

Constructing African American Histories In Central Florida

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CONSTRUCTING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIES IN CENTRAL FLORIDA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

From the time of their occurrence up to the present, people have constructed and revised narratives about violent racial events in Florida. In the case of the racial violence in Ocoee and the lynching of July Perry, multiple accounts coexisted until one particular group in the 1990's contested earlier conservative white Southern narratives with new public memories containing African American perspectives of the events, demanding racial justice and memorialization of the events. A struggle over the power to construct this narrative resulted in compromises between the two sets of memories. While some goals were attained, the landscape of memorization remains undeveloped.

The construction of a narrative concerning the meaning of Harry T. Moore's life and death entered the public domain at his death and remained unchanging, carried forward by the collective memories of African Americans in Florida. Historians reassessed his role as a martyr for civil rights to the first martyr of the Civil Right's Movement. A group of African Americans in Brevard County were successful in attaining resources that included landscape and a memorial complex during the 1990's and the first decade of 2000.

The construction of public memories and the power to gain landscape and resources for commemoration reflected the aims and power of each group. Because the public memories of July Perry were contested, the group could not attain commemorative landscapes. However, the narratives about Harry T. Moore had consensus, allowing significant commemorations.

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My husband has been a wonderful source of support and encouragement, reading several versions of this work. My love of history came from my mother and thanks to her interest in family history, I found my way to public history.

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of heterogeneous groups vying to interpret the South's past is one measure of the scope and health of the region's civil life. Robust debate has produced a more sophisticated appreciation of the region's heritage, one that will hasten the day when the South offers a truly inclusive public life. It is no longer premature to anticipate a future in which the invocation of heritage will advance emancipatory rather than reactionary goals.

*W. Fitzhugh Brundage*¹

During the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century, standard southern versions of violent racial incidents were challenged and replaced by descriptions of African American resistance and struggle. Numerous authors including W. Fitzhugh Brundage, David Goldfield and Joseph Tilden Rhea have described how the events of the civil rights movement of the 1960's and 70's resulted in a changing social and political climate; all over the South, African Americans contested standard interpretations of Southern history.²

In the Florida towns of Ocoee and Mims, histories have been rewritten and commemorative sites consecrated to the memory of the events that occurred there. In each community the change in the public's memory and in its history was brought about by differing social processes. Further, each memorial by its design presents a different reading of the past according to present public ideals and political needs. As James Young suggests "every site

¹ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 11.

² David Goldfield, *Southern Histories: Public, Personal and Sacred* (Athens, GA and London: University of Georgia Press: 2003); Joseph Tilden Rhea, *Race Pride and the American Identity* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

suggests its won definition, grasped in local context.”³ This thesis explores the current reconstruction of public history in the case of July Perry in Ocoee in 1920 and Harry T. Moore in the town of Mims in 1951.

The reconstruction of public history hinges on two concepts; one is the concept of what “public history” means in this document and the other is how the term “reconstruction” is used. For a definition of public memory, I have relied on the philosopher Edward S. Casey who argued that public memory is “memory that occurs in the open, in front of and with others.” There is an implied place or space where people remember together and where memories can be debated – he characterizes this space as “a horizon within which a public finds itself, constitutes itself and deliberates its own existence.”⁴ Kendell R. Phillips, in discussing this definition in a collection of essays about public history, argues that this is akin to a public sphere where different publics may assert claims for their memories, where others may react in opposition and where a rhetorical struggle may take place for authority over public memory.⁵

The ability of individuals and groups in the present to reconstruct the past in this public sphere according to present ideals and social values is central to this discussion. The thesis of David Lowenthal’s prize winning book, *The Past is a Foreign County*, is that the features of the

³ James E Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), viii.

⁴ Edward S. Casey, quoted in Kendell R. Phillips, ed., *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

past are shaped by the needs of the present, a product of our own times.⁶ Different aspects of the past may be used to reaffirm current beliefs, justify current actions or supply an escape from day-to-day life. In the case of Southern history, Goldfield has detailed how the South after Reconstruction invented their own myths of the Lost Cause, buttressed by memorials and celebrations to ease defeat bring order and establish community to a troubled region.⁷ African American history disappeared from public view, although carried on by African American writers like W.E.B. Dubois, whose works were read by few whites. Only in the late 1960's did African Americans gain enough political and economic power and resources to challenge and contest white Southern history, erecting their own monuments, museums and associations to preserve and educate. As Hodges and Radstone point out, the question of who is entitled to speak for the past in the present is more important than the actual past events since the narratives of the past were shaped by groups with the power to impose their representations and to silence those of others.⁸

The construction of an historical event may be flawed even from the very beginning according to anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot who argues that what is mentioned and what is silenced in an archive are both active processes in a dialectical process of which history is a synthesis. Beginning with the original sources, the uneven power of one group over another or the inequalities among actors may privilege the recording of some events and the silencing of

⁶ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1985), xx.

⁷ Goldfield, 6-7.

⁸ Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds. *Contested Pasts - The Politics of Memory* (London and NY: Routledge, 2003), 1.

others.⁹ He reasons that in the creation of archives, choices and judgments about what is important are made, leaving other records or artifacts out. From this already biased archive, narrators who create history select some items from the archive and omit others in the creation of their narrative. Finally, when there are multiple narratives, not all of them will make it into the accepted standard version of the events.

Martha K. Norkunsa has added to this argument in an analysis of tourist culture in the United States. She argues that museum exhibits, landscapes and other public presentations reflect particular ideologies in which some interpretations are deliberately included and others excluded. Each narrative reflects the ideology of the narrator and contains different perspectives on ethnicity and class and history.¹⁰ The idea that public institutions change as ideologies change is embodied by the construction of the memorials and museums constructed to honor the contributions and sacrifices of African Americans including the Civil Rights Memorial in Atlanta and the Civil Rights Institute of Montgomery, Alabama. These memorials were the result, according to Rhea, of numerous conflicts over who had the right to put up memorials.¹¹ The culmination of this process was not only the right to claim landscape for memorials but also the legitimization of a different authority over what these memorial structures narrated and reflected back on their subjects.

⁹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

¹⁰ Martha K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourist Culture, History and Ethnicity in America* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 8.

¹¹ Rhea, 112-113.

The ability to claim landscape is necessary to the process; Casey points out that public memory requires what the Romans termed *stabilitas loci* – stability of place. In his view, an enduring place has the best chance to ground, harbor and collect social and collective memory. “Time always happens in a particular place.”¹² Brundage has also stated that landscapes are central to struggles over southern historical memory and identity and constitute the most crucial playing field for struggles over values, power and resources.¹³

Landscape is the focus of the work of geographer Kenneth Foote; in his book *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, documents the transformation of sites of violence over time.¹⁴ In his scheme, some landscapes are commemorated or merely designated but others are obliterated. Obliteration occurs when an event is so shameful that people want to forget it such as a killing, lynching or mass murder. In that case, all evidence of the event is removed and the site is stigmatized.

A designated site is one in which something important happened that may be meaningful to a group in the minority but has not assumed the importance of a sanctified site for the wider community. The site may be marked but falls short of sanctification. The site of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis Tennessee was first marked by a tablet put up by the motel’s owner, designating the site as a place where this important event took place. Twenty years later as the momentum for public recognition of the site grew, it was transformed into a

¹² Edward S. Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” in *Framing Public Histories*, 39, 41.

¹³ Brundage, 6.

¹⁴ Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).

museum and education center. Another option is reification in which a site is returned to its former use, reintegrated, with no connotations attached; it generally occurs when an event becomes viewed as senseless or as an accident. This occurred with the site of “Holmes Castle” in Chicago, a three-story house where H.H. Holmes murdered young women visiting the Chicago Columbia Exposition in 1893. The site was never marked: it was reused for business up to the 1930’s when it was torn down and a post office was constructed in its place. However, sites of events that hold or come to hold a positive meaning, such as courage or sacrifice, become sanctified, resulting in a monument or memorial. The results are not static since historical processes are always in motion; landscapes that were once sanctified such as Civil War monuments may lose their meaning for following generations.

Landscapes, for Foote, have “shadowed pasts” which are reinterpreted in the present to bring past events in line with present thinking. In his view, they are not a representation but more like a text that is subject to change, an “expressive medium, a forum for debate within which these social values can be... realized symbolically.”¹⁵ Commemorative landscapes, with their memorials, are a system of signs and symbols. Here, collective values are sustained over time and the communication of values is extended over time and space. Landscapes that are obliterated are as important as those that are commemorated since they indicate the values that society wants to forget or those in contestation.

I differ in this thesis from Foote’s emphasis on the change in landscape to a focus on the actions taken by groups to acquire and promote or to prevent change in the landscape. While

¹⁵ Foote, 292.

landscapes ground memories, remembering can only take place because there are people who do the remembering. James E. Young uses the concept “collected memory” to emphasize that many separate memories are drawn together into memorial spaces. A monument or an official site becomes a nexus for commemorative activities and rituals that sustain it. The rituals around memorial spaces conversely inspire the memories of their constituents.¹⁶

Young, by focusing on Holocaust memorials, has explored the kinds of memorials and sites that are used to mark miscarriages of justice. Each site, he argues, brings different qualities and every text brings a different meaning to memory because the memory being constructed turns on complicated political, historical and ideological needs.¹⁷ Each public memorial brings different tactile, physical and temporal dimensions and constructs memory using an array of sources, narrating events according to the needs of a community, the preferences of its curators and the political atmosphere.

Civil rights memorials have a special charge since they must deliver potentially disruptive, controversial and divisive histories of violence and resistance along with critiques of whiteness while satisfying a diverse, public audience. The delivery of a history at a memorial site or museum is commonly through the presentation of texts and the use of artifacts; how these are used to make one narrative and not another is the rhetoric of an exhibit. A visitor to the memorial sites in both Ocoee and Mims that commemorate the memory of the violent events that occurred

¹⁶ Young, 202-203.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

there would only see the surface, the aesthetic contours but not the complicated political and historical forces that brought them into existence.

The geographic location of a monument may also make a statement but some scholars like Blair and Mitchell have extended the analysis of the geographical site of a memorial to include as well the effect of the physical presence of a monument and how it may function to make a statement. They call this the rhetorical performance of a monument and have argued that the rhetorical performance of the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery disrupts the space of the site in the same way that the tactics of civil rights protestors disrupted public spaces.¹⁸

This thesis follows the change in public memory of the incidents in these two communities and of two African American men, July Perry and Harry T. Moore. The public memory of both men has undergone transformation by different routes and with different degrees of penetration, a process I will detail in the first two chapters. Since Young contends that the different quality of each site brings a different meaning to memory, I will further analyze each memorial site in terms of how each site projects different rhetorical readings. This thesis refines Joseph Tilden Rhea's assertion that the "recognition of the role of minorities is not because of a drift toward cultural pluralism but because of concrete actions which can be documented." Organized groups like African Americans, he states, have been able to assert new versions of

¹⁸ Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 30 (Spring, 2000): 31.

their histories.¹⁹ The commemoration of these sites, I will argue, differs because of changes in social values and due to the power and aim of groups bringing forward a counter-narrative.

¹⁹ Rhea, 7, 126.

CHAPTER ONE

In the latter part of the 1980's and through the 1990's, the African American memories of two violent, racially motivated events in Florida from the 1920's were published after decades of silence. The story of one these events, the burning of the African American town of Rosewood in 1923, is now well-known because in a series of almost serendipitous events, a prestigious law firm brought a suit for compensation on behalf of the survivors against the state of Florida and won. The merits of their case were widely debated in the newspapers during 1993, especially in Florida. Currently, the name Rosewood is often invoked in discussions of reparations, as the first state legislation to compensate African Americans for racial violence.²⁰

In contrast, similar events in 1920 in the town of Ocoee in Orange County, along with the lynching of an African American man, July Perry, in Orlando are not well known. On Election Day, November 2nd, 1920, there was a shoot-out at July Perry's home, which left two white men dead and a popular white lawman wounded. When the word of the death of whites at the hand of a black man spread to Orlando, it triggered a mob that raced from Orlando into Ocoee and burned the southern quarters of Ocoee's African American community. In the aftermath, an unknown number of them dead, all members of the African American community were driven out of town. July Perry, fatally wounded, was taken to Orlando for medical care and then to the jail where another mob seized and lynched him in the early morning hours of November 3rd.

²⁰ This remarkable book traces the process by which this incident reentered public history. Michael D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day* (Berkley: Berkley Publishing; Movie Tie-In edition, 1996).

Since 1920, the memory of Perry's lynching and the white mob action in Ocoee has advanced in public memory from shameful silence to outspoken anger and indignation resulting two distinct memorial events; in 2002, the gravesite of July Perry in Greenwood Cemetery of Orlando, Florida was dedicated with a tombstone, in the formerly segregated area of the city-owned cemetery - the first permanent marker since his burial in 1920. In concert with this event, the town of Ocoee dedicated a park to the African American community who had lived, worked and raised their families there until 1920. To understand the change in the public memory of these events from 1920 to 2008, I would argue, is to study the way public history is created by groups involved in the memorialization process and the significance of landscapes to them. Additionally, since landscapes are also real estate, the power of a group to erect a memorial in a landscape is a final variable.

The events in Ocoee and Orlando occurred in a social environment governed by Jim Crow laws. Segregation in Florida dates back to the time of Reconstruction with the passage of the black codes. After the Civil War, whites endeavored to continue the paternalistic plantation system while trying to comply with the requirements of Reconstruction under President Andrew Johnson. In 1865-66, the state legislature passed the "black codes" - laws that allowed punishment by whipping, or the pillory. The death penalty was imposed for rape of a white female, burglary, or inciting an insurrection. Any black who could not establish gainful employment was subject to arrest for being a vagrant.²¹ Congressional Reconstruction,

²¹ Jerrell H Shofner, "Custom, Law, And History: The Enduring Influence of Florida's "Black Code," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (Spring, 1977): 280-281.

implemented in 1867-68 by Republicans, overturned this legislation and military supervision was implemented. Using many methods, including violence, white Floridians acted to destroy Republican power. Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was appointed President in a contested election because of a compromise which allowed him to take office if he promised to pull out federal troops from Florida and end Reconstruction. The convention of 1885 began the disfranchisement of blacks starting with a poll tax. From 1889 onward, more extensive Jim Crow laws were enacted including the requirement that the poll tax be paid two years prior to voting.²² Florida's boosters and investors believed that Florida needed to be sold as a state with plentiful, cheap African American labor and depriving African Americans of voting power was one of the strategies to compel them to work for low wages.

Yet, the social space of African Americans differed within each town, due in part to the history of their settlement. The town of Ocoee was settled by Confederate soldiers and their families around 1865 near lake property worked by slaves. Their leader, Capt. Bluford M. Sims, a Confederate veteran from Georgia, Sims established what might be the first citrus nursery in Orange County by 1870 and was one of Ocoee's leading citizens. When Sims received 72 acres of land from his sister and her husband, he expanded Ocoee; this land became the site of downtown Ocoee which did not incorporate until 1925.²³ The African American community there, engaged in agriculture, was housed in either the Baptist Quarters or the Methodist Quarters, in reference to the churches of the community. More than one-third of the African

²² Ibid., 289.

²³ City of Ocoee, "Ocoee History," [http:// www.ci.ocoee.fl.us](http://www.ci.ocoee.fl.us) (accessed September 12, 2007).

American families there owned their own homes and over twenty percent were working their own farms.²⁴ The presence of so many black farm owners offered African Americans some control over their own labor - this may have been an affront to whites of the area who wanted control over land and labor and a factor in the violent events there in 1920 that resulted in the expulsion of the entire black community.

The town of Orlando had formed even earlier around the remains of Fort Gatlin, south of the current downtown. Fort Gatlin, established in 1838, was one of several forts in middle Florida built to protect pioneer settlers. Gatlin was abandoned after the Seminole Wars but some of its soldiers returned to the settlement with their families and joined the settlers along with freed African Americans and their families. By 1860, Orlando was a small settlement surrounded by cotton fields and sugar cane with cattle foraging around the outskirts but the cotton crop was ruined by 1873.²⁵ However, Central Florida development was due more to citrus than to cotton, and eventually agriculture became dominant. While the African American population of Orlando numbered only seventy-three in the 1870 census, by 1884 it had grown to 504 blacks and 1,182 whites.²⁶

The mild weather of Central Florida was a drawing card for well-to-do northerners who established their winter homes in nearby Maitland, Winter Park and Orlando. A colony of

²⁴ 1920 U.S. census population schedule, agricultural Orange County, Ocoee District 10, 1A-9B.

