (Althusser, 1970), Ideological state apparati contrast from the repressive state apparati, which directly work to control populations by various means- examples of repressive state apparatus include the military, police force, courts, government and rule of law. Ideological state apparatuses function differently, and effect persons their entire lifetime. They are ambiguous and nebulous, but easily recognized. The ideological state apparatus produces and reinforces the relationship individuals have in relation to the state. Ideologies exist because of the utility

they lend to the ruling class. An individual's entire social consciousness, from infancy until death, are inevitably affected by ideology. There is no instance wherein an individual can separate themselves from ideology (Ryder, 2014), which makes it an effective tool to perpetuate the collective amnesia regarding African American history in the United States.

Because Althusser names the relationship of ideologies to their human subjects as imaginary, it begs the question: why? Althusser, in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,* poses the same question. Since the relationship between subject and ideology is arbitrary, why do these ideologies emerge?

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels outlined the origins of ideology. He begins by differentiating between the ruling class and the working class. The ruling class monopolizes both the production of material goods along with production of intellectual material. They state that along with their existing a division of labor, there also exists a division of mental labor and intellectual production (Marx and Engels, 1846). Based in a Hegelian conception, Marx and Engels argue that the ruling class both materially rules the lower class, and *intellectually* rules the working class. The authors determine that due to the intellectual determinism that originates from the ruling class, the bourgeoisie determine the extent and the compass of a historical epoch" (Marx and Engels, 1846). To put it simply, the ideas of the ruling class will determine the characterizations of every epoch in history. This assertion is consistent with the theory that the ideologies that work to erase the contributions and existence of African Americans in American history are inextricably linked to the ruling class.

In the case of history, the narratives dispersed work to support the ideas of a guilt free America—of a guilt free white society. Althusser further explicates on the role of ideology within the realm of the ruling class. Ideology is necessary for the unconscious cooperation of minority factions.

The findings of this work are echoed by various post-modernist philosophers in the century. A notable recent work that corroborates the role of ideology apropos society is *Manufacturing Consent.* Although Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky referred to the "mass media" in their groundbreaking work, the essence of their work relates back to the role of ruling ideologies and lends insight into the potential reasoning behind the erasure of history. For instance, when Herman and Chomsky refer to the manipulation of populations via "propaganda," they posit that "propaganda campaigns in general, have been closely attuned to elite interests" (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The specific dissemination of certain information works to uphold, reiterate, and garner support for the class interests of elitist groups. Although Herman and Chomsky are primarily referring to the role of mass media in ideology, their argument is pertinent to understanding why black historical erasure is continually perpetuated by dominant groups in the United States.

History, is a form of ideology and perpetuates the continuing narrative of white supremacy. Hegemony is perpetuated by the of the ideologies of the ruling class. History, however, would fall under the category of a cultural ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1970). Examples of a cultural ideological state apparatus include literature, art, history, and

the humanities (Althusser, 1970). History is an ideological function of a fundamental

structure of American thought.

The ideology that results in the erasure of Black Historical events is backed by the

hegemonic power of the white super structure. Hegemony is incredibly useful in regards to

defining the subjective nature of history and erasure as it further explicates upon the ways in

which the state and various bodies work to control social consciousness.

Hegemony, a term academically most famously used by Antonio Gramsci, is defined

as an "ideological rule" existing because of the consolidation of thought processes (Felluga).

Furthermore, hegemony is dependent on ideology. While ideology has "no history"

(Althusser, 1970), history *is* ideology. Ideological state apparati, reproduces the relations of

citizens to the state. In the case of history, the narratives dispersed are meant to support the

ideas of a guilt free America, of a guilt free white society. This is supported by the hegemonic

body of the primarily white superstructure. Hegemony is communicated in several different

ways, in terms of ideology, this is done via subliminal inculcation.

One of the seminal theses of Gramsci's work is the important of this inculcation of

consciousness. Once ideologies have "controlled" consciousness, there is no little questioning

as to why history and posed in such a way. The acceptance of ideology leaves a profound

impact upon the "individual" (Felluga). Ideology allows for the unconditional submission of

the individual to society and the acceptance of the historical superstructure.

While the literature reviewed may seem separated from the study of history, history

is an arm of ideology. Ideology is telling of the white American superstructure that results in

the historical erasure of African Americans in American history. This consciousness-hegemony has utility because it supplies social control and social consent. If one buys the cultural ideology of a guilt-less United States, one may be less likely to question instances of erasure.

The Study of History: A Brief Overview

Various schools of philosophy have historically occupied themselves with the questions of the potential objectivity of history. Positivists, idealists, and post-modernists each approach history from widely different angles. Positivists, believe history can be realized, as long as there is rational, logical, and justifiable evidence to support the assertions of the historian. Positivism, a French school of philosophy, asserts that knowledge is concrete if there are ample reasons to reinforce the narratives described. Positivists also claim that there are "laws" of historical development. Idealism differs from positivism, in that it does not believe that laws of historical development can be derived from historical narrative (Feigl, 2019).Idealists believe that history is a subjective study, one that cannot be reiterated or replicated (Guyer, 2015). Idealists are less scientific in their approach to their history. Idealism heavily relies upon empathetic responses- starkly contrasting the extremely scientific approach of positivists.

Post-modernists take a more extreme approach to the realization of history. Post-modern philosophers do not believe in the objectivity of the past, nor do they believe that

the past can be accurately realized. Post-modernists ultimately believe that history is an

ideology characterized by the philosophies and ideologies of the ruling class, or

superstructure.

Post-Modern historians have come to the conclusion that historical objectivity is

impossible (Duignan, 2019).

Post Modernity and Historiographical Accuracy*:*

In the 20th century, post-modern philosophers began to question the way in which

historians wrote history. This movement was epistemological in nature, questioning the ways

in which an objective reality is realized. Social scientists began to question the concrete ideas

of history, and instead evaluate what has been deemed as evidence and evident of history.

The post-modern deconstruction of history reduces history to a more interpretive

experience, rather than a hard truth.

Compelling questions to the very nature of history are questioned by various post-

modernists. Post-modernity is characterized by the decentralization of truth. The works of

post-modernists work to undo the traditional ideals of truth, and instead posit them as a

function of cultural ideals and relativism (Ankersmit, 145). Rather than existing one truth,

there exists many. Philosophers such as Michel Foucalt, Francois Lyotard, and Jurgen

Habermas deconstructed and extrapolated upon post-modernism, with Michel Foucault

paying special attention to historiography and the way that history is constructed. Post-modernist views of history and historiography align closely with the idea a decentralization of truth has occurred. While modernists view history as an almost scientific truth, based upon evidence and primary accounts, post-modernists view historiography as a series of interpretations. Whereas modernists view history as a concrete reality, not unlike science, post-modernists deem history an expression on "interpretations of the past" rather than the "past" itself (Ankersmit, 145). In *History and Theory,* F.R Ankersmit described the function of evidence in modernist and post-modernist studies of history. Evidence in modernist philosophy is the primary determinant of the "reality of history" (145). Post-modernist philosophers liken evidence to the "brushstrokes used by the painter to produce a certain affect" (145). To post-modern philosophers ruminating the question of history, evidence paints simply a perspective history. Furthermore, Ankersmit asserts that despite evidence arising during a period of time, the actual characteristics of that specific epoch may not be recognized until the passing of that era. Similar to Roland Barthes, post-structuralist theorists, and linguists, Ankersmit asserts the importance of the "unsaid."

Post-modern theory and post-structuralism also delve deeply into the "unsaid"- this refers to the silence that contrasts language. Popularized by Roland Barthes and other post-structuralists, the study of the "unsaid" is as important as language itself. Jane Hill, an anthropologist and linguist stressed the relationship of the "unsaid" to culture (22). Linguists, in a more modern context, play close attention to lexicon, grammatical structures, vocabulary, tone-overall what is said. Post-structural linguists are similarly concerned with

the assumption and the inferences that can occur from the "unsaid" (22). In terms of

language, the unsaid refers to a variety of factors that must be unpacked if one attempts to

understand what is "said." Hill extrapolated her point using the analogy of a piano. She states

that the sentence "She heard the piano" can explain only one thing to the passing listener-

that someone is playing the piano. In reality, the sentence releases inferences, such as there is

another person playing the piano, that she is located in a place where someone can play the

piano, etc. The inferences are not explicitly mentioned by the speaker or writer of the

sentence. The sentence, by paying attention to what is "unsaid," releases various truths about

the condition of what is spoken or written (22).

Hill asserts that the study of the "unsaid" is symbolic of both knowledge and cultural

factors. Whereas words and speech can directly reference the explicit, the unsaid refers to

the implicit (21). The implicit meanings of the unsaid can lead to important interpretations

of what is said. For post-structuralist linguists, the "unsaid" must be contended with as

seriously as the "said." Hill asserts that the silence in speech is "a vast and unspoken source of

human cultural meaning derivable primarily only by inference" (22). Furthermore, Hill

posits that understanding "linguistic code" would be impossible without exploring the role

and characterization of the unsaid (21). The characteristics of the "unsaid" are related to the

erasure that occurs in history. History, like language, is dependent on the lexicon (or

evidence) presented, but equally dependent on the what is *not* presented.