²⁵ Kena Fries, *In the Long, Long Ago...and Now*, (Orlando, Fl.: Tyn Cobb's Florida Press Inc., 1938), 10, 13, 36.

²⁶ E.H.Gore, *From Florida sand to "The city beautiful: a historical record of Orlando, Florida*, 2nd ed. (Winter Park, FL: Orange Press, 1951), 118.

Englishmen, mostly retired gentlemen along with their wives and second sons, who would not inherit their family's property, settled in the Conway area bringing a certain polish and sophistication to the locale by introducing tennis, polo, croquet and golf.²⁷ The possibilities of citrus agriculture enticed farmers and investors from the North and the South and bolstered the tourist trade. The railroad came to Orlando in the 1880's bringing with it black railroad crews that settled along the tracks and worked in the warehouses and foundry. The growth of the citrus industry led to a migration of black laborers to work the citrus groves. The former group settled around the area west of the tracks known as Parramore and the latter group, settled near the orange groves east of town, lived in an area named Jonestown. Fern Creek, running from north to south provided a natural barrier separating Jonestown from the city and the railroad tracks separated most of the black Parramore residential area from the white. While there was never an ordinance that designated segregated black housing, custom dictated such an area.

Orlando walked a line between segregating blacks and presenting a face to the tourists that all was well. Early on in 1881, state agricultural brochures advertised that "This is a white man's county; there are but few negroes among us."²⁸ However by 1904, the same publication reassured its readers that blacks knew their place in Orlando:

²⁷ Ibid., 88.

²⁸ Z. H. Mason, "A General Description of Orange County Florida, Apopka, FL: Orange County Immigration Society, 1881." In Kristin Larsen, "Harmonious Inequality?: Zoning, Public Housing, and Orlando's Separate City, 1920-1945," *Journal of Planning History* 1 (May 2002) : 176.

Social equality between the races is not tolerated and is impossible...the gulf that marks the social boundary between the white and the black, is as broad as the universe and as fathomless as the infinitudes of space. Yet, the relationship between the races is of the most kind and friendly order.²⁹

By 1911, when “snowbirds” were a feature of the economy, a newspaper article in the *Daily Reporter-Star* on “The Charms of Orlando in 1911” made it clear that blacks have their own place.

Orlando has quite a number of colored people, who, as a rule, are intelligent, hard working and orderly citizens. They have five churches, a large school building, presided over by competent teachers, and attended by a large number of pupils, many of who are exceptionally bright. They also have a large two story building in which their fraternal and secret orders hold regular meetings. In their part of the city are general merchandise stores, barber shops, restaurants, a large hotel, pool hall, moving picture show, theatre building, printing offices etc. Many also own pretty homes with well cared for gardens and tasty selections of pretty flowers adorn the front yards.³⁰

Orlando’s white citizens tolerated some racial mixing at church events: at the A.M.E. camp meeting in September of 1891, the paper reported that over two thousand “coloreds” and three or four hundred whites attended. Another area of racial mixing was politics; William Russell O’Neal of Ohio, a Republican who came to Orlando in 1886, appears to have been a major influence in promoting the integration of blacks into the Republican Party in Orlando. White Republicans, in a minority, united with blacks to elect Republican platforms and although

²⁹ Florida Department of Agriculture, Florida. A Pamphlet of Its History, Topography, Soil, Resources and natural Advances in General and by Counties. Prepared in the Interest of Immigration (Tallahassee, FL; Department of Agriculture, 1904), in Kristin Larsen, “Harmonious Inequality?: Zoning, Public Housing, and Orlando’s Separate City, 1920-1945,” *Journal of Planning History* 1 (May 2002): 177.

³⁰ *Daily Reporter-Star*, 27 December, 1911, 3-4.

no blacks were elected to political office, in 1890 in Orlando a congressional convention appointed both white and black delegates. Local wits called this “huckleberries and crème.”³¹ Another Republican, John Cheney, a lawyer who arrived in Orlando in 1885, served as United States Attorney for the Southern District from 1906 to 1912 and United States Judge from 1912 to 1913. The presence of two highly respected, politically active and powerful white Republicans in Orlando brought a more liberal feel to the town. Ocoee, in contrast, was the winter home of a widely respected Confederate Brigadier General, William Temple Withers (1825-1889) a prominent Kentuckian who served in Mississippi.

Racial violence in central Florida in 1920 was unremarkable but several lynchings occurred in the state in 1919. The NAACP began a campaign against lynching in 1916; they provided funds to send their own people to the sites of lynchings, to publicize them and to fund legal work. In 1919, the NAACP protested the lynching of two African American men in Santa Rosa County in a letter to the governor, Sidney J. Catts. Catts replied that the NAACP, rather than taking him to task for not bringing lynchings to trial, should instead “teach your people not to kill our white officers and disgrace our white women” because he added, “If any man, white or black, should dishonor one of my family, he would meet my pistol square from the shoulder, and every white man in the south, who is a red-blooded American, feels the same as I do.”³²

³¹ *Florida Times-Union*, 16 August, 1890. The African-American participants were C.H. Bogen, E.F. Wooden and D.H. Jones.

³² Minutes of the Anti-Lynching Committee, Boston, November 27, 1916. Group1, Box C-336, NAACP papers.

The whites of the state of Florida, as it approached Election Day 1920, were anxious over the admittance of women, particularly black women, to the vote. Three weeks before the election, Orlando Republicans Judge John Cheney and William O'Neal received a letter from the Grand Master of Ku Klux Klan warning them that their activities "among the negroes of Orlando" were widely known and condemned. They were threatened that they would suffer the consequences if they continued their activities.³³ Cheney was running as the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate that year and was active, along with other Republicans in Florida, in trying to garner the black vote. It was widely believed that Cheney and O'Neal had been meeting with blacks in Ocoee to prepare them to vote in the November elections.³⁴ In October, 1920, an editorial in an Orlando paper reported that:

The republican party, with which the negroes have been affiliated since their emancipation is using every power at its command to pile up a great vote among the colored people...The republican party, more intent than ever before of "breaking up the solid south" is expecting to vote every negro man or women eligible.³⁵

White supremacists came out in large numbers to intimidate the black population of Orlando prior to Election Day. According to an Ocoee lawman, at this time there was a dedicated unit of the Ku Klux Klan in West Orange County with headquarters in Winter Garden, west of Orlando. Ninety percent of the membership was composed of law officers, judges, public

³³ Grand Master Florida Ku Klucks to Mr. W.R. O'Neal, Orlando, Florida, 20 September, 1920, July Perry File, Orange County Regional History Center Archives, Orlando, Florida.

³⁴ Lester Dabbs, "A Report of the Circumstances and Events of the Race Riot on November 2, 1920 in Ocoee, Florida." M.A. Thesis, Stetson University, 1969, 17-18.

³⁵ "What "Republican" Means Here". *Evening Reporter-Star*, 6 October 1920.

servants, lawyers and all the railroad employees.³⁶ The night before the election, 500 Klansmen from all over the area paraded down the streets of Orlando in white robes with crosses burning, silently threatening the black population and packing the town with white supremacists. The *Orlando Sentinel's* headline read “Clansmen Cowled in Flowing White, Parade in Orlando’s Streets More Than Five Hundred Strong.”³⁷ Additionally, the town was the location for the United Confederate Veterans reunion for November 10th–12th, drawing more veterans than usual for the festivities. This was a social event that included the local United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Boy Scouts³⁸ The timing for casting a vote could not have been worse for a black voter in Orange County.

The precipitating events of November 2nd are unclear; from the beginning, the reportage of these events was confused and the accounts from the two newspapers of Orlando conflicted with each other. The vagueness of essential details such as who started the riot and why is a clue that facts were an elusive part of the narrative. This highlights the problems inherent in reporting an essentially shameful event but trying to make it sound positive. American sociologists Stewart E. Tolney and E. M. Beck have noted that editors of Southern newspapers manipulated the language of violent incidents to favor the whites involved and to denigrate the blacks.³⁹ This

³⁶ Dabbs, 18.

³⁷ *Evening Reporter-Star*, 1 November, 1920.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Tolney, Stewart E. and Beck, E. M. “Racial Violence and Black Migration in the South, 1910-1930,” *American Sociological Review* 57 (1992): 104.

approach was common through the South where lynching did not need to be explained or investigated. This early confused reportage accounts for some of the confusion of facts in present day narratives.

Two different narratives emerged after the event: one which blamed African Americans for resisting arrest and starting the riot and the other which highlighted the event as the result of white violence toward African Americans only trying to vote. The former narrative had the backing of local, state and some northern newspapers and the latter by the NAACP, the National Equal Rights League, African American newspapers of the time and again, some white northern newspapers. The major difference in the narratives was over the assignment of responsibility and accountability for the event. Both narratives were not clear about whether it was July Perry or Mose Norman who tried to vote. This difference in narratives would continue in further social constructions of the event.

The *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, the more conservative of the two Orlando papers, reported on November 3rd that a race riot had occurred at Ocoee as an “outgrowth of a Negro carrying a shotgun to the polls after he had been refused to vote because of non-payment of the poll tax.” July Perry was named as “the negro who shot and killed the two white boys at Ocoee yesterday evening.” Three unidentified negroes were dead and two white boys killed. Perry, with his “right arm shot away,” after being treated at the Orlando hospital, was taken to the jail and there removed from the sheriff and the chief of police by a mob and taken to parts unknown.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, 3 November, 1920.

The *Evening Reporter-Star* of Orlando stated that the riot was precipitated by Mose Norman, a friend of Perry's, who had tried to vote, been refused and later returned to the polls where he had been knocked down but "made a getaway." Perry's home was reported as harboring a band of enraged Negroes who opened fire at the white men sent to arrest him, exploding 2,000 rounds of ammunition. Ocoee blacks, trapped in their homes opened fire on the crowds of men who had rushed there, forcing the whites to set fire to the homes. July Perry, the headline proclaimed was "Strung From Limb of Tree and Shot To Death at Early Hour This Morning."⁴¹ As the narrative continued the following day, July Perry was painted with blacker colors and the prose more florid. July Perry was characterized as "the head of a band" and that the Perry house was "filled with negroes who were armed and evidently planning to cause trouble."⁴²

Around the state, the *Tampa Tribune* characterized Perry as a violent man who had possibly killed one or two other Negroes "...but has always escaped on a self-defense plea." It was reported that "...between 500 and 1,000 rounds of ammunition exploded in the church and in Perry's house where the congregated and desperate blacks fought like demons."⁴³ The *Florida Metropolis* of Jacksonville reported that the black quarters were the refuge of armed negroes who offered resistance and had to be burned out.⁴⁴ In the South, the *Savannah Press* blamed Mose

⁴¹ *Evening Reporter-Star*, 3 November, 1920.

⁴² *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, 4 November, 1920.

⁴³ *Tampa Tribune*, 4 November 1920.

⁴⁴ *Florida Metropolis*, 4 November, 1920

Norman in an article titled “Norman Has Not Yet Been Caught Yet: He is alleged to have been cause of Orlando trouble.”⁴⁵

Liberal Northern newspapers reported a different story – the *Christian Science Monitor* reported testimony that the news of the violence in Ocoee had been suppressed in newspaper reports and gave a figure of 32 deaths.⁴⁶ The *Chicago Tribune*’s lead on the article was “Mob in Florida Burns 5 Black Men to Death; Another Hanged for Row at Polls.”⁴⁷ Officers of the National Equal Rights League demanded a federal investigation declaring Perry as a hero and victim.⁴⁸

The African American narrative was represented by the NAACP. The organization immediately sent its executive secretary, Walter White, to investigate. White, who was light enough to pass for white, reported a different story several months later in his report to the Anti-Lynching Committee:

A mob attacked Norman at the polls and demanded that he go home. Not satisfied with this, evidence shows that the mob formed in larger numbers, went to the colored settlement, set fire to it, cremating all of the colored men, women and children who were in the buildings. Eighteen (18) homes, two (2) churches, one (1) schoolhouse and a lodge hall was burned. When Negroes attempted to flee from the burning buildings, they were either shot down or driven back into the flames. Among those burned to death were a colored mother and her two weeks old infant.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Savannah Press*, 4 November, 1920, Group 1, Box C-336, NAACP Papers.

⁴⁶ *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 November, 1920, Group 1, Box C-336, NAACP Papers.

⁴⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, 4 November 1920, Group 1, Box C-336, NAACP Papers.

⁴⁸ *Tampa Tribune*, 6, November 1920.

⁴⁹ White, Walter. *NAACP Report of the Secretary to the Anti-Lynching Committee*, January 21, 1921, [http://memory loc.gov](http://memory.loc.gov)., (accessed October 5, 2005).

White also published an article in the *New Republic* entitled “Election by Terror in Florida.” He wrote, “I asked a white citizen of Ocoee who boasted of his participation in the slaughter how many Negroes died. He declared that fifty-six were known to have been killed – that he killed seventeen “niggers” himself.”⁵⁰ White’s report indicated that Mose Norman was the man who having paid his poll tax, tried to vote and was turned away at the polls.

The *Chicago Defender*, an African American newspaper, blamed election officials of Orlando for the murder of Perry with a headline that read “Florida Election Officials Use Gun and Rope to Kill.”⁵¹ The response of the African American community in Ocoee at the time is almost unknown but the NAACP procured a letter sent from a Mrs. J.H. Hamiter, an African American resident of Ocoee to a friend dated November 28, 1920, shortly after the event. In it she describes the events as “one of the most wickedest happenings of a life time”; she described how the black people from the south side of Ocoee had been threatened that “they must sell out or leave or they will be shot and burned as the others have been.” She wrote, “I don’t know the first step to take. Everywhere near here is crowded out with people and I haven’t been able to sell out as yet.”⁵²

While African Americans were portrayed as scheming and violent and Perry as a killer in the white press, the two white Ocoee men killed at the Perry house were portrayed as heroes and victims. Leo Borgard and Elmer McClinton were described as “ex-service men” wearing

⁵⁰ White, Walter. “Election by Terror,” *The New Republic*, “Jan. 12, 1921, <http://memory.loc.gov/>, (accessed October 5, 2005).

⁵¹ *Chicago Defender*, 6 November, 1920

⁵² Mrs. J.H. Hamiter, 28 November, 1920, Group 1, Box C-336, NAACP Papers.

portions of their uniforms.⁵³ The funeral of one of them, Borgard, "...was described as one of the largest attended funerals ever held in Winter Garden".⁵⁴ The ethos of the event for the townspeople - the importance of white supremacy - was demonstrated by the tombstone erected at Leo Bogard's grave in Oakland. Five feet high, it is engraved with two Klan nightriders in robes atop horses rearing and pawing at the air with the Klan motto in between them and "Only the American Stands on Guard" at the bottom.⁵⁵ Although it was possible that Borgard and McClinton were killed by their own men in the crossfire, this was not investigated. The other African Americans killed in the riot were never named. The only evidence of their deaths is the burial report of the white undertaker of Orlando who noted that he brought three pauper's caskets to Ocoee for three African Americans "burned to death in their houses" on November 2, 1920. He buried them in an undisclosed location, all in one grave.⁵⁶

Beginning with these narratives constructed in 1920 and 1921, there was a struggle over the representation of these events, particularly in the construction of a motivation for the violence. Those sympathetic to African Americans condemned the violence, burnings and the lynching while those supporting white supremacy and contesting African American civil rights defended them as necessary. Locally, authority over the narrative of the event was won by Orange County's white citizens, particularly Democrats. They had the power to justify taking the

⁵³ *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, 4 November 1920.

⁵⁴ *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, 6 November 1920.

⁵⁵ Don Price, manager of Greenwood Cemetery, Orlando, Florida, private collection.

⁵⁶ Undertaker's Memoranda, Nov. 2, 1920, *The Carey Hand Funeral Records*, Special Collections Department, University of Central Florida Libraries, Orlando, Florida.

property of black landowners, black churches and a black fraternal lodge, obliterating signs of violence and turning it into white landscape.