America faces an institutional amnesia in regards to black history. A post-modern

philosophical lens, as well as the previously mentioned case studies work to de-obfuscate the

role that white supremacy plays in the telling of Black History in America. The literature

reviewed ultimately contends that erasure occurs primarily because of the ways that

ideologies and hegemonic bodies work to render white America as virtually guiltless, and

leaves African Americans with little historical closure, reckoning, or commemoration for

their achievements and suffering, in the past and present. The following chapters will

explore the ways in which Black history was erased in two local episodes, the Rosewood

Massacre and the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Massacre.

Chapter 3: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON ERASURE

"I think we are bound by every consideration of duty, gratitude and interest, to make these

people as enlightened, prosperous and happy as their new situation will admit. For

generations past they have been our faithful, contented and happy slaves. They have been

attached to our persons and our fortunes, sharing with us all our feelings, rejoicing with us in

our prosperity, mourning with us in our adversity. If there were exceptions to this general

rule, they were only individual exceptions. Every Southern man who hears me knows that

what I say is literally true in regard to the vast mass of our colored population. The world has

never before seen such a body of slaves. For not only in peace, but in war, they have been

faithful to us." -Governor David S. Walker (1865)

The massacres or programs that occurred in both Rosewood and Ocoee share more

similarities than differences. The characteristics, motivations, and tactics present in both

events elucidate the racial atmosphere during the time of Reconstruction Era Florida. The

feelings of the majority of white Southerner's is encapsulated by former Governor of Florida,

Governor Walker in 1865 where he asserts his displeasure at the freedom of slaves. His speech both echoed and set the tone for the behaviors of many southern democrats following the Emancipation of slaves. In both instances of racial violence certain characteristics remained similar. Each event occurred because of racial motivations. In the case of Ocoee, the massacre was the result of African Americans attempting to vote. In the case of Rosewood, the Massacre and exodus occurred because of the sexual assault allegations of a white woman against a black man. Furthermore, each event occurred in Central Florida in the same time period. The Ocoee Massacre proceeded the Rosewood Massacre by only three years.

This chapter will focus on the factors that analogize each event, focusing primarily upon characteristics of each town, the political atmosphere at the time in each respective location, as well as the modus operandi that caused the decimation of each community. More importantly, I will be comparing the historical erasure of both events.

It should be noted initially that although erasure occurred in both instances of white-sanctioned violence, the degree of erasure varied. Rosewood experienced much greater visibility on a national and international level, compared to Ocoee, still struggling for regional or even local visibility.

Rosewood:

The Rosewood Massacre was the 1923 destruction of a primarily black community near Gainesville in Northern Central Florida. The event, not unlike the Ocoee Massacre that occurred three years prior, resulted in the mass exodus of residents in a primarily African American township.

Like many instances of historical black crime, the Rosewood program began with the accusation of a white woman being assaulted by an unnamed African man. After rumors of violence hit the community, a posse formed, headed for the neighboring town of Rosewood, composed of primarily poor and lower middle class blacks. Many worked as domestic workers for white families. Despite having no specific suspect, a white mob formed, attacking members of the community, eventually lynching a young man, and entirely razing the community of Rosewood.

Program vs Riot

Academics also refer to the acts of violence in both Rosewood and Ocoee "progroms." Academics are in increased agreement that the modus operandi of these events were characterized by the "outright killing or forced removal" (González-Tennant, 2012). Furthermore, acts of violence during the reconstruction era resulted in the exodus and mass killing of African American communities.

Formally derived from Russia, the term progrom refers to "an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group" and generally referred the organized violence against Jews, the description of the types of violence enacted against African American groups.

Defying Radical Reconstruction:

Violence against African Americans in the time period of reconstruction was, by and large, the norm. This time period was characterized largely by violence, various forms of political, social, and economic suppression. Primarily, the instances of racially motivated violence were spurred on by the perceived radical gains of black men and women during this time. The social gains of black Americans were retaliated against by white democrats by way of various mechanisms. Suppressive mechanisms used would often include the following: protection of the rights of whites' above, voter suppression, and overt forms of violence.

The freedom of African Americans was a radical idea to most southerners. Southern white democrats in particular were averse to the freedom of black Americans. In cases in various parts of the United States, including the affluent community of Rosewood and the well-to-do Ocoee, black folks and individuals oft drew the ire of both working class and powerful whites.

This was true in the cases of Rosewood and Ocoee wherein the towns, filled with middle-class homes and business-owning black folks, were eventually razed.

The Summation: Rosewood

Rosewood was an unincorporated town but had both a community railroad station and a post office (Dye, 29). The town by 1900 had a majority African American population

and was home to various black owned businesses, including a prosperous turpentine mill. The town in 1923, would become home to a massacre of potentially "hundreds of blacks" and would lead to the mass exodus of the entire black community.

Few were formally aware of the massacre, instead hearing of the event via circulated rumors in northern central Florida. The event would widely remain undiscussed about until the 80's when an investigative piece was released at the *St. Petersburg Times* that would later be picked up by CBS' a *60 Minutes* broadcast sixty years later. The broadcast galvanized public interest in the event that would later result in a major motion film, and more importantly in a landmark court case that would result in reparations for survivors and their descendants.

The relative peace and normalcy of Rosewood was shattered after Fannie Taylor, a young woman in a neighboring town, claimed to have been attacked by an African American man. Despite various accounts dispelling the rumor, "a group of white residents" (Dye, 29), took up arms and marched towards Rosewood in order to catch the alleged suspect, Jesse Hunter, an escaped convict (Dye, 29) was accused of assaulting Taylor. Although this claim was unfounded, a small "posse" of local whites from the neighboring towns attempted to find the assailant. The situation was escalating quickly, with the several different mobs of angry whites assembling on the outskirts of Rosewood. Bloodhounds directed by the mob "traced a scent from the Taylor's house to the home of Aaron Carrier" (30). The mob assumed that Carrier was harboring the "fugitive" and the group immediately prepared to lynch Carrier. However, the local Sheriff, Sheriff Walker "intervened and took Carrier into protective

custody" (30). Nevertheless, the mob turned their ire toward another innocent, Sam Carter. Carter was "returning home in his wagon" and mob wrongfully assumed Carter was transporting Hunter "to some unknown location" (Dye, 30).

Carter would be beaten, kidnapped, tortured, and eventually lynched. His body, mutilated from the torture of being questioned by the mob, was hung and displayed "as a warning to the black community" (Dye, 30).

Following the massacre, white residents in the town of Sumner claimed to hear rumors of the African American residents allegedly organizing to shelter Jesse Hunter, the unconfirmed assailant. A group of twenty to thirty individuals descended upon Rosewood. A nearby Klu Klux Klan rally also provided participants of the mob, as rumors spread African Americans were arming themselves.

The following episode of the Rosewood Massacre was triggered by the presence of Sylvester Carrier, a cousin of Aaron Carrier, the young man the mob initially tried to lynch. Sylvester was both well-known and well respected in the black community as a renegade who "refused to adhere to the codes of Jim Crowism" (Dye, 30). A group of "armed vigilantes" showed up at Carrier's home in efforts to confront the matter brewing between the two communities. There is no record of an armed group of African Americans, despite reports from white witnesses.

The mob gathered outside of Carrier's house killing his dog and his wife. Various arsonists joined the firefight, setting homes, churches, and other buildings ablaze. Following

the massacre at Carrier's home, the following Sunday, between 200 to 300 whites descended

upon the town again to raze the remaining structures (Dye, 31).

All of the homes in Rosewood, save the homes of the few white residents were

destroyed. The residents who managed to survive the initial murders hid in the nearby

swamps before eventually migrating from the area. One white family, the Wright family of

Rosewood, provided shelter for many of the Rosewood refugee children. Despite the

widespread violence and the forced migration of virtually every African American resident,

the official state death toll remains low, with eight official deaths. Estimated deaths are

estimated to be much higher. Nevertheless, despite the likelihood that far more perished in

the initial murders and the eventual decimation of the community, an accurate body count is

unlikely due to the time that has elapsed from the time period of the crime into the

contemporary.

Rosewood community members left Rosewood, migrating to other predominantly

black communities. African Americans left their land and valuables in the town. African

Americans did not re-enter the vicinity of Rosewood.

The Rediscovery of Rosewood:

The Rosewood story was lost for decades. The entire African American community had

migrated to nearby African American communities, being absorbed and unwilling to return

to Rosewood despite monetary losses incurred due to criminally vandalized and destroyed

homes, properties, and businesses (Dye, 26). Essentially, the story was lost until a South

Florida newspaper picked up upon the story. The *St. Petersburg Times* reported on the

Rosewood Massacre in 1983, nearly 60 years after the event. This media coverage ultimately

worked as a breakthrough for the story. *The St. Petersburg Times'* piece was eventually

picked up by the popular national broadcast, *60 Minutes.* The broadcast presented a turning

point for the massacre. Viewers were roused to action, urging "descendants to begin a long

search for redress" (26). Primarily, the driver for the effort towards reparations for victims of

the Rosewood Massacre was the mass media coverage afforded to it. Those aware of the

massacre via media began to encourage victims to seek redress against the state. Attorneys

from a pro-bono law firm based in Florida, Holland and Knight, eventually took on the case,

arguing for reparations in light of the absence of governmental, local, or state intervention

on behalf of the victims.