After his lynching, Perry was buried in a grave in the city's Greenwood Cemetery. The editorial of the *Orlando Evening Reporter-Star* called the incidents “deplorable” and advised that “Now that the disturbance in the western section of the county has come to an end, all citizens should forget it as soon as possible.”⁵⁷ Any further investigation, the editor argued a few days later, would stir up memories better left alone and would only “leave an everlasting feeling against them [Negroes] in all Orange.”⁵⁸ Afterwards, a Tampa newspaper printed an editorial from the *Deland News* that blamed Orlando’s Republicans for the violence since they had incited the blacks to vote and allowed blacks to think that they were equal to whites.

The sympathy of the News goes out to the poor unfortunate negroes who were shot down in Orange county this week. They were only pawns in the game. The entire blame for their murder rests upon the white skunks who put them up to voting, and made them believe that they were just as good as white men and women...The blood of the murdered negroes is on the heads of these carpet-baggers who protected themselves with the naked bodies of the inferior race.⁵⁹

At some point, a revision was made in July Perry’s *Certificate of Death*. The cause of death filled out by black undertaker Edward Stone was written “By being hung”; later another person with different handwriting wrote on the same line “not by violence caused by racial disturbance.”⁶⁰ The reason for this revision, I would argue, is that a death certificate is a legal

⁵⁷ *Evening Reporter-Star*, 4 November, 1920.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 November, 1920.

⁵⁹ *Tampa Tribune*, 6 November 1920.

⁶⁰ *Certificate of Death*, Bureau of Vital Statistics, State of Florida, File no. 12160.

document that must enter an archive of documents. As Trouillot argued, the selection of facts about an event begins with power over what will be collected for the archive. While a cause of death can not be revised, a reason for a death could be added.⁶¹ Here, Perry's death certificate was revised in an attempt to separate his death from the conflict itself. Although citizens had been admonished to put the incidents behind them, this illustrates that there was an ongoing need to deny their significance. Ironically this revision calls attention to itself, defeating its purpose.

From then on, silence surrounded the part of the incident on November 3rd that resulted in mob violence and lynching. The other part of the narrative that Mrs. Hamiter described – the forced dispersion of the African American community of Ocoee – was not reported by newspapers and not included in the white narrative. The wider white Orlando society, admonished to put this event behind them, did not again refer to the event. William O'Neal, the white Republican who may have encouraged Perry and Norman to vote, never mentioned the event in his small memoir that was published in 1932. No Orlando histories written prior to 1980 mentioned the existence of segregation, much less the presence of the KKK or the violent conflict of 1920. How African Americans in the county constructed this event is unknown. This is due, as Trouillot pointed out, that some sources were privileged over others due to the unequal power differential of the actors. Still, there were two major narratives in print that contradicted each other.

⁶¹ I suspect but cannot prove that such an addition must be rare.

In 1939, the Federal Writer's Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida published a tour guide of Florida, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State*.⁶² In a guide of informative tours of various regions of the state, the tour of the Orlando-Winter Garden area has a half a page devoted to the "race riot" in Ocoee.⁶³ This is a remarkable account of a race riot, mob action and a lynching, and the only such account in the *Guide*. This version acknowledges the existence of several competing narratives:

One of several conflicting stories attributed the trouble to the fact that July Perry, Negro foreman of a large orange grove, appeared at the polls intoxicated, brandishing a shotgun, and killed two officers sent to arrest him at his home. According to another report, substantiated by many eye-witnesses and published widely, the conflicts arose when Mose Norman, prosperous grove owner and the town's most prosperous Negro, ignored the threats of the local Ku Klux Klan and came to the polls to cast his ballot. Badly beaten, he retired to the home of his friend, July Perry.⁶⁴

The account goes on to say that "All versions agree on what ensued" and described Perry's lynching at the hands of a mob in Orlando, the burning of 30 homes and two churches and the death of some 35 blacks. This account stresses the prosperity of Norman; the fact that many African Americans in Ocoee worked their own farms and groves may have provoked envy and the feeling that blacks were getting above their station, a motivation for taking them down.

⁶² Florida Federal Writer's Project, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1939).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁶⁴ Pamela G. Bordelon, ed., *Go Gator and Muddy the Water* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 146. Bordelon contends that there was such controversy over the divergent accounts that the writers included both versions.

In a 1986 interview, Stetson Kennedy recounted the struggle between writers in the Florida Federal Worker's Project (including Zora Neale Hurston) that went on during the writing of the *Guide*.⁶⁵ He wanted to include more truthful accounts of race relations.⁶⁶ Since the rest of the *Guide* depicts harmonious relations between blacks and white, it appears that Kennedy's faction made the final cut and was included in the *Guide*. The publication of this piece in the *Guide* indicates the presence of an intellectual community trying to revise and contradict stereotypes about race as well as volatile narratives of the event.

Zora Neale Hurston wrote another, more dramatic version that made July Perry a hero, but her version was not published until after her death.⁶⁷ Her motives for the rewrite are unclear but it does show evidence of an African American narrative that made July Perry and his defense of his home and family the center of the story.⁶⁸ Hurston may have had an inside perspective on

⁶⁵ Pamela G. Bordelon, "The Federal Writers' Project's Mirror to America: The Florida Reflection" (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1991), 125.

⁶⁶ Bordelon, 1999, 147. She adds that some lines of this account in the *Guide* were Hurston's contribution.

⁶⁷ Zora Neale Hurston, "The Ocoee Riot," *Essence*, February 1989, <http://www.findarticles.com/>, accessed June 23, 2005.

⁶⁸ Democracy Now, on a website with panel discussion with Stetson Kennedy in 1997 entitled "The History of the Ku Klux Klan, continued," states that the history published in the *Guide* is based, in part, on a report by Hurston. She went to Washington D.C. in an effort to have the Ocoee riots and massacre removed from the *Guide*, which she and Stetson Kennedy had been working on together. http://www.democracynow.org/1997/2/17/history_of_the_ku_klux_klan, accessed June 12, 2008.

the riot since her father, Rev. John Hurston, married July Perry and Estelle Betsy in 1898 and may have continued a social relationship.⁶⁹

As the social climate began to change in the 1960's, African Americans slowly acquired the political power and resources to challenge the legal system that kept segregation intact. The activities of the Civil Rights Movement forced changes along with a recognition of the value of minority cultures. Following this trend, in 1969 F. Lester Dabbs, former white mayor of Ocoee, interviewed white participants and a fewer number of black survivors for his master's thesis "A Report of the Circumstances and Events of the Race Riot on November 2, 1920 in Ocoee, Florida" in 1969, adding another layer of memories of the events by collecting stories and recollections.⁷⁰ This thesis for the first time recorded explicit accounts from eyewitnesses including white lawman Sam Salisbury, a former police chief of Orlando, who was wounded while trying to arrest Perry at his home.⁷¹ In the white view, white Ocoee citizens of 1920 felt intimidated by African Americans, and took no part in the burning of the Northern Quarters. In the aftermath of that evening, they feared retaliation from blacks. Salisbury stated that it was Perry's daughter who shot him in his arm as he kicked down Perry's door.

In the black view, whites resented July Perry and Mose Norman because they were prosperous and powerful and because anyone needing black labor had to go through them. They hoped to drive Perry out of the county. The black informants described July Perry's final

⁶⁹ *Certificate of Marriage*, July P. Perry to Estelle Betsy, 13 October, 1898, State of Florida, Orange County, Record one, page 545.

⁷⁰ One of his black informants was July Perry's nephew.

⁷¹ Gore, 14. Salisbury was the chief of police in Orlando from January 1, 1920 to April 1, 1920.

moments as a scene in which July Perry was dragged at the back of a car to his lynching site. They said that at the time of his burial even the black undertaker, Edward Stone, was threatened by whites for his decency in removing the body and burying it. He was purportedly told “that if he ever again took down a “cow” the whites had strung up, he would assuredly suffer the same fate.⁷² It was agreed by all those interviewed that Mose Norman was the man that had been turned away from the polls, consulted with Judge Cheney, then returned again to vote and was pistol whipped.⁷³ Another point of agreement between the two narratives was that the violence had been committed by outsiders from Winter Garden and Orlando.

In this thesis, the two narratives expressed in 1920 were still preserved, with opposing views for the responsibility of the events by eye witnesses or by those who had heard the story. It is apparent that African Americans had actively kept the memory of the events alive as a terrible injustice perpetrated by whites on blacks. African Americans remembered the inhuman treatment of Perry and even the undertaker who buried him, passing along a narrative of a mob debasing a black man, even challenging his right to a decent burial. Their remembrances of the events also offered a motive for all the violence that occurred; anger and jealousy over Perry’s status as a prosperous black who had control over the labor that whites needed.

The author of the thesis drew no conclusions and did not allow authority to either narrative but he stated in the thesis that he believed that the event needed to be aired. “The race riot of November 1920, hangs over the area like an omen of doom which blights everything it

⁷² Dabbs, 30.

⁷³ Ibid., 24.

touches.”⁷⁴ Dabbs was a junior high principal during a period when integration had been resisted by the Orange County School Board. From 1962, when a lawsuit was filed in Orlando on behalf of eight children, to 1969, the School Board had been forced by District Court rulings, A U.S. Fifth Court of Appeals ruling and a Supreme Court ruling to cease delays in the integration of schools.⁷⁵ Ocoee had continued to display racist attitudes; as recently as 1959, he wrote, a sign admonished the Ocoee visitor that “Negroes and dogs were unwelcome.” In 1969 in Ocoee, the town had around 3,000 whites, no African Americans and blacks were still extremely reluctant to work there out of fear.⁷⁶ The year he wrote his thesis, a Klan rally was held within two blocks of the elementary school. Dabbs stated that he wrote this thesis because he feared that “outsiders” would “exploit the social tension arising from the broad desegregation of schools in West Orange County.”⁷⁷ It is not clear if he meant those outside the school system or those outside the town but given the examples of racism within Ocoee that he recounted, he must have feared tensions arising from Ocoee citizens as well.

The interviews took place in the 1960’s, when the perception of blacks in the South was changing, no longer the docile race that knew its place. The African Americans of the late 1950’s and 1960’s were picketing, rioting, and asserting Black Power. Their image was changing from

⁷⁴Ibid., 4.

⁷⁵ Orange County desegregation timeline, February 28, 2008, Orlando Sentinel.com/, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/orange/orl-desegregation-timeline,0,4550103.htmlstory>, (accessed June 9, 2008).

⁷⁶ *Orlando Sentinel*, 7 September, 1986 and Dabbs, 38.

⁷⁷ Dabbs, 43.

fearful to fearsome. It may be that the parts of the narrative from Dabbs' white informants that described fearing retaliation from blacks were a revision informed by this new 1960's perception of blacks retaliating for white injustices. The early newspaper accounts reported "negroes" stockpiling arms as the reason that the lawmen went to July Perry's house. This is more like a rationale for armed men to go into a black home rather than a fear of blacks.

Other accounts of the 1960's up to 1980 demonstrate that the narrative was now presented as a story about voting rights and as an Election Day riot. Charles Grove, in articles in the *Journal of Negro History* published in 1969 and 1970 characterized the event as a riot started by whites "when a small group of Negroes tried to vote" and in which a mob "murdered twelve persons."⁷⁸ However, within Florida, in 1971, the *Florida Magazine* reported that the riot started when July Perry had appeared at the polls intoxicated and killed two officers.⁷⁹ In 1980, *The New Yorker*, in a humorous article that ridiculed Ocoee's proposal to secede from Orange County, reported its part in the "ferocious racial conflict" in which eight people were killed.⁸⁰ A copy of an interview of July Perry's daughter, Coretha Caldwell, conducted in 1980 in the files

⁷⁸ Charles Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta," *Journal of Negro History* 54, (April, 1969): 151 and Charles Crowe, "Tom Watson, Populists, and Blacks Reconsidered," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (April, 1970): 107.

⁷⁹ *Florida Magazine*, 12 May, 1971.

⁸⁰ *The New Yorker*, 7 May, 1980, 62.

of the Orange County Regional Historical Center archives indicate that the event had not been forgotten in Orlando either.⁸¹

Grove's articles illustrate a mounting African American scholarly interest in this event and a challenge to the previous histories of Florida that did not include this event. His choice of twelve for the number dead is moderate, somewhere between the five dead in earlier white accounts and the fifty-six dead of White's account. Grove may have been striving for objectivity in an archive that now contained numerous differing reports of the number killed. The *Florida Magazine*, however, printed the more defamatory characterization of July Perry, betraying a continuing southern bias in portraying racial incidents as the fault of blacks. *The New Yorker*, on the other hand, preferred commentary in its pages that was sophisticated and urbane. It was witty to deride a Southern town trying to secede from its own county, especially when it had a racist past.

In the 1980's, the social values of truth and justice were important ideals to journalists in the South. There was a shift; now black history, in books and articles and museums of African American history was important and African Americans who had died in the Civil Rights Movement were being memorialized. A journalist from the *St. Petersburg Times* wrote two articles investigating the racial incidents of Rosewood in 1982 and 1983, the first probe into racial violence in Florida.⁸² Orlando celebrated the first national Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday in February, 1986 but Ocoee did not. The following month, the *Sentinel* reported the decision of the town leaders of

⁸¹ Mrs. Vernon Parrish, interview by Nancy Greenleaf, 10 December 1980, transcript, July Perry File, Orange County Regional History Center Archives. There is no indication where the interview took place. After the riot, Perry's wife and daughter moved to Tampa.

⁸² *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 July 5, 1982 and *Miami Herald*, 7 March 1983.

Dania to erect a monument to memorialize those blacks whose remains had been dug up and removed to a “colored “graveyard in the past.⁸³ In September, 1986, the *Orlando Sentinel* moved closer to home and investigated the incidents in Ocoee with two articles in the same issue that portrayed Ocoee as a community with a history of racist incidents and calling the incident the bloodiest outbreak of Election Day racial violence in Florida history.⁸⁴ The newspaper challenged Ocoee’s current hiring practices, after an allegation of prejudice in recruiting minorities and quoted a former black resident and a dark-skinned man from Guyana, both of whom had left their area due to racial hostility encountered there.

These 1986 articles contested the former interpretations of their own newspaper in 1920, reshaping the narrative and citing a new source, the FBI investigation of 1920, done two weeks after the riot. The FBI investigation cited Mose Norman’s actions as the source of the violence.⁸⁵ When he was turned away for not paying his poll tax, he returned to the polls with a shot gun and was beaten and chased out of town. The articles brought the incidents of 1920 out into the open, in their own backyard, into that space of discussion that Casey posited as a horizon in which an event can be discussed and debated. The interview with Perry’s daughter, Coretha Caldwell was the first documentation in newsprint of an African American witness to the event. Another survivor, Richard

⁸³ *Orlando Sentinel*, 20 March, 1986.

⁸⁴ *Orlando Sentinel*, 7 September, 1986.

⁸⁵ In October, 1920, the *Orlando Evening Reporter-Star* published a list of names of those who had not paid the poll tax – which would disqualify them to vote in the coming election. The name “M. N. Norman, unpaid” was on the list.

Allen Franks, testified to the white violence, a new turn in the narrative.⁸⁶ Dabb's thesis was alluded to but the article did not use his interviews as data.⁸⁷ These articles illuminate the shift in Orlando from trying to forget the events to an insistence on remembering the events. When the article noted that there were no African Americans living in Ocoee in 1940, 1950 and 1960, it changed Ocoee's public reputation within Orange County from a town that was the site of racial violence to racist. The article did not describe the economic losses of the blacks who had survived the incident or investigate their whereabouts.

In 1989, *Essence* magazine published Zora Neale Hurston's story of the "Ocoee Riot" written in 1939.⁸⁸ Her narrative differed from other accounts by blaming the trouble on people from Winter Garden and Orlando rather than Ocoee. Her construction of outsiders, as those from towns outside Ocoee, contrasted with the less clearly described outsiders of Dabbs' informers. This might represent an African American perspective in which the town that one resided in was an important referent. In her story, July Perry was a folk hero and black citizens of Ocoee along with Perry's wife, Estelle, had agency. She incorporated sections of the Hamiter letter, writing about the displacement of the African American population as a result of the event. Some details, like the names of the two white men killed from Ocoee were not correct although the names she used - "McDonald" and "Overberry" instead of "McClinton" and "Bogard" sounded so close to

⁸⁶ Coretha Caldwell was 22 years old in 1920. Richard Allen Franks was 18 years old.