Litigation and Reparations:

The case of Rosewood depended heavily on the ability of the plaintiffs to effectively

determine whether or not the state could be held liable for the crimes against the

community. The plaintiffs were in search of monetary compensation for victims. The

defense, working on behalf of the Sate of Florida, did not attempt to "minimize" the violence

faced by victims. However, the defense attempted to divorce themselves from potential

monetary liability by attacking the "historical report" that chronicled the massacre.

Primarily, they attacked the methodologies and the content of the report, stating the report

was primarily based upon shoddy evidence (Dye, 34). The State's argument pointed to the

failure of the report to include sworn depositions and attacked the absence of white

witnesses. Although the presiding bodies over the case agreed the report had significant

flaws, the case did not die, as the jury could rule the State had a "moral obligation" to

compensating the individual victims of the Massacre.

"On May 4, 1994, in a ceremony held at Florida's historic capitol with the Rosewood families

present, Governor Chiles stated, "For more than seven decades a shadow of shame fell across

the state of Florida. The long silence has been broken and the shadow has been"

Passing the Bill: A Historic Moment

The Florida House of Representatives began to convene on the matter of Rosewood.

The Bill was considered ground breaking at the time, as it offered reparation to an event that

had occurred 60+ years prior. The Reparations Bill in its initial form would offer

compensation to the immediate victims of the massacre as well as their second and third

descendants (Dye, 36). As the bill garnered support, key changes were made. Importantly,

lawmakers were "forced to reduce the monetary compensation awards." Primarily the

victims were allocated a large sum of money, and only descendants that could prove that

their lineage owned property in Rosewood would also be allotted a share of money set aside

for descendants (38). Despite the politics and pushback from various groups, including the

Klu Klux Klan, internal descent and disagreement, as well as the convenient avoidance of

voting by legislators, the bill managed to pass under Governor Lawton Chiles.

The passing of the Rosewood Act was widely regarded as a historic victory.

A Summation: The Ocoee Massacre

The Ocoee Massacre, or program was, an event that occurred on Election Day 1920.

Like Rosewood, the Ocoee Massacre transpired in an incredibly racially charged atmosphere.

Ocoee was a settlement that formed on the edges of Stark Lake. In 1920, Ocoee had a notable

black population that resided primarily in what is referred to as the Northern Quarters.

Ocoee, located in Western Orange County, was no stranger to tense race relations. The

Massacre ensued during a pivotal presidential and local election. Local whites were worried

about the outcome of the election, as black women would now be allowed to vote.

Republicans were making gains in local elections that caused a level or weariness to racist

democrats. Dozens of African Americans were registered to vote in Ocoee on voting day, but

many whites, with the support of the KKK, were bent on continuing intimidation tactics that

would prevent black people from voting (Strom and Hoffman, 41).

Ocoee, like many towns, was heavily segregated. Black people settled in the northern

quarter of the town. Many African Americans owned homes and land. Furthermore, the

settlement was home to a fraternal lodge, a school and two churches. The community also

was home to two prominent African Americans, Mose Norman and July Perry. Norman owned swathes of land in the Northern Quarter. July Perry was a local labour broker. Post World War II, labor was in high demand, as many African Americans had already fled to the North due to the Great Migration. African American labor was in high demand, and whites could only higher African Americans through July Perry. This granted him an unusual amount of power as a black man.

Essentially, the progrom began due to Mose Norman and July Perry attempting to vote. When Mose Norman arrived at the polls, he was allegedly greeted by a mob. Despite both Perry and Norman being assured by local Judge John Cheney they had paid their poll tax, Normal was not allowed to vote. In fact, Norman was pistol whipped and sent home. Norman would later that day flee. In the evening, a group of armed whites approached July Perry's home in search of Norman. An altercation ensued and a shot was fired, apparently from Perry's daughter. Perry and his family were able to fend off the group for a short amount of time. Perry would later unsuccessfully hide in a sugarcane patch where he was unfortunately found by local Klans members.

Seriously injured, Perry was taken to a local jail where reports claimed he was treated for an injury. Perry was kidnapped from the jail cell by a Lynch mob. He was hung in front of Judge Cheney's house, a warning to Cheney for emboldening African Americans for voting. The mob grew, encompassing Klan members from neighboring towns in Orlando.

They soon descended upon the Northern Quarters, razing all of the structures and threatening to kill African Americans that attempted to flee the blaze. Any residents that

remained forfeited their property and fled. Following the election day, Ocoee became a

sundown town.

Following the Massacre:

Following the Ocoee Massacre, there was little if any effort to hold members of the

community accountable. Many persons in power, including the Sheriff, were witnesses of

various crimes, however, they were unable to offer answers as to who should be held

accountable for the crimes of the razing of the Northern Quarters.