⁸⁷ Lester Dabbs was, at this time, an Ocoee County Commissioner.

⁸⁸ There is no evidence to indicate when this was written but Bordelon implies that it was written in the 1930's to help win support for an anti-lynching bill that liberals were trying to pass. Bordelon, (1999), 147.

the real names as to suggest an oral narrative that was handed down within the African American community. Stetson Kennedy, it was reported later, stated that Hurston had written the article to dispute the high count of thirty five dead and that “her absolution of Ocoee’s population was standard for racially sensitive stories of the time.”⁸⁹ The publication of this piece was a coup for the editors of *Essence* magazine since interest in Zora Neale Hurston was increasing beginning with Alice Walker’s essay in 1975, a biography in 1977 and an anthology of her work in 1980. An unpublished piece, found years later, was valuable.

The publication of Hurston’s article did not go unnoticed in Orlando. The *Orlando Sentinel* reviewed it, referring to parts of Hurston’s narrative to frame the story as an Election Day riot. In this article, Dabbs, now an Ocoee county commissioner was quoted as saying that the Ocoee incident was best left in the past. As a town commissioner, he might have realized that the information in his thesis reflected badly on the Ku Klux Klan past of the town of Ocoee and wanted to minimize the event. This is the latest example of what would later become a struggle to control the past between Ocoee townspeople and “outsiders.” Revisiting the past has many benefits, according to Lowenthal but it also has as many drawbacks; Lowenthal wrote that “To endure present life we may want to forget or obliterate a malign or traumatic history...Traditional or inherited perspectives may seem pernicious to all but their few inheritors...”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *Orlando Weekly*, 1 October 1998, <http://www.orlandoweekly.com/>, (accessed September 16, 2005).

⁹⁰ Lowenthal, xx.

In the same article, the executive director, Nick Wynne of the Florida Historical Society stated that the “Ocoee riot was not unusual for that period in the South.” Unfortunately, this emphasis on the event as an Election Day riot seems to have diminished its importance and uniqueness; although lynchings and riots may have been common, running an entire African American community out of town was not common and only the burning of Rosewood in 1923 exceeds it. However, in 1989, newspapers were not comparing this event with Rosewood.

Other articles from the *Orlando Sentinel* followed in the 1990’s and in 1993, when a lawsuit was brought against the state of Florida by the survivors of Rosewood, the *Orlando Sentinel* interviewed one of the survivors, Richard Allen Franks of Ocoee a second time.⁹¹ In an article in 1994, the paper ran an article on Rosewood and Ocoee side by side, contrasting the legal status of incidents in Rosewood with those in Ocoee.⁹² The state considered that the legal case of Rosewood was different from the case of Ocoee because in the former, the Governor did not act to protect the residents over a span of a week whereas the Ocoee conflict occurred over one night and lawmen were sent there to stop further violence. Also, after the incidents the residents of Ocoee, forced to sell their land, did receive some money although records of the

⁹¹ *Orlando Sentinel*, 21 February, 1993. Richard Allen Franks, age 90, was interviewed. He passed away in 1994.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 27 March 1994.

transactions are missing. This makes it impossible to determine if the payments were fair. No attempts were made to compensate residents of Rosewood for their land.⁹³

The Rosewood case drew attention to the suffering and economic loss of the survivors in a public debate. Unquestionably, the testimony of the Rosewood survivors and families had an emotional impact at the hearings that led to an examination of the consequences of the state's past racial policies of the 1920's. The past that was invoked was not the nostalgic southern past but a violent and unjust one. After that, the debate was about amends, compensation and reparations owed. This public discussion of past injustices influenced the newspaper coverage of the Ocoee event. This change was reflected by articles in the *Orlando Sentinel* interviewing descendents of Ocoee and survivors. Ed Brown of *Wall Street Week*, whose grandparents had to flee, spoke about the ethical injustice of not compensating the survivors of Ocoee who had lost everything. Another survivor, James Hightower, argued, "I lost my childhood...What you think, they oughtn't to pay me for that?"⁹⁴ The reparations case for Rosewood influenced the Ocoee story by drawing attention to the suffering of survivors and the anger of descendents, fleshing out parts of the Ocoee narrative that had been neglected.

In 1998, a group called the Democracy Forum, formed from members of the Orlando First Unitarian Church. The leader of the group, Curtis Michelson, had an African American

⁹³ *Orlando Weekly*, 1 October, 1998. Ironically, it was the lawyers for Rosewood who, in order to counter fears that their case might open a floodgate of claims, posed the restrictions that there must be a failure to act by *state* authorities and a failure to compensate for property.

⁹⁴ *Orlando Sentinel*, 11 March, 2001. In 2001 Hightower, age 93, was the last survivor. He was 13 years old in 1920. He passed away in 2001.

friend who encountered racial hostility in his new job in Ocoee. In an effort to understand this lingering hostility, Michelson formed this largely white group to investigate this situation in Ocoee, beginning with the 1920 riot in Ocoee and the lynching of July Perry. The Democracy Forum modeled themselves after the Rosewood Forum, the group of Rosewood survivors who investigated the history of the Rosewood incident. The mission of the Rosewood Forum was “to establish a means of sharing information and promoting dialog in a structured format.”⁹⁵

Accordingly, the group, which later included other interested people from Orlando and Apopka, applied for a grant from the Bert and Mary Meyer Foundation to investigate the incident in old newspapers and NAACP archives and searched for living survivors of the Ocoee incident. Some of the grant money went towards producing a play about the night of November 2nd, “A Whirlwind Passing.” Although the NAACP president of Orange County attended some of their meetings, the organization did not get involved.⁹⁶

After several years of research and discussion about race, the Democracy Forum decided to dialogue with the citizens of Ocoee. To do so, they organized a meeting about the incident in the local Borders bookstore in Ocoee in 1998. There was an immediate negative response to this forum; the mayor of the town of Ocoee tried unsuccessfully to dissuade the manager of the bookstore from hosting the event and many citizens called the manager to pressure cancellation. At the meeting, Forum members argued with town residents over issues such as whether the

⁹⁵ “Remembering Rosewood,” <http://www.displaysforschools.com/organiz.html>, (accessed June 1, 2008).

⁹⁶ Francina Boykin, 2008. Interview by author. Orlando, Florida, March 18.

incident was a massacre or a riot and how many people were killed. The word “massacre” was repugnant and unacceptable to Ocoee citizens since it had associations of a slaughter done by whites to blacks. The term “race riot” however, was commonly used in racial incidents across the South. The use of the latter term blurs responsibility for the violence and would make the incident less unique. Other Ocoee residents, including Sam Salisbury’s daughter Betty Hager, and his grandson, wanted to point out that some white members of the community shielded black residents that night. The Forum wanted to place a monument in Ocoee in some prominent spot, include a discussion of “the massacre” in the school curriculum and mark the grave of July Perry, to emphasize his courage and martyrdom in the long fight for civil rights.

It is interesting that the tales of white citizens helping blacks during the violence were absent in the stories told to Dabbs in 1969; this new addition may reflect the change in the social climate, that now portrayed whites helping blacks as heroes rather than traitors. Armed men, kicking down the door of July Perry, a feature of the 1920 newspaper reports, was no longer a picture of bravery.

In response to the group’s demands, Ocoee citizens banded to form their own group, the West Orange Reconciliation Task Force of Ocoee.⁹⁷ This largely white group included one African American, the Rev. Jerry Girley, a resident of Ocoee who did not know about the town’s past when he moved there. Members of Democracy Forum, once they located July Perry’s unmarked grave began meeting in Greenwood Cemetery for an annual memorial service on

⁹⁷ West Orange Reconciliation Task Force, “History of the WORF,” <http://racialreconciliation.org>, (accessed January 9, 2008).

November 2nd beginning in 1997.⁹⁸ This was the only landscape from that era that was not controlled by Ocoee citizens, since the lands owned by the former black residents, including July Perry's home had been taken over and reused by its white population. By the year 2000, there were two groups contesting the public portrayal of the incident, Democracy Forum and the West Orange Reconciliation Task Force of Ocoee. This struggle was between two largely white groups, one contesting more entrenched and nostalgic memories of the events and the other that wanted to include the African American memories of the events and promoted justice for those who had lost so much as a consequence of the events.

The two groups differed with each other on their goals; the Task Force wanted to “put the race riot of 1920 into perspective,” a quote from their website reads:

A group of Ocoee and West Orange County citizens who were concerned about the area's public image began to meet and discuss ways to clarify or improve that image. This was not an attempt to rewrite history, but an attempt to put the race riot of 1920 into perspective, to consider the subliminal causes contributing to the event, and to seek ways to improve the area's public persona, and to seek ways to make reconciliation efforts effective.

This viewpoint centers on a portrayal of the event as a race riot, which diminishes its uniqueness. As a race riot among many in the South, the event was not unusual. In 2002, a member of the Task Force, presented their report to the Ocoee City Commission meeting and declared, “It was a horrific incident not unique to Ocoee and not uncommon during that time – knowing this helps to heal the wounds.”⁹⁹ This construction makes the incident commonplace

⁹⁸ *Orlando Sentinel*, 3 November, 2002.

⁹⁹ Ocoee City Commission meeting minutes, Feb. 5, 2002, <http://dms.ci.ocoee.fl.us/>, (accessed June 10, 2008).

and downplays the aftermath of the riot and masks the destruction of the black community. It also distances the incident from Rosewood and any idea of reparations although the consequences of the two incidents were similar. In this narrative, the actions of whites are represented as not unusual for the time. The consequence of this construction did not address the reasons for the town's continuing racism and pride in Klan membership into the 1960's. The Task Force included outspoken members like Betty Hagar who wished people would forget about the riot and conciliatory members, like Rev. Girley. The meetings of the Task Force with Democracy Forum although characterized initially by hard feelings, defensiveness, disagreements and a continued wish by the former to leave the issue alone, slowly moved toward compromise.

During this time the horizon of public debate widened as the play was produced in Orlando and University of Florida students made a documentary about the event. The former group put up a website about the play and the background of the event and the latter put up a website about the lynching of July Perry and the events in Ocoee.¹⁰⁰ Both the play and documentary used information from Dabb's thesis and research from the Democracy Forum to craft narratives that viewed the Ocoee violence as instigated by whites and July Perry as a victim

¹⁰⁰ "Ocoee Riot," documentary by Sandra Krasa and Bianca White. The Documentary Institute, College of Journalism and Communication, University of Florida, A NoVisuals Production, 2002. A trailer for the film, that afterwards was titled "Ocoee: Legacy of the Election Day Massacre", is available on <http://www.myspace.com/>. The film won an HBO award for Best Short Documentary. The website for the play "The Whirlwind Passeth" is http://home.cfl.rr.com/davisrus/auth_note.html.

of white authorities. All of these events plus the meetings and graveside services received news coverage from the *Orlando Sentinel* particularly during 2001 and 2002.

Foote discusses the difficulty in commemorating miscarriages of justice since “reflective self-criticism is not a tradition of the American past.” Although memorials can create a focal point that facilitates working through the emotions of grief and guilt, there is no simple or traditional way to commemorate shameful incidents.¹⁰¹ The mayor of Ocoee put his finger on this problem when he said “What are we making a memorial to, something we are not too proud of in our past.” No one in Ocoee wanted to concede that their ancestors shared responsibility for this incident which, they say, was done by “out-side agitators” who were in Orlando for the big KKK rally. Sam Salisbury is viewed with pride, especially to his descendents, as a man doing his job in the face of an imminent threat. On one side it was argued that bringing up the incident served no purpose to the community since the city had tried to move forward by employing African Americans for city jobs and other steps. On the other side, African Americans in and outside Ocoee say the city has far to go and has never embraced the truth. However, only the City of Ocoee has the power over the use of its landscape for commemoration.

Unfortunately, this emphasis in the debate on the riot sidetracked the central moral and ethical question of justice for the African American residents who lost their lives and their livelihoods. The mayor of Ocoee, in stating that, “There were heroes on both sides...I am very ashamed of some people trying to make a Rosewood out of it,” appeared not to be aware that whites in Rosewood did help blacks escape. A comparison is appropriate since the restitution for

¹⁰¹ Foote, 305.

Rosewood residents was for the suffering and losses they experienced for the loss of their community.¹⁰² While it is accurate that in Ocoee, the law stepped in to prevent further killings, it did not act to protect their property

In 2001, the Ocoee town manager proposed naming an elementary school and a 26-acre memorial park in South Ocoee after July Perry. Although the Democracy Forum endorsed his suggestion, members of the Task Force moved to block the proposal. One member of the Task Force opposed the idea citing the accusation against Perry that he had killed two white deputies. “Why would you want to name a school and park after somebody who killed two people?”¹⁰³ Another member, Betty Hagar, argued that since Perry was lynched by a mob in Orlando, any memorial should be put there and not in Ocoee.¹⁰⁴ Although labeled as mean-spirited and disavowed by other members of the group, Hagar raised a valid point; Perry was lynched in Orlando but no group had come forward to ask the city of Orlando to account for its violence. An Orlando journalist, however, declared that, “All of Orange County had a role in pushing Perry off the [hanging] stool.”¹⁰⁵ Although a grand jury at the time exonerated the city from wrongdoing, it would not be expected to do otherwise since whites were routinely not convicted in mob actions and lynchings. This journalist pointed out that the secretary of that grand jury was the editor of the *Orlando Morning Sentinel*.

¹⁰² *Orlando Sentinel*, 5 February, 2001.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 14 February, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 15 February, 2001.

¹⁰⁵ *Orlando Sentinel*, 18 March, 2001.

July Perry's tombstone was another area of neglect; while his burial space was known by cemetery officials to be located in the segregated section "K", it was not marked until 2002. After Perry's violent death, his wife and daughter moved to Tampa and there was no family member to place a tombstone on the grave. Over the years, the family members lost that thread of the story and did not know where Perry was buried until the Forum members met with them to give them the results of their research.¹⁰⁶ This meant that the collective memories of the Perry family along with those of the black residents of Ocoee had lost part of the narrative. Although some of Perry's descendants knew he had been lynched, they were not aware of the history surrounding the lynching or where he was buried.¹⁰⁷

Sometime during 2001, the West Orange Reconciliation Task Force of Ocoee endorsed the placement of a tombstone on July Perry's grave at their expense, with the permission of the descendants. Before this took place, the manager of the cemetery hired a company to investigate the site with a GPR (ground-penetrating radar) unit to verify that it was indeed a burial site. Once that was accomplished, the tombstone was dedicated at a service in Orlando's Greenwood Cemetery in November, 2002, with members of Democracy Forum, the Task Force, Ocoee city officials and descendants of July Perry attending. At the service, the Rev. Stephen Nunn, Perry's great grandson proclaimed, "The sleeping giant of Ocoee has awakened...He has declared that

¹⁰⁶ Boykin, 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

there are giant footsteps for democracy today, and they're being imprinted upon the hearts and the minds and the souls of people everywhere."¹⁰⁸

This graveside commemoration in 2002 is one outcome of this struggle to bring the event into public history. By marking the grave of July Perry with a tombstone, the Task Force acknowledged that he was a victim of mob hatred. However, since the mob was composed of "outsiders" in many of the narratives, including Hurston's, Ocoee citizens felt no special obligation to memorialize him. He would not achieve the status of hero that Hurston had posed.