The FBI headed an investigation into the massacre in 1920- its findings were

questionable- as it cited Mose Norman as the primary aggressor, and allegedly agents even

reassured interview subjects not to worry (Parry, 34) The NAACP sent a separate researcher,

Walter White, to investigate. White reported a much different narrative, wherein a mob

attacked Norman. The mob later precipitated the widespread violence (21) that would end in

the mass exodus of the black community.

By and large, the Ocoee Massacre was ignored for the decades following, with public

figures such as former mayors attempting to silence conversations on the topic.

In an interview I conducted with Paul Ortiz, he stated that there was a concerted

effort within the community to silence talks and narratives on what occurred in Ocoee.

Under Mayor Scott Vandergriff, Vandergriff attempted to stop an event at a bookstore where

there would be a speaker on the Ocoee Massacre.

Similarities in Structure and Strategy: Ocoee and Rosewood

The Ocoee and Rosewood Massacres were remarkably similar in striking ways. In this portion of the chapter, I will outline the characteristics similar to both. In both instances of violence, the attacks occurred in the Reconstruction era, in the same three-year time frame. Each instance also targeted black communities and resulted in the mass exodus of an entire community, as well as the eventual erasure of the murders themselves.

Both the Ocoee and the Rosewood Massacres occurred in the Reconstruction era, a period following the Civil War, where the enfranchisement of African Americans was oft challenged by the political establishment of the White Southern democrats. Furthermore, in both cases erasure of violence was dictated primarily by white supremacist historical paradigms.

Targeting Black Community Centers:

Again, the similarities between the massacres in Rosewood and Ocoee are striking. Local mobs descended on primarily black, relatively prosperous communities. The ire directed towards at these communities is well explained by socio-political transitions in the south. In a journal by Historian Claire Strom, Ocoee functioned as a microcosm of the racial tensions playing across the country (Hoffman and Strom,36). In 1920, the citrus industry was booming. The boom, to the discomfort of many southern whites, allowed for the prosperity of African Americans. In both Ocoee and Rosewood, African Americans owned homes and

businesses. In the case of July Perry and Mose Norman, each owned a labor brokerage firm

and an orange grove "valued at $10,000" (34). Mose Norman even owned a car.

Furthermore, African American labor was becoming valued during this time. The

industries in the north required large numbers of cheap labor. Thus, thousands migrated

from the south, opting for greater chances at economic opportunity. Southern employers,

after this migration, were in dire need for cheap labor, hiring African Americans. Steady

labor did lead to the development of African American communities. Citrus groves, for

instance, were extremely lucrative. Regardless, trends in the south pointed to growing

discontent between white folks and African Americans, as the continued development of

African Americans placed them "in direct competition with white interests" (Hoffman and

Strom, 35).

Furthermore, in various race riots and struggles across the country the economic

enfranchisement of blacks "exacerbated race relations" and would often lead to violence and

riots.

Modus Operandi of Violence: Physical Violence as Tools of Erasure

The Ocoee and Rosewood Massacres also operated along similar modus operandi.

Each relied heavily upon the participation of local mobs and utilized similar violent

strategies and intimidation tactics. Ad-hoc vigilante groups were responsible for the

widespread violence, lynchings, and forced migrations during each occurrence.

Again, in the cases of Ocoee and Rosewood, the political atmosphere of both towns were charged and tense, often due to the discomfort of whites at their prosperous neighboring counterparts.

Furthermore, in both scenarios local whites were able to call upon Klansmen from the neighboring area to aid them in their progrom against the African American townsfolk. Lester Dabbs, a former Ocoee Mayor, chronicles the events in his master's thesis. In Ocoee argues Dabbs, citizens were able to call upon Klan Members from as near as Winter Garden to aid them in their raze of the north quarters (Dabbs, 28). Following the lynching of Perry, the mob directed their ire towards the black quarters, setting the church, lodge, and homes alight.

In Rosewood, local whites were able to rely on the presence of Klan members from a local rally being held in Gainesville to aid the sustained assault on the Rosewood community. A part of the reason that each massacre was so deadly was the ease in which locals were able to mobilize outside Klan and militia forces as "back-up" for such progroms.

In addition, local whites opted to raze the communities via burning. The destruction of the communities in the blaze left African Americans with few if any possessions, and virtually no African American returned to lay claim to any sort of land. The "strategy" to completely raze the community worked in the favor of the whites who had remained in the town, as they could simply claim the land. Again, the destruction of homes, properties, and businesses were not officially sold. Rather, they were settled and often seized after the entire

community had fled. The exodus of African Americans allowed for the eventual

redistribution of land without much fuss, threat of litigation, or challenge.