While the commemoration of a tombstone on July Perry's grave was dignified and believed to correct the indignity of an unmarked grave, in many ways it was simpler, less controversial and less contentious to mark July Perry's grave in Orlando than it was to put up any type of memorial in Ocoee. His tombstone only provides his dates of birth and death, with no mention or allusion to his role in the Election Day events, a reading that erases the complex racial factors that led to his death and lynching in Orlando. Like the grand jury that exonerated everyone involved in the incident in 1920, the tombstone exonerates the need for further remembrance. While Duluth, Minnesota, has memorialized three black men accused of rape and lynched in 1920 by a mob, Orange County has not come to terms with the violence and racism of its past history through any memorialization. In order for the site to be sanctified, Perry's history and death would have to be portrayed in terms of equality and justice, however contesting voices from Ocoee have opposed this, pointing out that whites were also killed and wounded. Although the lynching has been drawn into the wider story of the tragic consequences of segregation and

¹⁰⁸ *Orlando Sentinel*, 3 November, 2002.

struggle over the right to vote in many of the current Florida history books and has been cast into the history of African Americans struggles in claiming their right to vote, Floridians outside Orange County do not know about this lynching.¹⁰⁹ The sites of violence were built over; these included the burned-out homes and land where the African American residents lived and worked and the site of Perry's lynching. Another site, Perry's home, is now occupied by a funeral home.

In 2002, the Members of the Task Force settled upon the site of the old, one-acre deserted African American cemetery on Ocoee's outskirts as a site for memorialization of the former African American residents of Ocoee, recommending it for annexation by the city. This choice was a step down from naming a school and memorial park in honor of July Perry. Still, it was a step that intended to honor the people who died in Ocoee during the riot. The city commission's vote to make sure there is public access to the site was called a "gigantic step" by the city.¹¹⁰ The only tombstone remaining in the cemetery is for an African American male who died in 1912, therefore not connected to the events of 1920, an irony that was not lost on some onlookers when the site and this headstone were commemorated by a wreath as a park in a ceremony in 2005.

Members of the Task Force characterized the cemetery as "a sacred place", worthy of respect. Turning it into a memorial garden, they stated, would "show how much the community

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: the Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) for a chapter devoted to Ocoee. He draws heavily from Hurston's narrative and information in Dabbs' thesis to make argument for white violence against blacks.

¹¹⁰ *Orlando Sentinel*, 23 January, 2003.

has matured and become more tolerant.”¹¹¹ Currently, the site is barren of any decoration or landscaping. It is not a meditation garden and a survey of the location of the older graves has not been accomplished. There is a sign that reads “The Historic African American Cemetery” and underneath, “Hallowed Ground” but there is no plaque or marker that narrates the history of the events, the expulsion of its African American citizens or explains why this site is “hallowed ground.” However, the Task Force has sponsored annual ceremonies at the site. A reading of this landscape, located at the end of a cul-de-sac of a subdivision, narrates a story of continued marginalization. Since there are no markers that call attention to the purpose of this site, the history it commemorates is consigned to obscurity.

While planning and funding a memorial may bring a community together, the difficulty in settling on a suitable memorial for July Perry within the town reveals that hard feelings lingered. In Ocoee’s version of the story, the mantra “it wasn’t our fault” bonded the townspeople together along with their pride in their Confederate past and Ku Klux Klan membership. The Klan was the important social organization of the area and much of the region’s wealth, power and social standing were invested there. Even in 1998, Betty Hagar, a former city commissioner, still defended the Klan. “The Klan, at that time, it was necessary...the whites were just as afraid of the blacks as the blacks were of whites. With the blacks coming over and marauding, it just

¹¹¹ *Orlando Sentinel*, 1 June, 2002.

makes common sense.”¹¹² Consequently, the role of the KKK in bringing about violence and death to African American citizens was not examined.

Yet, both groups believe on the whole that the outcome has been positive. Democracy Forum disbanded, believing that, while failing in some goals, they had achieved the goal of creating public awareness of the incident and educating the descendants of the African Americans forced to leave the community. The group helped bring about a documentary and a play about July Perry, brought survivors and their families together and facilitated changes in Ocoee such a Martin Luther King Jr. parade. The Forum used some of their grant money to produce a play that was the first narrative to introduce a major female African American character in a male-dominated story, giving voice to the role of Perry’s wife Estelle and daughter Cordelia. The Forum’s actions resulted in the formation of the West Orange Reconciliation Task Force. The Task Force dedicated a tombstone on July Perry’s grave in a ceremony, cleared the abandoned African American cemetery and held a commemoration there along with hosting some forums on racial issues. They also helped form the Human Relations and Diversity Council that helps insure that diversity is incorporated in city-sponsored events.

Since history and memorials are made by people with motives, I would argue that a central element in bringing an event into public history is the aim of a group who elects to remake a past history of an event. In this case, a diverse group of people formed for the purpose of understanding a present incident - racial hostility in Ocoee - and raising public awareness

¹¹² Edward Erickson, “Dead Wrong”, *Orlando Weekly*, 1 October, 1998, at <http://orlandoweekly.com/>, (accessed 15 November, 2005).

about a town's history that continued to condone this. Their actions galvanized the formation of another group centered in the Ocoee area with different and sometimes opposing purposes. No group made an appeal to the county or state for redress and the confrontation centered on sites in Ocoee.

The compromise (in choice of sites) offered by the Ocoee townspeople has currently diffused the controversy. Embedded within this dispute over public history and how it should be presented, selecting and commemorating landscapes was an integral part of this story. Although we generally consider cemeteries only as sites for burial, in this case the landscape of cemeteries was central to the struggle over the presentation of the story as public history. While the outcome is not entirely favorable to African American history, it has broadened the field of debate, shattering decades of silence and one-sided interpretation. The town of Ocoee came a long way in promoting the town's cultural diversity and facing opposing narratives of 1920. As African Americans have increasingly taken over the portrayal of their own history, the struggle over memorializing the incidents in Ocoee's past is a skirmish in the ongoing struggle for equality and the recognition of past injustices. Since the construction of public history is never finished, it is possible that the death of July Perry, the violent incidents in Ocoee and the destruction of its African-American community will be further commemorated.

CHAPTER TWO

In 2004, The Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore Cultural Complex in Mims, Florida, was dedicated in a ceremony attended by state, county, and NAACP officials and a great many African Americans, on the original site of the Moores' home and citrus grove, almost 12 acres in all. On Christmas Day, 1951, a bomb set by unknown assassins exploded under the Moore's bedroom, mortally wounding Harry Moore and injuring his wife Harriette so severely that she died nine days later.

In contrast with July Perry, an uneducated farmer in a small community in 1920, Harry T. Moore was an important, educated and well-connected man within the African American community in Florida. Moore was born in 1905 in Houston, Florida. In 1916, he was sent to Jacksonville to live with his three aunts, all educated women. He graduated from Florida Memorial High School in Live Oak, Florida in 1925. He became a teacher in elementary and junior high schools and continued his own education, receiving a Normal Degree in 1936 from Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach and a Bachelor of Science degree in 1951.

By the 1950s, the NAACP was stronger and other organizations joined with them in protesting racial inequalities. Florida was more sensitive to bad publicity while the nation as a whole was more critical of the South's continuing racist practices. National focus had shifted to the Cold War in which the United States held a prominent place on the international stage, promoting its system of democracy. Every racial incident provoked criticism, embarrassing the government. All of these factors are important for a greater public awareness of Moore; however,

I would argue that a key factor in the current construction of public memory of these two men lies in the aims and power of the groups who worked to commemorate them.

The Moores' deaths were remembered by the African American population and the Florida NAACP who have marked the anniversary of his death to this day. The four investigations of the bombing launched in the intervening years to find their murderers also aided the process of remembrance.

The African American community preserved Harry T. Moore's memory in different ways at different periods of time. As Edward S. Casey has written "to be public is to be subject to continual reassessment."¹¹³ Harry T. Moore's death received immediate attention immediately after the event and its international implications were apparent in the headline "The Bomb Heard Around The World."¹¹⁴ Following initial publicity, the African American community of Florida and the NAACP preserved the memory of the Moores as martyrs along with the knowledge that the killers had not been apprehended, as a symbol of the injustices done to blacks, which helped unite them. In Brevard County, a dedicated group of NAACP members that included people who knew the Moores carried forward plans to memorialize them and worked with city and county officials to achieve that goal. After the publication of Ben Green's book, *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore, America's First Civil Rights Martyr* in 1999, his importance was reassessed and the focus shifted to situate him as the first martyr in the civil rights movement.

¹¹³ Phillips, 17.

¹¹⁴ "The Bomb Heard Around the World," *Ebony*, April, 1952, 1.

Like Orange County, Brevard County had a history of racial hostilities. Brevard County, the site of Harry T. Moore's murder, had been sparsely settled before the Civil War. By the mid-1800's early settlers had established LaGrange community near Sand Point (which later became Titusville). When news of the war came, some of the younger men joined the Confederacy. After the Civil War, some of them returned along with other Confederate and Union veterans, freed slaves and wealthy Northerners looking for a favorable climate, settling into a series of small villages and towns along the waterways of Indian River lagoon. Originally, it was a hunting and fishing paradise in some areas and sprawling cattle range in others, but citrus farming became the most important agricultural endeavor in the northern end of the Indian River. Homesteaders settled north of LaGrange to plant citrus and some other agricultural products in the 1870's and by the 1880's the area became known as Mims after Casper Neils Mims who arrived in 1876.¹¹⁵

Blacks settled in Titusville as early as 1870 and within the decade there were 13 blacks in the area, some working their own groves and some operating businesses in town.¹¹⁶ In Titusville, the black and white residential sections were separate but there was frequent mixing of blacks and whites at social events. Similar to Orlando's pattern of black settlement, blacks had come to Titusville to work on the railroad in the 1890's and many stayed. Titusville was then known as a rough town and one citizen had estimated that there was one murder for each mile of the track

¹¹⁵ Jerrell H. Shofner, *History of Brevard County*, vol.1, (Brevard County Historical Commission, 1995), 89.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

laid in Brevard County between 1892 and 1894.¹¹⁷ Railroad workers clashed in the streets with townspeople in 1892 and one man died after the militia was called in. In 1896, a black man accused of rape was lynched by a mob of whites in Mims, on the way to jail.¹¹⁸ Several years later, the local newspaper, the *East Coast Advocate*, maintained that “none but the ignorant and hopelessly prejudiced will deny that he [the Negro] is inferior in every way to the white man.”¹¹⁹

Like Orange County, Brevard County prospered from the real estate boom of the 1920s. Citrus was a major industry and Mims had a large citrus packing house and a turpentine still. The racial hostilities of the earlier years continued and the Klan had several chapters in the County. In 1926, a black man was lynched in central Brevard County for an alleged assault on a white girl.¹²⁰ In the late 1920’s, Brevard County was affected by the depression along with the other southern counties. The citrus industry survived; in Mims, the African American community pulled together and formed a Rations Club to help tide the orange grove workers over during the summer month of 1931 until they were needed again in the groves. Also, in 1931 Harriette

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 209.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 210.

¹¹⁹ John M. Erickson, *Brevard County, Florida: A Short History to 1955* (by the author, 2004), 168.

¹²⁰ Jerrell H. Shofner, *History of Brevard County*, vol.2, (Brevard County Historical Commission, 1996), 44.

Moore's parents, who lived in Mims, sold the young couple one acre of land about one mile south of Mims for their home.¹²¹

Brevard County, in the 1940's experienced a population rise due to the increased interest by the Navy and Air Force to use sites in Brevard for bases. The Banana River Naval Air Station in central Brevard opened in 1940, the Naval Air Base in Melbourne was commissioned in 1942 and the Joint Long Range Proving Ground Base was activated in 1949. These military bases brought crews of laborers, carpenters, welders and heavy equipment operators into the County along with engineers, technicians and their families. When there was a call to register for the draft in 1940, the county asked for one African American volunteer for the draft. The man chosen, George Simms, who became a career officer, was Harriette Moore's brother.¹²²

The first assessment of Harry T. Moore within the white political establishment was given while he was still alive: in March, 1946, Governor Caldwell of Florida wanted to know who this Harry T. Moore was. In a time when most citizen protests were quietly lodged, Moore was very outspoken and wrote numerous complaints to the governor about police brutality that called for investigations. As an educated man, his letters were not humbly written or full of laughable errors and could not be easily disregarded. The governor's executive secretary wrote to a Brevard County Commissioner for information and received the reply that "He is a trouble maker and negro organizer." In the same letter, the writer made it clear that the Moores were

¹²¹ *Archaeological Investigation of the Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore Homicide Scene, Mims Fl.*, 2006, 34, Office of the Attorney General of Florida, <http://myfloridalegal.com/>, (accessed January 10, 2008).

¹²² Shofner, 1996, 72.

about to be fired.¹²³ No one had anticipated that the firing of both Harry T. Moore and his wife Harriette would lead to his new position as the first full-time executive secretary of an NAACP state conference.

This was not his first position with the NAACP or as an organizer. As a member of the Florida State Teacher's Association, he fought for equal pay for black teachers, and helped organize the first Brevard county branch of the NAACP, increasing its membership from 5% in 1934 to 31%. In 1950, he created the first NAACP state conference in the country, formed the Progressive Voters League in Florida and organized an ambitious voter's registration drive. All of this was done in the dangerous, racist atmosphere of 1950's Florida; in nearby Orange County the Ku Klux Klan had three chapters, each with a "wrecking crew made up of members who carried out attacks against Klan targets."¹²⁴

Moore was also involved in the Groveland case of 1949 in which four black men were accused of raping a white woman. One died trying to escape arrest and the presence of the remaining three men in the Lake County jail brought a mob of Klansmen who set off a rampage: five black homes were burned and the blacks of Groveland were forced to flee the area. The three remaining men were convicted and one of them was killed and another wounded as the sheriff transported them to their hearing. Moore, along with the NAACP, helped raise funds for a

¹²³ Ben Green, *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore* (New York City: Free Press, 1999), 60-61.

¹²⁴ James C. Clark, "Civil Rights Leader Harry T. Moore and the Ku Klux Klan in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (October 1994): 180.

defense attorney for the three men and wrote letters of protest to public officials.¹²⁵

However, his relationship with the NAACP was strained by his partisan voting campaign, a strategy that the NAACP did not advocate. They blamed the drop in membership in Florida on his involvement in so many areas - in spite of the fact that the NAACP's increase of membership fees had decreased membership all over the country. At the time of his death, he had already been ousted from his position as executive director and was owed back wages by the NAACP.¹²⁶

Harry T. Moore's murder received immediate coverage by white newspapers, especially the *New York Times* which published seven articles about the bombing from January 27, 1951 through January 19th, 1952. Moore was characterized as a "Negro crusader who led a campaign to prosecute a white Sheriff for shooting two handcuffed Negroes."¹²⁷ Their coverage linked this bombing death not only to the Groveland case but also to a series of Miami bombings during the fall months that included an integrated housing project, a Jewish synagogues and Catholic churches - ten attacks in all. Their reportage reveals that a variety of organizations had become involved in protesting Moore's murder including the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, the Civil Rights Congress, the Progressive Party, the American Labor Party and the Anti-Defamation League.¹²⁸ The FBI sent agents from its Daytona Beach office and Florida Governor Fuller Warren also sent an

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹²⁶ Green, 160-161.

¹²⁷ *New York Times*, 27 December, 1951.

¹²⁸ Teresa Lenox, "The Carver Village Controversy," *Tequesta*, 50 (1990): 39-51 and *New York Times*, 10 January, 1952.

investigator. The state contributed \$6,000 as a reward for apprehension of the killers and private donors added another \$19,325.¹²⁹

Moore's funeral on January 1, 1952 was covered by the *New York Times*, representatives of the Civil Rights Congress (an American communist organization), the NAACP, a writer from the *Daily Worker*, and representatives of *Ebony* magazine, among others. A protest rally in Harlem was sponsored by the Harlem Council of the American Labor Council.¹³⁰ On January 6th, a memorial meeting for Moore and his wife was held at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, an influential black congregation in New York City.¹³¹ In the swell of reportage, the NAACP claimed Moore as their own, smoothing over the fact that they had fired him. Moore, they said, was named Coordinator of Branches of Florida "and a new financial program was in process of being developed at the time of his death."¹³²

At an international level, Harry T. Moore's death was an embarrassment to a United States government which had been trying to export their brand of democracy as superior to communism. Earlier in the month, an African American communist and head of the Civil Rights Congress, William L. Patterson, had presented a petition titled *We Charge Genocide* to United Nation's delegates. The petition charged the US government with genocide for the civil rights abuses inflicted on blacks, citing hundreds of cases of lynchings and other killings¹³³ Moore's

¹²⁹ *New York Times*, 29 December, 1951.

¹³⁰ *New York Times*, 2 January, 1952.

¹³¹ "Florida Violence," *The Crisis*, February 1952, 117.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³³ *People's Weekly World*, <http://PWW.org>, accessed February 22, 2008.

bombing seemed to confirm the petition's claims. The Soviet delegate to the United Nations, Andrei Vishinsky, condemned the United States for "talking about human rights and upbraiding other nations while Negroes were shot down by an officer of law while in custody."¹³⁴ *Ebony* magazine wrote that "Repercussions from Florida blast make it most explosive since Hiroshima bomb," and published Eleanor Roosevelt's admission that "That kind of violent incident will be spread all over every country in the world and the harm it will do us among the people of the world is untold."¹³⁵ For Jeremy North, writer for the *Daily Worker*, who also attended the funeral, the murder of Moore was "related to the foreign and domestic policy of the Government which is controlled by bankers, industrialists and the Big Brass."¹³⁶

Despite an investigation by the FBI and the Justice Department, no charges were brought. Harry T. Moore was buried in what was then called the Mims Colored Cemetery, a parcel of land just north of the white LaGrange Community Cemetery. Unfortunately, Harriette Moore died on January 3rd from injuries from the blast and was buried by her husband on January 8th, with NAACP official Roy Wilkins in attendance.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Steven Lawson, *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 190.

¹³⁵ *Ebony*, 1952, 1.

¹³⁶ Jeremy North, *Who Killed Harry T. Moore* (New York City: New Century Publishers, February, 1952), 22. North reported that members of the Civil Rights Congress passed out copies of *Who Charged Genocide?* outside the church at Moore's funeral.

¹³⁷ *New York Times*, 4 January, 1952 and *The Crisis*, 1952, 11.

Although the coverage of the Moore's in the white press soon ended, the NAACP's publication *The Crisis*, featured the Moores in a twelve page article entitled "Martyr for a Cause."¹³⁸ *Ebony* magazine published almost two dozen striking black and white photographs of the bomb-shattered house and the funeral in their April issue. The Moores' daughters, Evangeline and Rosela, returned to their homes in Washington D.C. and Ocala, respectively. The home and ten acre citrus grove passed into the hands of Mrs. Moore's family, the Simms, who lived nearby in Mims. They sold it in 1961 to another family and the home was demolished sometime after 1961.¹³⁹

Decades passed without further mention of the Moores in the press but the memory of the bombing reverberated in the African American community of Florida. NAACP leader, Robert W. Saunders, who followed Moore in the position as the NAACP Florida field secretary documented in his memoir in 2000 that African Americans in Florida, intimidated and fearful after the bombing, were reluctant to join the organization right after the Moore's death and membership had declined as old members dropped out. This was the situation when Saunders took up his new position as the NAACP field secretary in late September, 1952. Membership picked up with the Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation in 1954.¹⁴⁰ Although NAACP membership declined, the number of registered black voters increased from 40,000 in 1948 to

¹³⁸ *The Crisis*, February, 1952, 133-134.

¹³⁹ *Archaeological Investigation*, 42.

¹⁴⁰ Robert W. Saunders, *Bridging the Gap: Continuing the Florida NAACP Legacy of Harry T. Moore 1952-1966* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2000), 65, 71, 184, 227.

120,000 in 1954.¹⁴¹ This may have been one of the reasons that Moore's work for voting rights became so important that he risked the criticism of his NAACP superiors; he had discovered that blacks wanted to exercise political power by voting, in spite of intimidation. Even after his death, blacks continued to register. In 1954, when a bomb exploded in a black polling area in Jacksonville, blacks turned out in heavier numbers than before.¹⁴²

The same conclusion was also reached by Gilbert Porter and Leedell Neyland in their history of the Florida State Teacher's Association in 1977. Porter and Neyland declared that, "The murders of the Moores and the destruction of their home also helped destroy the foundation of a racially segregated society that white racists wanted so desperately to preserve. At the same time, they stated, among blacks their murders became a force that united them in a common cause and gave them an invincible martyr for freedom."¹⁴³ Moore was an important leader in this organization. He was for some years the Association president and although banned from teaching, he fought to enroll blacks at the University of Florida for graduate work and to raise

¹⁴¹ *The Crisis*, May 1954, 263. According to Hugh Douglas Price, the registration of black voters steadily increased from 1946 to 1954 with the greatest gains in the Democratic party. Hugh Douglas Price, "The Negro and Florida Politics", 1944-1954," *The Journal of Politics* 17 (May 1955): 2000.

¹⁴² *The Crisis*, May 1954, 262.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 100.

funds for Virgil D. Hawkins in his struggle to attend the college of law in the late 1940's. This organization was the first to honor his memory with a plaque in 1965.¹⁴⁴

By 1977, the narrative of martyrdom applied here may have been informed by the amplification of this theme within the Civil Rights Movement, due to the many killings and assassinations especially Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers and the four schoolgirls killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. Solidification of the Civil Rights Movement narrative inspired the memorial services held by the NAACP at their gravesite in Mims in 1976 and 1978.¹⁴⁵ When Saunders wrote in 2000 that “For decades after the death, Black Floridians remembered the ultimate sacrifices of Harry and Harriett Moore as they demanded the death of Jim Crow,” he was writing during a period of time when the city of Titusville and Brevard County Commissioners were dedicating buildings and planning other memorials to the Moores.¹⁴⁶

Twelve years later, NAACP officials scheduled a protest march in Tallahassee, signaling to the state, according to Saunders, that African Americans could not be intimidated by the murderers of Harry T. Moore and their supporters.¹⁴⁷ Martin Luther King Jr. was not invited to

¹⁴⁴ Gilbert L. Porter and Leedell W. Leyland, *History of the Florida State Teacher's Association* (Washington DC: National Education Association, 1977), 101. In 1965, the Florida State Teacher's Association gave the Moores their first award – a plaque in their memory, now located in the museum.

¹⁴⁵ Saunders., 121.

¹⁴⁶ Saunders, 119.

¹⁴⁷ Saunders, 178.

speak since the state conference president wanted to underline the point that this was a Florida march and an NAACP march.¹⁴⁸ The Cocoa Beach branch of the NAACP in Brevard County was aggressive in fighting discrimination and preserving the memory of the Moores; according to Saunders. After the Moores' deaths, the Cocoa Beach branch did not flounder and, after the retirement of its older officials, younger activist leaders started protests over discrimination in housing and employment and pushed for desegregation of its public schools. Unfortunately, there is no documentation of these events other than these histories written some time later.

Within Brevard County's African American community, memorial services at the Moores' graves underscored the fact that the Moore's murderers had escaped unpunished. In a large memorial service sponsored by the Florida NAACP, in December, 1977, speakers there called for a reopening of the Moore case and dedicated a memorial stone on the Moores' graves.¹⁴⁹ Only two years before, *Ebony* magazine republished their article on the death of Harry T. Moore, replete with the numerous photos of the funeral including a photo of Harry T. Moore in his casket.¹⁵⁰ The publication of the photographs corresponded with Senate and House Democratic leaders demands for a review of Martin Luther King's assassination and a Justice Department review of the FBI's earlier investigation.¹⁵¹ The public memory of previous unsolved killings was emphasized by the conviction of Robert Chambliss, a Ku Klux Klan

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ben Green, *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 209-10.

¹⁵⁰ "The Bomb Heard Around the World," *Ebony*, November 1975, 63-70.

¹⁵¹ *New York Times*, December, 1975.

member, for the deaths of the four schoolgirls in the Sixteenth Street Church.¹⁵² Photographs of the girls and the bombed church were republished at the time to drive home the injustice of this crime. The photographs of Harry Moore's funeral along with the reinvestigation of King's death may have influenced the call to reinvestigate the Moores' deaths since the photos underscored the violence of the crime and recalled the Klan in Florida and the unsuccessful investigation by the FBI.

In January 1978, the Brevard County Sheriff's office, under pressure, reopened the case and interviewed two suspects, one, Ed Spivey, passed away after naming an Orlando Klan member who had killed himself following the 1952 investigation. The other suspect, Raymond Henry, named more names but disappeared. None of these leads panned out and the investigation was closed. According to Green, who researched Stetson Kennedy's papers, Kennedy researched Henry's story, certain that Henry's testimony was real. Kennedy had authored a book on the Klan in Florida in 1954 and recreated a new narrative of an FBI's cover-up of Henry's story and Klan involvement in the Moores' deaths. He promoted the story in an article printed in *The Crisis* in 1982, in the Atlanta newspaper, *The Great Speckled Bird* in 1984 and on a PBS show, *Tony Brown's Journal*.¹⁵³ Perhaps influenced by this new narrative, in 1985, the NAACP leader of the Brevard chapter voiced the suspicion that there had been a cover-up by local and federal investigators.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *Washington Post*, 19 November, 1977.

¹⁵³ Green, 209-210.

¹⁵⁴ *Orlando Sentinel*, 22 December, 1985.

The North Brevard chapter of the NAACP that Moore had started did not get enough membership for a charter until 1979, but once established the members, who had been holding annual services for the Moores, now wanted something more permanent. In 1985, they were able to successfully lobby the Titusville City Council to rename the Titusville Social Service Center, a government day-care center, in Harry T. Moore's honor. The first memorial art, a bust of Moore, was commissioned from funds raised by the Brevard chapter of the NAACP and was unveiled at another Florida NAACP memorial service for the Moores in December, 1985. At this service, an NAACP official characterized Moore as a pioneer and trailblazer and vowed that the bust would stand as "a constant awareness of the things he was about."¹⁵⁵

These events mark the beginning the beginning of a community narrative about Harry T. Moore. The commemoration of a bust for Harry T. Moore follows several such commemorative busts of Martin Luther King Jr. One of these, the most important, was commissioned for the Capital Rotunda, in the 1980's. Commemorative busts follow a long tradition in American history and there are many well known busts of Founding Fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. King's bust at the capital was the first of a black man to go on display in those historical surroundings as Moore's bust was the first in the County. Busts call upon references to classical Greek and Roman artistic forms of dignity, solemnity and nobility. For Aristotle, artistic representations conveyed insights about universal truths. In this community narrative, the bust functions to point to Moore as an African American leader within Florida who broke new ground by tirelessly protesting racial injustices. Busts have also been part of a tradition of tombstone

¹⁵⁵ *Orlando Sentinel*, 29 December, 1985.

commemoration. In that tradition, along with the busts of Martin Luther King, they signify that the pursuit of justice cannot be killed by assassins.

In 1986 a parade to support the designation of the oldest segregated school in Cocoa as a historic landmark ended at the Harry T. Moore Center. This landmark, it was hoped, would be a source of inspiration to students, reminding them of how hard black students had worked to get an education.¹⁵⁶ By the mid-80s, Brevard's black citizens had formed a Harry T. Moore Historical Site Committee, applying to the State of Florida for landmark status for the Moore homesite. By 1989, they began meeting with the County to purchase the Moore Homesite. During this year, the Civil Right Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, was dedicated with a memorial that used a timeline to trace milestones of the Civil Rights Movement. The timeline begins with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case. Considering that the site was dedicated by the Southern Poverty Law Center, it is not surprising that they began their timeline with an important legal case - but it meant that Harry T. Moore's contributions would not be inscribed in this nationally known civil rights timeline.

The Memorial in Montgomery is well known, facilitated by the reputation of Maya Lin and her design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Her design of a circular memorial fountain with a timeline inscribed in its watery stone has been acclaimed since the opening of the Memorial. The Memorial itself has already become a metaphor for a new website to broaden

¹⁵⁶ *Orlando Sentinel*, 6 July, 1986.

knowledge of African American women's art.¹⁵⁷ The Memorial's timeline argues for a certain reading of civil rights martyrs. It has national stature and reputation and since public histories are constructed from many versions of public memories, their timeline, beginning in 1954, has become solidified as the national timeline.

The 1990's were significant in bringing civil rights to public consciousness in many ways: nationally, the documentary *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads (1965-1985)* was broadcast in 1990. Racial issues came to the fore during Clarence Thomas's contested Supreme Court nomination and Rodney King's beating in Los Angeles. Stetson Kennedy, his books reissued by this time, spoke about the Moores in CNBC's Live Talk.¹⁵⁸ In 1991, 40 years after the Moore's death, Governor Lawton Chiles reopened the investigation after an Orlando woman reported that her husband had boasted about his role in the bombing. Scholar and journalist, James Clark asserted that it was this investigation of his death in 1991 by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement that attracted new attention to his civil rights activities and gained the Moore's the recognition they deserved.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ "VG: Voices from the Gaps., Our Project" <http://voices.cla.umn.edu/vg/index.html>, (accessed June 19, 2008. "We chose the image of the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama as a metaphor for the new VG. It is fitting for several reasons. The collaborative nature of VG is much like a fountain - a community whose contributions are the flow of thought over text. The water interacts with the text on the fountain and indeed, with itself."

¹⁵⁸ Green, 211.

¹⁵⁹ Clark, 183.

After so much time had passed, the investigation was an important event especially for the Florida NAACP. At the memorial service for the Moores in December, 1991, they provided buses and cars to bring people there from around the state “to remind people of Moore’s contributions to civil rights.”¹⁶⁰ For African Americans in Florida, the Moore’s were clearly martyrs for the cause of justice. In a piece printed in the *Miami Herald*, at the memorial service the black preacher roared "Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground.. The shed blood, the broken bones and the bomb-ridden bodies of Harry and Harriette Moore have made this a sacred spot.”¹⁶¹

This reading by a Christian minister at a graveside service adds a new dimension to the public memories of the Moores. In religious tradition, the places where innocent people were killed for their religious beliefs became sites of pilgrimage, a place to spend time in the presence of the divine. Secular traditions in the United States view several different sites as sacred, particularly the battle grounds of the Civil War, where some, like Gettysburg, were consecrated. The preacher did not merely call it a sacred space but used a familiar biblical reference that has special importance in the *Bible* since it is repeated three times: in *Exodus*, *Joshua* and *Acts* when God calls on Moses and Joshua to do his bidding.¹⁶² Its reference here at the gravesite suggests a reading that God himself is present here, sanctifying the ground and that their sacrifices, like

¹⁶⁰ *Orlando Sentinel*, 22 December, 1991.

¹⁶¹ *Miami Herald*, 16 February 1992.

¹⁶² *Exodus* 3: 56, *Joshua* 5: 15 and *Acts* 7: 33.

those of other holy martyrs will not be forgotten. In this speech, the sacred combines with secular memories of the Moores.

The passion that the Moores inspired led the black community of Brevard, NAACP members of Florida, along with the Moore's surviving daughter, Juanita Evangeline to urge the Brevard County Commissioners to name another building after the Moores. After discarding the new stadium as the suitable building for a memorial, the commissioners voted in 1993 to name the new Brevard County courthouse after Harry Moore and his wife - the Harry T. Moore and Harriette V. Moore Justice Center.¹⁶³ Both the community and the county contributed funds for a bronze relief placed inside the new justice center that featured figures of the Moores lifting the scales of justice, with the bombed house and two children looking on in the background, inscribed with "Courage to Challenge." The title of the piece unambiguously tells us that the Moores had the courage to confront the injustices of their time. In the piece itself, the representation of the Moores are directly connected to the scales of justice. They recognized, it suggests, the justice of their cause which they pursued regardless of consequences. The consequences are shown by the bombed-out house. The two children may be drawing inspiration from this lesson and their example and at the same time, understanding the foundations of their freedoms. The scales are not balanced; one side the scale is lower, the other higher. This might suggest that the scales of justice during their lifetime weighed against African Americans. Another reading might be that the scales of justice for the Moores are not balanced since their

¹⁶³ *Orlando Sentinel*, 17 November, 1993.

murderers went unpunished. The piece is strengthened by its placement within the new justice center for Brevard County, named for them.

Nineteen ninety three was an important year in other respects; the bill to compensate the survivors of the Rosewood Massacre of 1923 was widely debated through the state, bringing attention to the issue of justice. In 1994, after a comprehensive debate in the state legislature, the bill was passed, establishing a precedent of using state money to compensate African Americans for the state's earlier racist policies. The momentum for addressing the wrongs of the past was building.