Efforts Towards Investigation:

As characteristic of most episodes of violence against African American communities,

little, if any criminal investigation was made to find any liable parties. In Ocoee, after the

forced migration and murder of several African Americans, there was little to no effort in

conducting an official investigation. The investigation conducted by the National Equal

Rights League, for instance, was conducted by questionable agents (Dabbs, 34). Specifically,

the agents "assured those person interviewed that they had nothing to fear" as they were in

"sympathy with Ocoee" (34).

Similarly, the initial Rosewood investigations lent little insight into the crime and was

did not shed light onto the actual perpetrators. No arrests were made, and the attempts at

litigation were lazy at best.

Efforts to Erase:

Both Rosewood and Ocoee had great difficulty reckoning with the past. Both events were

similar in most respects. They occurred within a five-year time-frame in Central Florida.

They were acts carried out by violent vigilante groups in an effort disenfranchise African

Americans from their property, new-found freedoms, as well as their businesses.

Framing Memory: Challenges to Public Memory

The framing of the central Florida African American history is and was heavily affected by the dominating Southern white narratives of history. As stated by Herman and Chomsky, the histories and ideologies espoused by the classes in power dominated and subverted the voices of the public, as well as the public understanding of history. Furthermore, the dominating narratives of history are reflective of the narratives perspectives of race, class, and gender (Parry, 4). These theories on history are again substantiated by the theories of Noam Chomsky and Karl Marx, wherein they posit the ruling classes become the primary voices in dictating histories, and in this case ideologies. Both Rosewood and Ocoee were exemplary of this trend. The memories of the Ocoee Massacre and the Rosewood Massacre were contested. Various accounts and reports framed the massacres as riots with both sides acting offensively. As the case with ideologies, the narratives of some are propped above the narratives of others, again reflective of power struggles and inequities potentially related to literacy and access.

In a doctoral thesis on contested African American histories, Katherine Parry described how "public history" and "public memory" was constructed by Southern White Democrats. Public history refers to "an implied space or place where memories can be debated" (4). In these spaces, oppositional forces debate upon the "rhetorical struggles" part of recording history. In the South, this was a particular struggle. Following the civil war, the South "invented their own myths" to breathe peace into a "troubled region" (3). Re-writing

history had a certain level of utility in the region. Myths of bravery and the romanticized

south "eased [the] defeat bring[ing] order… to a troubled region" (3). Furthermore, the

myths that bolstered the romanticized notion of the south acted as a unifying ideology and

formed a cultural and political identity, unifying the region, as well as disgruntled and

disenfranchised Southerners.

The constructed memorialization of cultural memory in the South again harks back to

theories espoused by Gramsci on ideology, and via Marx on the monopolization and

reproduction of ideologies deemed convenient and useful by the working class.

Ocoee and the Conflicting Frames of Public Memory:

The immediate conception of the Ocoee Massacre singled out two popular narratives:

one that primarily framed African Americans as the primary source of discord during the

Election Day Massacre, and the second school of thought posited the Massacre as a response

by racist community members against African Americans attempting to vote (Parry, 19). The

former narrative was the one generally popularized by conservative democratic press at the

time. Local Orlando newspapers, including the Orlando Sentinel positioned Mose Norman

and July Perry as aggressors (Parry, 19). Particularly, the news report following the massacre

named Norman, one of the most prominent land owning African Americans in Ocoee, as an

aggressor, stating Norman was armed when he entered the polling station. This alleged

aggression, as well as the alleged arming of African Americans in Ocoee, was framed as an act

that warranted the eventual violence against African Americans.

According to Parry, depending on the political leanings of various newspapers, the

coverage differed. Publications including the Tampa Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, and the

Florida Metropolis framed the African Americans in the community as violent aggressors

who were hoarding ammunition (20). The actions of white locals in Ocoee were defensive in

nature (20).

African American newspapers and more liberal organizations framed a different story:

line wherein the Ocoee Massacre was retribution to the success of African American land

owners and labor brokers and an intimidate tactic to hinder any African American from

reaching the polls (20).

Organizations such as the Nation Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP), the National Equal Rights League offered more liberal coverage. Specifically, this

framing revolved upon the suppression of accurate testimony of the massacre. According to

an NAACP investigation, at least 56 persons perished, including a young woman and her

infant children. Walter White, the agent sent to investigate spoke of whites bragging about

killing African Americans. Furthermore, White reported to an anti-lynching committee the

massacre occurred after a mob had attacked Mose Norman. The framing of the event by

these institutions also argued that July Perry was "inhumanely" treated. The framing of these

narratives worked for different purposes by different parties.