Locally, this decade brought more investigations into the Moore's deaths, more publicity and an important step in the memorialization process – Brevard County bought the homestead of Harry T. Moore with the purpose of building some kind of memorial on it.¹⁶⁴ In 1996, they requested that the County's legislative proposals for 1997 include a partnership with the state to fund improvements for the Moore Homesite or possibly or to make the site into a state park.¹⁶⁵ Also in 1996, the Harry T. Moore and Harriette V. Moore Multicultural Center opened on at Brevard Community College's Cocoa campus. The activities of this center caught the attention of one of President Bill Clinton's advisory boards and it was included as one of many notable

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., July 19, 1995.

¹⁶⁵ Brevard County , Florida, Clerk of the County, County Board Minutes and Meetings, Sept. 10, 1996, <http://199.241.8.125/index.cfm?FuseAction=MinutesRecords.Home>, (accessed Feb. 23, 2008).

“Promising Practices” in President Clinton’s *Initiative on Race* in 1998.¹⁶⁶ In 1998, a state historical marker was funded for the Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore Homesite.¹⁶⁷

The high point in nationwide awareness of Harry T. Moore arrived in 1999 with the publication of *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore* by Ben Green which was widely reviewed and widely praised. It remains the most comprehensive account of Harry T. Moore’s life and the subsequent investigations of the bombing. In it, he disseminated more widely an argument that another scholar, Caroline Emmons, had written in 1997 - that Harry T. Moore was the first martyr of the Civil Rights Movement. The idea that Moore was the first martyr did not create a national consensus as evidenced by the *New York Times* reviewer who questioned whether this was the case or not.¹⁶⁸

Scholarly papers about Moore began to appear in this decade; in 1994, James C. Clark wrote the first scholarly article on Harry T. Moore, calling Moore “an ambitious fighter for civil rights.”¹⁶⁹ The *Journal of Negro History* published a paper on Moore’s work for voting rights by Carole Emmons. In it she put forward an idea that had been emerging in the late 1970’s and

¹⁶⁶ On America in the 21st Century: Forging a New Future. The President's Initiative on Race: The Advisory Board's Report to the President in 1998.,

<http://clinton3.nara.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/cevent.html>, accessed February 19, 2008.

¹⁶⁷ Brevard County, Brevard County Board Minutes and Meetings, July 28, 1998, <http://199.241.8.125/index.cfm?FuseAction=MinutesRecords.Home>, accessed February 20, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Times*, 13 June, 1999.

¹⁶⁹ Clark, 1994.

1980's - that the periodization of the civil rights movement needed to be moved away from the perception that the movement started with the activities of specific leaders and organizations.

Emmons was echoing the opinion of academics such as Charles Payne who critiqued the traditional narrative for placing too much emphasis on national leadership and national institutions.¹⁷⁰ Steven F. Lawson, in a historiography of the civil rights movement, noted the early tendency of scholars of the early 1960's and 1970's to narrate this story as the judicial and legislative triumphs of a political movement while failing to include the contributions of women, labor, and the lives of ordinary people all across the South.¹⁷¹ Dating the Civil Right's movement to a specific year like the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, used by the Birmingham Rights Memorial Institute as well as the award-winning documentary "Eyes on the Prize" (1987) as their starting points, reinforced the impression the movement for civil right had a specific beginning.

Another argument made by Lawson was that the historiography had shifted toward researching the movement through the lens of social history and women's studies, illuminating the lives of ordinary people.¹⁷² However, the scholarly articles about Moore while successfully documenting his tireless pursuit for African American civil rights, by characterizing him as persistent, determined, courageous and tenacious, described a man who appears to be flawless in

¹⁷⁰ Deborah Menkart, Jenice L. View , Alana D. Murry, , eds., "*Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching*" *A Resource Guide for K-12 Classrooms*, (Washington D.C.: McArdle Printing, 2004), 11.

¹⁷¹ Lawson, 3-4.

¹⁷² Lawson, 6.

character. Admittedly, these articles were written to establish his role in civil rights in Florida and not as character studies.

Ben Green's more comprehensive book serves as a biography of Moore that begins with his early years to the double murder of Moore and his wife and beyond, to a lengthy account of the attempts to find the murderers. Green posits his commitment and zeal to formative years in the urbane black society of Jacksonville, his intelligence and to his experience as a black male in the South. Why this affected him so strongly that he would put his life at risk to pursue civil rights is not explored. The book is directed towards Moore's activities as an organizer and activist and his troubled relationship with the NAACP. He covers the Groveland case in great detail and suggests that Moore's involvement and protests over the case led to his death. However, the narrative is male-dominated and we do not gain insight into Harriette Moore's role in the marriage, her religious beliefs or her feelings about his work and its effect on their marriage its possible consequences for their lives. Moore appears undaunted, fearless and unstoppable in this account but there are many sides of him that are not described as well such as his religious beliefs and his failings. Harry and especially Harriette Moore are somehow one-dimensional.

The problem with these characterizations is the same problem that Michael Eric Dyson tackled with his study of Martin Luther King Jr. King's image as a perfect icon, he has stated, prevents us with identifying with him. Moreover, it is his contention that King's failures do not

detract from him but only magnify his humanity.¹⁷³ This was put more emphatically by Biko Baker, a journalist and hip hop organizer, who complained that the civil rights movement is dominated by superhero narratives. “Far too often our history is taught from the perspective that change is made only by strong primary leaders.”¹⁷⁴

In 2001, PBS broadcast a documentary titled *Freedom Never Dies: The Legacy of Harry T. Moore*. This highlighted Harry T. Moore’s life and work in organizing the Florida NAACP and his tireless efforts to advocate for civil rights. The documentary made his face public and increased his exposure in the public eye. Carole Emmons appeared in it, repeating to a nationwide audience her argument that the timing of the civil rights movement should be recast and that Harry T. Moore was the first martyr in the civil rights movement.

The documentary, narrated by Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, follows the non-linear plan of Green’s book in presenting the deaths of the Moore’s first, then moving to Moore’s early life, education and marriage. After this linear narrative, it presents his life in segments focusing on his troubled relationship with the NAACP, and his involvement in the lynching crimes of Florida, particularly in the Groveland case. Close readers of the book will recognize that the editors of the documentary have brought Green’s descriptions in the early chapters of the book to life by its use of images and music. One of Green’s strengths in the book was his ability to describe a scene or

¹⁷³ “The Real Martin Luther King,” Online NewsHour, January 18, 2000, <http://pbs.org>, (accessed June 3, 2008).

¹⁷⁴ “Future Civil Rights: Next Move is Ours,” 15 August, 2007, <http://wiretapmag.org>, (accessed January 29, 2008).

capture a time period. In the documentary, this strength is enhanced by sound, narrations and photographic work.

The documentary juxtaposes black and white photographs explained by voiceovers with close-ups of a manual typewriter clacking away while a narrator reads the text of one of Moore's letters, expressing Moore's reaction to the events around him. This pattern is interspersed with "talking heads," interviews with historians, friends of the Moores, former FBI investigators and NAACP officials. Those researchers who have written about Moore – Ben Green, Jim Clarke, and Carol Emmons, frequently appear. Since the narrative relies on historical photographs to illustrate events, much of the documentary is in black and white. Contrast is achieved by filming the interviews in color. Another striking and perhaps symbolic use of color is a faded red tone that is always used for the motif of the typewriter and narration of Moore's letters.

In the middle of the documentary, there is a set of graphic photographs of lynchings that are so shocking that the narrative seems to halt. The disturbing sight of photograph after photograph of black men hanging from trees forces the viewer to confront and examine our society that allowed this. It makes Harry T. Moore's reality as a black man painfully clear. As the narrative moves on, and the role of the Ku Klux Klan is explored, the many images of the Klan in gleaming white robes contrasts with the darker photographs of the lynchings, constructing a racial narrative of white violence on black bodies. This narrative is invoked again towards the end of the documentary when photographs of the Klan are interspersed with those of the Moore's bombed house.

It is a male-dominated story. The achievements of black society in Jacksonville and the Black Renaissance cited are male achievements. Although not stated, the Moore's marriage

seems patriarchal with Harry at the head and Harriette in a supportive role. Violent acts are done by men to men. However, the tone is mitigated by interviews with female friends of the Moores, their daughter Evangeline and a female historian. Class is evidenced by recounting the educated backgrounds of Moore's aunts, his own education and the family's status in Mims where the Moores, a middle-class professional family, owned an orange grove in a town where most blacks labored in one. Although all of these themes were present in Green's book, here they stand out, highlighted by photos, music and narration.

The music throughout the film plays an emotional role; the music is lively in a description of the vibrant, black urban Jacksonville of Moore's youth, somber with photographs of violent incidents, and symbolic when a version of the poem "The Ballad of Harry T. Moore" written by Langston Hughes is softly intoned over photographs of the bombed home and funeral. The long segment about the deaths of the Moore's, mixed with reports of the unsuccessful investigation, seems more intimate than the rest of the documentary since it is narrated by friends of the Moores who were present. Their daughter Evangeline, talking about her mother's death, in one of the most emotional scenes in the documentary, reminds the viewer of the personal consequences of this tragedy.

The conclusion rapidly covers the reaction of the NAACP to his death; the organization claimed him as their hero as it made money from memorial benefits in his name. Green and Emmons appear on camera to emphasize that he deserves to be included in the Civil Rights Movement as the first martyr and that his name should be inscribed in the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery. The film closes with written text to add that the couple were memorialized by Brevard County and by the state of Florida in 1991 and 1998 by naming the new Justice Center

after them, purchasing their land for a memorial park and reopening the investigation three more times. By ending here, the viewer is consoled that their names have not been forgotten in Florida and their memorialization is on-going. The ending reconciles the violent racist Florida of the past with a Florida now seeking equity and justice by continuing to investigate their murder.

Although we do not learn any more about the Moores from the documentary than we learned from the book, the documentary has the power to make us care.

The culmination of dedicated memorials to the Moores occurred in 2004, with the grand opening of the new 5,000 sq. ft. Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Memorial Park on 11.93 acres of the original Moore homestead. The park complex which includes an interpretive center, a library and a community meeting room, was funded through a \$700,000 grant from the state of Florida, through the Brevard County Commissioners and the North Brevard Parks Referendum.¹⁷⁵ The timeline in the exhibit hall in the interpretive center maintains visually and graphically that Harry T. Moore was the first martyr in the civil rights movement. Its continued development is the responsibility of a non-profit organization, the Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Complex, Inc. Since 2004, the organization has been holding the Moore Heritage Festival of the Arts and Humanities each spring with education sessions and exhibitions at Brevard Community College campus and talks by Evangeline Moore.

In 2005, due to the urging of Evangeline Moore and the Brevard County NAACP, Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist reopened the investigation into the Moore's deaths, offering a

¹⁷⁵ Florida House of Representatives Newsletter, vol. XIV, February 6, 2004, <http://nbbd.com/gogd/moore/040205SpeakerByrd/index.html>, (accessed May 23, 2008).

\$25,000 reward for information. As part of the investigation, an archeological firm examined the site where the house once stood, testing for the ingredients of the bomb. At that point, the memorial site became, at the same time a site for forensic/archeological investigation. Since it was also the year of Harry T. Moore's 100th birthday, celebrated at the park, Harry T. Moore's name was frequently in the newspapers. Although the investigation did not turn up any new information after twenty months, it brought the injustice of their deaths to the forefront.

There are now numerous memory sites in Brevard County for Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore. The state of Florida and Brevard County has recognized the Moores with funds, memorial buildings, artworks, a memorial park and honors like the Great Floridian award (2007). Lawson rewrote his 1991 historiography in 2003 to include grass-roots people like Harry T. Moore and has acknowledged that Harry T. Moore probably is the first civil rights martyr. This reading of Moore is also codified in a PBS documentary, a biography, scholarly articles, numerous newspaper articles. However, Moore has not been granted that status in national civil rights museums. Because the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute started their time-line in 1954, they will not consider adding Harry T. Moore even though they rededicated the memorial in 2004 for another Florida victim - Johnnie Mae Chappel, killed in 1964 during a civil rights demonstrations at Jacksonville.¹⁷⁶ He is not on the NAACP's timeline on-line, not included on the National Civil Rights Museum's timeline, and he was not included in the first inaugural

¹⁷⁶ *St. Petersburg Times*, 13 June, 2004 .

exhibition of the new National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. titled *Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits*¹⁷⁷.

The timeline of the civil rights movement is still in flux in scholarly articles but it may be that the timeframe of the civil rights movement has concretized in public memory. Before there was a civil rights movement, Harry T. Moore was cast within the temper of his times; as a leader, crusader, and “true martyr in the fight for a world free from dictatorship as any soldier who fought in Korea.”¹⁷⁸ These narratives were not supplanted but revised with a new narrative added – as first martyr in the cause of civil rights. His story and particularly, his memorial homesite, was brought forward by ordinary but dedicated individuals, largely African American members of the NAACP who lived through segregation and recognized the courage that it took for any African American to protest the injustices of the time.

Landscape is central to this story as well; initially the NAACP of Florida used the Moores’ gravesite as a rallying point, then made restoration of his home and the acreage around it a priority. They shepherded a cultural center onto the property and are preparing to restore the original home. It is to this site that we now turn.

The Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore Memorial Park and Cultural Center, located in Mims, Florida, was designed by Thaddeus Cohen, an African American architect who was then the Florida Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs and winner of several Florida

¹⁷⁷ National Museum of African American History and Culture,” *Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits*,” <http://nmaahc.si.edu>, (accessed Feb.25, 2008).

¹⁷⁸ *New York Times*, 21 January, 1952.

Design Awards. The memorial park is situated at the end of the street in a small African American community in Mims, Florida, near Old Dixie Highway. In 1952, a reporter who covered the funeral described Mims:

Mims lies half hidden by the great orange groves; a small typically backwoods Florida town – a few big garages, Cocoa Cola signs, a big central store, several streets of fine gleaming white houses where the rich planters live and then, down in the hollow, after a right turn of US Highway 1 you are among the ...clapboard bungalows of the Negroes.¹⁷⁹

The Center is positioned on the Moore's land just west of the site of Moore's home, demolished sometime after 1961. The site was purchased by Brevard County in 1994 and the building, whose entrance faces north, was dedicated in 2004.¹⁸⁰ The glassed two-story entrance towers above any of the other nicely turn-out residences of the neighborhood, seeming to rise up where the road, now named Freedom Avenue, ends. The tall center gallery of the entrance has an unhindered view to the glassed wall at its south end and beyond to a view of flowering orange groves that once belonged to the Moores. West of the gallery is a lateral one-story projection that houses the community meeting room, storage area and rest rooms. On the east side is a similar one-story projection, housing the exhibition hall with a civil rights timeline and artifacts of the Moore's life alongside spaces for a gift shop, office and library.

The modern two-tier entrance with its glass panels is an imposing structure and with its one-story lateral projections suggests a guard tower or portal. The two columns bordering the

¹⁷⁹ North, 7.

¹⁸⁰ Information on sale of land from Brevard County Clerk of Court, Parkway Complex, Land Records, 700 S. Park Ave., Titusville, Fl.

second level on each side of the entrance evoke Roman temple architecture. Together, the architecture of the building brings to mind classical associations of solemnity and a sanctified space. The Center does not infringe on the location but seems to rise up with dignity at the end of Freedom Avenue. As it overlooks the neighborhood, the building suggests permanence and credibility. Standing as it does on the Moores' own property and indicating by signage and fencing the location of the Moore's home, it conveys a clear message that despite violence and death, the importance of Harry T. Moore's work for justice and equality continues, inspiring others. At the same time it marks the effort of ordinary citizens to secure justice for the Moores, by memorializing and honoring them.

The physical location of the Cultural Center monument could be seen to convey meaning in itself; the ten acres of productive orange groves that the Cultural Center rests on and overlooks from its central gallery, conveys a powerful message of fertility and abundance, suggesting its present fruitfulness is one legacy of Harry T. and Henriette V. Moore's life. These acres were Harry T. Moore's investment in the future and his hope was to make money in his retirement from the groves.¹⁸¹ Now, they function to bring Harry T. Moore's hopes for racial justice and equality. There is an accord between the scholarly articles about his life and work and the Cultural Center Complex. The texts of the articles and the text of the Complex landscape are complementary – the texts are about what he accomplished in the past that promoted social changes while the Complex points to the abundance of the present and embodies that change.