For conservative democrats, the actual violence and murders were downplayed, while the alleged threat posed by Mose Norman, July Perry, and the rest of the community were played up. This would work as a strategy to pose the massacre as a defensive tactic rather than an offensive one (29). For African Americans, the inhumane treatment of African Americans was highlighted, as well as the jealousy of white folks against the monetary and social power that African Americans in the community possessed.

Closely resembling Gramsci's theory on ideology and hegemony, powerful whites in both Ocoee and Rosewood were able to dictate the historical perspectives of white supremacy and black victimhood in Florida, reproducing and sustaining the history deemed convenient to the white leadership characteristic of central Florida in Reconstruction Era Florida.

Rosewood and Popular Memory:

Rosewood also had internal struggles of public memory. Immediately following the massacre, framing narratives posited two frames of reference. The frame of reference, as in the case of Rosewood, was dominated primarily by the narrative created following the first Rosewood investigation. Following the pogrom, a light investigation was ordered by the then Governor Hardee, who "dispatched" a state attorney to "collect evidence" of crimes against

the residents of Rosewood (Parry, 31). The crime was overseen by an all-white jury. Despite

directions for jurors to expend their energy in affixing blame upon the guilty parties the case

was unable to gather key witnesses, leading to a failure to indict any potential guilty parties.

Following the court case "the blacks who evacuated Rosewood never returned. Those who

owned land forfeited their property to unpaid taxes within a few years" (34).

Despite the failure of the Sheriff to control the mob and mitigate the violence, no

arrests were made, and no one was held accountable. The failure of any proper investigation

essentially rendered the mobsters of Rosewood as innocent. It was only until the 1980's, after

the Rosewood story was picked up by a journalist at the *St. Petersburg Times*, that the

narrative was formed around the injustices of the massacre, and more specifically, the

systemic crimes carried out against African American community members. It took nearly 60

years for the correlating narrative to challenge the notion of white innocence in Rosewood.

It should be noted however, that following the coverage in the 1980's, the collective

response was extremely positive. Following the broadcast of the massacre on 60 minutes,

Rosewood was nationally broadcasted— resulting in a million dollar plus settlement of

victims and their descendants.

Seizing the Means of Historical Reproduction:

In the case of both Rosewood and Ocoee, immediately after each respective massacre,

the framing of history bolstered the narratives of whites over African Americans. This is in

part because African Americans fled the area, likely were unavailable during the investigative portion of the cases. Furthermore, other tangible evidence such as bodily remains, remains from buildings, and official deeds and asset estimates were either lost, unrecovered, or not investigated, making the substantiation defending the African American historical conceptions difficult. The failure to recover evidence such as title deeds, bodies, monetary asset approximations, and witnesses all aided in the continued reproduction of dominant perspectives of historical memory (Parry, 24)

In the case of Ocoee, white southern democrats were able to monopolize historical perspectives because of the following: whites were able to seize land held by former black land owners, black churches, lodges, and other communal spaces were all overtaken, creating a "white landscape" (Parry, 24). Parry notes that only decades later was there a renewed interest in uncovering more holistic historical perspectives on the instances of violence against African Americans in town.

Similarly, valuable archaeological evidence such as bullets and burnt figurines lend insight into the extent of violence faced by Rosewood community members that may be absent from official reports (González-Tennant, 162). Archaeological finds can have a profound impact on the remembrance of history and works to challenge white historical narratives of history. Artifacts such as burned figurines act as a testament to the burning of communal lodges, churches, homes and businesses that may not have been present in official reports.

The pursuit of holistic perspectives were the first real challenges to erasure. Unfortunately, these pursuits normally occurred several decades after the fact, allowing white supremacist ideologies to reign supreme for the vast majority of contemporary history.

Erasure: More than Just Physical

Both Rosewood and Ocoee are salient examples of erasure in central Florida during the Reconstruction era. Again, the historical narratives that were erased represented the ideological impulse to erase history as it pertained to violence against African Americans and instead prop up narratives that rendered the historical actions of whites as necessary and correct. The erasure of history in both of these communities is more than just physical violence— erasure worked to indirectly prop up narratives of white supremacy and the willful erasure ensured the continued reproduction of a white dictated perception of history.

Nevertheless, the communities of each respective town have done work to provide restitution to African American communities and shed light on the events in the last two decades. Ocoee erected a memorial marker for July Perry in 2019 and is currently planning a funeral service for those that had perished. Rosewood, in a landmark court case, provided reparations to victims. In recent years, the recovering of historical narratives that were previously erased has been generally supported by the public— a sentiment in sharp contrast to the past wherein the past was hidden and forcefully silenced (Parry, 92). Historical ideologies now favor revisions, wherein injustices are recognized and erasure is challenged (Parry, 92).

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