¹⁸¹ This information is inscribed on the historical marker at the entrance of the Memorial Homesite.

On entering the building's gallery through the main door, there are tables on both sides with brochures and information on the museum with a portico to the left that announces the exhibit hall. On the right, is a hallway to a fair-sized community meeting room at the end. Upon entering the exhibit hall, a small glass case faces the visitor, housing memorabilia of the Moores and artifacts from the home. The timeline starts on the left (north) wall and continues around a small space on the back wall to the long south wall. Photo images and explanatory texts crowd the walls; the visitor here must work to engage the two-dimensional narrative since some of the texts of the timeline towers over the visitor and the visual display is dense with text and reproductions of newspaper articles and letters, including at least sixty-five text panels and thirty-nine photos.

The timeline begins by contrasting with images the difference between the freedoms of white citizens and those of black citizens by beginning with the familiar image of a kneeling slave in shackles with the title "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?"¹⁸² This is the only image of slavery in the exhibit. It closes with a statement of progress in African American civil rights with a photo of Lyndon Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964. There is a second timeline that is interspersed which describes and displays events in Moore's life and his work for civil rights. These include photos of the young Harry Moore, of Moore with other members of the Florida NAACP and finally, the photos from *Ebony* magazine of his funeral. Along with these are letters of protest written by Moore to state officials.

¹⁸² This well-known image was published as a broadside in 1835 and was the seal of an abolitionist society.

The timeline of the Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, according to Gallagher, narrates a theme of African American progress due to civil rights milestones.¹⁸³ This timeline is similar, describing the victories that occurred after Moore's death such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, and Martin Luther King Jr. posing with Kennedy and Johnson. This section has one of the few artifacts in the timeline, a bell mounted on the wall, alluding perhaps to a Freedom or Liberty Bell. By ending the timeline with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it implies that Moore's goals of fairness and justice have been achieved.

Although the first section of the timeline evokes some of the violent and unjust events that occurred in Florida such as the Rosewood massacre and the Groveland case earlier in the timeline, by its end, it displays only signal national events of progress in civil rights. Consequently, it does not make clear the progress within the State of Florida to set right its own injustices by, for instance, awarding reparations to the Rosewood survivors or reopening the investigation into Moore's death in 1999. Both are symbols of progress and reconciliation that are not noted here. The timeline in fact, while making reference to his murder does not make any reference to the several unsuccessful investigations into Moore's death. In doing so, it emphasizes the untimely nature of his death and deemphasizes the moral outrage that was displayed over the state's failure to bring his murderers to justice.

¹⁸³ Victoria J. Gallagher, "Memory and Reconciliation in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2 (1999): 303-320.

While I have argued that some opportunities for reconciliation are overlooked by this approach, it does accomplish the work of honoring the Moores, particularly Harry T. Moore's unshakeable efforts to obtain civil rights for African Americans. Even though the timeline ends in 1964 on the south wall, on the west wall, there is attention to temporal continuity by the representations of the honors presented to the Moores; the visitor exits the hall shifting attention from the past to a present in which Moore's work has been honored and is now honored. The memory invoked by graphics in the timeline of violent and unjust events like slavery, and the Scottsboro and Groveland cases reinforces the idea that memories of racism should not be forgotten but instead contested, as Moore did. The values of protest and activism are manifested in its display of items such as letters that Harry T. Moore wrote and his position in the Florida State Teacher's Association and the Florida NAACP. By focusing on the work of Harry T. Moore, the timeline suggests that individuals by emulating his example can work to challenge and change the dominant society.

Whiteness and blackness are portrayed here in a certain balance. Blair and Mitchell argued that the Civil Rights Memorial's timeline reveals the dynamic of whiteness as a form of authority that maintains itself and dominates through brutality and violence.¹⁸⁴ In this timeline, there is a mix of photographs of antagonistic whites like Sheriff McCall along with photographs of well known white men including Presidents Lincoln, Truman, Kennedy and Johnson in a helpful context. Blacks here are not portrayed only as victims or prisoners but in roles as

¹⁸⁴ Blair and Mitchell, 45.

lawyers, officials, protestors, founders and luminaries such as Philip Randolph, Jackie Robinson and Booker T. Washington.

Alongside the roles of great African American men and both local and national events, the timeline shows Harry T. Moore as an individual who attempted to bring justice and fairness to Florida. This message is akin to Dyson's assessment of Martin Luther King Jr., "we must imagine what American society would be for blacks without his historic achievements." Here the timeline prompts us to try to imagine what Florida would be like for African Americans without Harry T. Moore's activism all illustrated by the second timeline interposed on the first that illustrate Moore's groundbreaking work - organizing the Florida NAACP, defeating the white primary, fundraising and speaking out against injustice. The timeline draws attention to the agency and moral purpose of one individual who refused to accept a system that sustained racism and inequality but instead envisioned a society of racial equality. Because of this emphasis, the dynamics of gender inscribed here are largely masculine although there are some photographs of African American women, for instance, in military service and of one white woman, Mary White Ovington, a founder of the NAACP. While Harry T. Moore is portrayed as an active agent, Harriette V. Moore's role is only supportive. Although Clarence Rowe, a Brevard county NAACP official who was instrumental in this process, has stated that Harriette Moore "had to be one hell of a woman," her personal contributions to civil rights, her character or her beliefs about her husband's work are not illuminated.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Green, 254.

Gallagher has argued that the social functions of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute are preservation, remembrance and education. While all memorials have this latter function, for civil rights history, she states, there is a greater need since this history is not as widely disseminated.¹⁸⁶ This is particularly true in the case of a local hero like Harry T. Moore whose life and work are not well known. In the Cultural Center, the large gallery devoted to a historical timeline fulfills that need but is it also evident in the use of the building for community meetings, lectures and events. Moreover, in the park outside the building, numerous educational programs are offered for children and adults. The Memorial Complex has been teaming up with the Brevard Community College Moore Multicultural Center during the annual festival to use their venue for lectures on contemporary issues like the Jena Six and African American artists in Florida along with talks on civil rights. They have also used the Cocoa Village playhouse to stage a play about Harry T. Moore and to host an “Evening with Evangeline,” the Moore’s daughter.

By placing this public memorial on the Moore’s land and pointing out the site of the home within it, the remembrance function is evoked geographically. Although this sacrifices some of the advantages of a central location in Titusville, or nearer the popular John F. Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex in Merritt Island, it emphasizes how murder invaded this small rural community. The timeline, by referencing CORE protestors and Martin Luther King Jr.’s actions, remembers the value of non-violent protest and plays down more confrontational parts of civil right history like the Black Panther Party and Malcolm X. This places Harry T. Moore’s

¹⁸⁶ Gallagher, 311.

methods in the stream of non-violent social change. It is clear but not necessarily highlighted that in Moore's time organizing African Americans and writing letters was enough to get a black man killed. The geographical location also serves the preservation function; this will be emphasized when a replica of the Moore's home is built. Preservation of African American heritage is expressed by the timeline, the artifacts from the home in its exhibit hall and library for researchers that contains the FBI files of previous investigations.

Recently, the museum board has changed its "vision" statement: Early in 2008, the vision was expressed as a dedication to "the celebration of their lives, to promoting awareness of their contributions to the early civil rights movement, and to preserving African American history."¹⁸⁷ All of these goals were met within the Cultural Complex in its timeline, artifacts, library and the many festivals they hold on the grounds to commemorate them. Recently, that vision has been changed to a new and grander one,

To develop a national civil rights resource and tourist center incorporating the latest technology and information management systems.

To form cooperative working relationships with academic, corporate and cultural institutions throughout the nation and the world to link the historical trail of the early civil rights pioneers and their effect on communities both large and small.¹⁸⁸

While the first vision focused inward on what the site should express within the local community, the newer version displays an outward orientation towards becoming become part of

¹⁸⁷ The Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Complex, Inc., <http://harryharriette.moore.org>, (accessed Jan. 10, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ The Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Complex, Inc., <http://harryharriette.moore.org>, (accessed May 23, 2008).

the larger national and international sphere. Currently, it has succeeded in making the Moore's life relevant to the present by providing a site for community meetings, concerts and festivals alongside a presentation of African American history in a community that had no public spaces of its own. This revision of goals may be motivated by the need to correct the oversight of Moore's role by other museums and exhibits of the civil rights movement. This new vision, if directed to the main exhibit of the timeline, will necessitate a revision of the exhibit since currently the exhibit is static and relies on an artful visual display of text to present its history. Currently, the exhibit does not incorporate any of the interactive and multi-sensory museum technologies that are now available, and that were so effective in the documentary. With its new vision, the site may be moving closer to a new role for museums articulated by the National Council of Public History as "Sites of Conscience," defined as historic sites that serve as centers for civil dialogue and engagement for important contemporary issues.¹⁸⁹ The partnership of the museum with the Moore Cultural Center of Brevard County Community College for this last heritage festival of 2008, that featured speakers on many facets of current and past civil rights, seems to speak to this ideal.

In 2005, the non-profit organization received a \$100,000 grant from the state of Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Office to Historic Preservation to help build a replica of the Moore

¹⁸⁹ This new role was brought forward in April, 2008 on H-PUBLIC, an on-line discussion forum of the National Council on Public History. The editor challenged its readers to debate the idea that museums should take responsibility for promoting public engagement. On H-PUBLIC@H-NET.MSU.EDU, April 9, 2008. This topic was explored in *The Public Historian* 29 (Winter, 2008). The forward of this issue was quoted in this listserv.

home.¹⁹⁰ Although the Harry T Moore Cultural Complex and Museum website says that it will be a construction of the destroyed Moore home, a newspaper article in *Florida Today*, states that the intention is to build a replica of the home as it stood before the bombing.¹⁹¹ If it is the former, the addition might accentuate the violence of his death. Further, the board of the Complex, which is composed of many of the individuals who persuaded Brevard County to buy the site, plans in the future to build a mausoleum on the site. This would create a feeling that the ground has now been sanctified. The sight of the Moore's mausoleum would be a sobering reminder of the price the Moore's paid for their convictions and emphasize their martyrdom for the cause of civil rights.

In time, his legacy will be in other, younger hands. What they bring forward may be influenced by many factors, including how effectively the present curators link the complex to wider institutions and update the technology to match visitor's expectations and experience. Other modes of commemoration might facilitate this like use of a website like YouTube.¹⁹² Also, there may be new modes of commemoration in the future that are as influential as media like television, film or internet websites. Also, there may be new modes of commemoration in

¹⁹⁰ The Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Complex, Inc., <http://http://harryharriette.moore.org/checkacceptance>, (accessed May 23, 2008) and Harry T. Moore Cultural Complex and Museum, <http://nbbd.com/godo/moore/press.html>, (accessed May 28, 2008).

¹⁹² YouTube has one site commemorating Harry T. Moore, put up on March 7, 2008. It is a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Harry T. Moore Center. There is a moving biography of Harry T. Moore appended at the end but a visitor to the website would not realize this unless they watched the ceremony to the end.

the future that are as influential as media like television, film or internet websites. Yet Bodnar has suggested that “collective outlooks about moral and political affairs are entrenched in wide sectors of the population.” He argues that as long as our society is characterized by large pockets of powerlessness and inequality, the construction of history will be shaped by popular narratives and the needs of ordinary people for stories of mortality and democracy.¹⁹³ Issues of race are ascendant at the time of this writing, when an African American man is running for President; what this portends for the future may shape further memory narratives.

¹⁹³ John Bodnar, review of *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* by Barbie Zelizer and *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* by Michael Schudson, *Journal of American History* 80 (December 1993): 1168.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that narratives of violent incidents are not static but undergo reinterpretation. The newspapers of Orlando in 1920 constructed the events in Ocoee and the lynching of July Perry as the regrettable but inevitable outcome of blacks overstepping their boundaries and as the fault of white Republicans using the black vote to get into power. The local Orlando newspapers, voicing white Democratic public opinion as well as prescribing it, determined what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. In this case, the deplorable incident of burning, shooting and lynching should be forgotten and that the primacy of the doctrine of white supremacy should be remembered. Although the African Americans involved constructed their own memories that opposed the white accounts, they were dispersed to other communities, their narratives suppressed by fear.

The narrative of the events in Ocoee was revised over time and into the 1990's when a group arose within Orange County that contested the earlier narrative with a new one that contained the African American collected memories of the event, demanding justice and restitution. Although the group modeled their actions on the Rosewood Forum, there were important differences between the constructions of the two events. In the compensation case for the Rosewood community, there were four African American survivors testifying along with a host of descendents brought up on the tale. The lawyer for the Rosewood survivors found a white witness who testified to the lynching of a black man from the community and investigators could confirm the deaths of eight people. Importantly, there were no opponents with a strong enough narrative to contest these witnesses. In Ocoee, they could find few African American survivors to recount the story and their voices alone could not contest the many opposing stories told by

residents of Ocoee who used the accounts of the 1920's newspapers and lawman Sam Salisbury's memories to back up their story. By the time of the commemoration ceremonies in Orlando and Ocoee, which was the height of newspaper coverage of the story, the survivors had already passed on. Additionally, the aim of the group involved in bringing the history forward was to raise consciousness, to address the injustice of the event and to confront the racism of Ocoee. The outcome of their struggle resulted in a commemoration of an African American cemetery by the West Orange Reconciliation Task Force and more lasting changes in Ocoee such as the establishment of the Human Relations and Diversity Board.

Revisions of the past may require revisions in self-identity as well; in the case of July Perry, for some citizens of Ocoee, his role as a killer upheld the self-identity of some outspoken citizens of Ocoee. His part in the incident, buttressed by newspaper accounts of the time, as a man who shot two white men at a house full of blacks and ammunition, justified the events that followed since he was cast as a perpetrator. Because he allegedly wounded a well-regarded white lawman permanently, it was more difficult to put him forward as a victim, much less a hero. The descendents of lawman Sam Salisbury and the descendents of one of the white men killed, along with other citizens have carried on a history that regarded the Ku Klux Klan as necessary for the protection of whites. The counter-narrative was not successful in creating a consensus about July Perry's role or the responsibility for the incidents.

By the time of Harry T. Moore's death in 1951, the dominant discourse was moving away from white supremacy and the forces that maintained legal segregation towards more democratic ideals. The injustice of the deaths of the Moores at the hands of unknown assailants entered the public domain and remained there, carried forward by the collective memories of

African American in Florida who continued to call for justice and restitution for this well-known organizer for civil rights. In the community where the Moores were killed, this memory of injustice became institutionalized by an African American group growing in power, the NAACP. This group organized regularly repeated rituals like annual memorial services at the Moore gravesite. As they began to ask for more permanent memorials like a bust of Harry Moore, city and county officials with power over resources cooperated rather than contested their action for more concrete memorials.

When there was a revision of the importance of Harry T. Moore's life and death from a martyr for social justice to the first martyr of the Civil Rights Movement, he became a more important figure in Florida and the state contributed to his memorialization by financing a Cultural Center and Complex. Since a group's memory is linked to the landscape and the memorials upon it, as interpretations have changed, so have the goals of the group who are curators of this memorial.

In viewing the reconstruction of the two events, the aims of the group were the most important variable in determining the end state of memorialization but a changing social climate that now favors justice and restitution was also important in rewriting the narrative of the incidents of 1920 and in the revision of Harry T. Moore's role in the Civil Rights Movement. Bodnar has suggested that "collective outlooks about moral and political affairs are entrenched in wide sectors of the population." He argues that as long as our society is characterized by large pockets of powerlessness and inequality, the construction of history will be shaped by popular

narratives and the needs of ordinary people for stories of mortality and democracy.¹⁹⁴ Civil rights issues are ascendant at the time of this writing; the state of Florida has apologized for slavery and an African American man is running for President of the United States. What this portends for the future may shape further memory narratives. The needs of ordinary people for stories of morality may expand to include lesser known figures like July Perry and the call for justice and restitution may extend to the African American community of Ocoee.

¹⁹⁴ John Bodnar, review of *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* by Barbie Zelizer and *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* by Michael Schudson, *Journal of American History* 80 (December 1993) : 1168.

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