

Interviewer: Larry E. Rivers

Interviewed Dr. Annett Shakir at the Florida A&M University Black Archives, Research Center and Museum on 9/25/93 (D.D.)

Brief Introduction

Rivers/Question: Good morning Dr. Annette Shakir, my name is Larry Rivers and it is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk with you, about Rosewood. I understand, Dr. Shakir that you are a direct descendant of Rosewood. Would you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you are a direct descendant of Rosewood? Tell me about your parents, your grandparents, if you can, and anything else that you might want to share with us about your family.

Answer: Okay, good morning. My name is Annett Theresa Goins Shakir and I was born in St. Petersburg, Florida. My father is Arnett Turner Goins who is a survivor of the Rosewood Massacre. Ah, my father's mother was Sarah Harriett. Ah, I'm really a direct descendant of two Rosewood families. On my father's side I am a direct descendant of the Goins family. And, the Goins, my grandfather, George Goins, was of course my father's father, okay. My father's mother was a Carrier and she married a Goins, and she also was a Robinson, so on my father's side, my grandmother was a Carrier and my grandfather was a Goins. It

was two families that married each other. My father's oldest sister was Philomena Doctor. And Philomena Doctor was with her grandmother Sarah, during the time of the Massacre who witnessed the incident of the man running out of the house. I learned about the incident just through family history, oral history. For a long time, it was not discussed in front of the children. Let me kind of go back and say that most of the family kind of relocated of course all over the state, but most of them also went to a place called Lachoochee, Florida. And that was where I spent, most of my childhood summers. In order to get away from the city, St. Pete, my parents would send me there and that's where my Aunt Phil, who was a doctor stayed. And so I use to just here about it, we just had pieces of it as children because they really did not discuss it openly in front of the children. We knew something had happened but we were not sure exactly what had happened. But as we got older, we started to kind of observe and ask questions. We, you know, got the facts of what had happened on that particular day.

Question: Okay, thank you Dr. Shakir that's, that's real good, it gives us an idea of your family tree and how you are related to the Carriers, Goins. What do you know about, from what your parents have told you about the

Bradley's, and the other families that lived in Rosewood in 1924?

Answer: Well, from what I can remember from just talking to my father and my aunts and my aunt before she died, and other members, there were seven major families. The Bradleys, the Carriers, the Colemans, the Edwards, the Evans, the Goins and the Robinsons. And, these families also intermarried each other. And with Rosewood, there were you know, just a regular, lively community. And in all honestly I kind of picture it like I knew Lachoochee was. A kind of an extended family situation where you know people were working, and children were playing and just that kind of community that I knew as a child in Lachoochee, and I picture Rosewood having that same kind of spirit and that same kind of economic growth and that same kind of community concerns.

Question: Okay, can we just take a break here for just a second.

Answer: Okay

Question: Ah, Dr. Shakir, I'm glad that we are able to continue the interview now. I like you to tell me from what you recalled your parents and other survivors of Rosewood telling you in terms of Rosewood. In other words, a physical description of Rosewood, the number of people, families and the main, business, or economy of Rosewood.

Answer: Okay, as I was saying before, in just listening to my dad and other adults talking about Rosewood, physically, I pictured it as being a place with homes, I know that the Goins family had different homes. Ah, my grandfather, on the Goins side had bought houses for his children. They weren't all together but they were sought of scattered around. Ah, in fact, there was also a Goins quarters, and I don't know whether you know what a quarters is but it is some houses that are sort of built around in a circle, and um.

Question: Are these basically houses that accommodate the workers that worked for the Goins?

Answer: Yes, uh huh, there was a turpentine still, uh huh and he owned this quarter. I picture that, on the Carrier side I know that there was a two-story house and with a porch on it. Uh lace curtains, um manicured lawns. My grandmother also played pianos. So, there was a piano in the house.

Question: Do you have any idea from, from what you have been told of the number of people and families that lived in Rosewood in 1923?

Answer: Just from, from what has been said and ah just picturing the activities and everything, and I would think that there were over 200

people.

Question: Okay, there were over two hundred people and possibly thirty or more families?

Answer: Yes

Question: Would you say that a lot of the different families were related in some way?

Answer: Yes, as I said, a good example is like the Goins and the Carrier. My grandmother was a Carrier and she married a Goins. And, so like in all of our communities there is no bloodline. These communities, you know, the families married each other.

Question: Right

Answer: Ah, I've been told for example, and I don't know the names that two brothers married two sisters, okay, and so you know that makes them first cousins and some other things, but two brothers married two sisters, and I don't know the family of that but in answer to your question is yes.

Question: Okay, besides Rosewood residence working at the Goins Turpentine Still, what did the rest of the men of working age, what did they do in Rosewood, or did they work outside of Rosewood.

Answer: Some of them, from what I have heard, worked outside of Rosewood some of them were loggers, some of them were trappers, yes saw mill, there was a saw mill, some of them worked at the sawmill. And like I said, I know that was in Lachoochee there was a sawmill there, so I'm sure that's why a lot of the people kind of relocated in that particular area because there was a saw mill in Lachoochee. And I would imagine after these people had to leave, they also had to find work and they were attracted to places where they could find work.

Question: Ah, Dr. Shakir, I had a very interesting, I thought a very enlightening interview with your father who is a survivor of Rosewood. Ah, but from the years that that you have talked about, and he has talked about it to you, what would be the four or five things that he constantly told you about Rosewood that kind of stuck with you?

Answer: You have to remember that many times this was like a secret and my dad did not verbalize it. My father is, first of all, one of the most, the greatest person that I have known. He, in spite of this situation, he has always been a calm person, a very deliberate person. He talked first about the family and the closeness and the family pride and given the different description of the personalities it always reflected around to how

strong the men felt about protecting and providing for the family. How his grandmother protected and provided for the family. The second thing that I would say, he talked about was the incident of um when the shooting occurred and his perspective as a child. It was after Christmas and gotten, he had gotten a new suit. And, he mentioned that when they had to run away and go into the woods, he wanted to go back and get his new suit, and they kept saying no you can't do that, you can't do that. So, he often talked about that. He talked about Minnie Lee Langley, who was in the house and he said that they played together as children. And she was like a tom boy and they use to wrestle and he constantly, you know, talks about the people who were in the house at the time.

Question: So, so your daddy, Mr. Arnette Goins and Ms. Minnie Langley played together and they are both survivors of Rosewood?

Answer: Yes, yes, they were children.

Question: What was, how old was Ms. Langley? Do you have an idea?

Answer: I'm not sure, my father was around eight.

Question: So, she may have been nine or ten?

Answer: Yes, I don't know whether she was older, I think she is a couple years older but he was eight. Ah, he talked about Mr. John Wright

who was the gentlemen who owned a store. And he often said that when they went into his store he never let any of the children leave unless he gave them something, whether it was a little piece of candy or something of that nature.

Question: Okay, so,so the, one of the most vivid events in your father's life as it relates to Rosewood was having to go out into the woods and staying in the woods and waiting to be rescued by trains to take them to and I know you talked about the places like Gainesville and later maybe from Gainesville to Jacksonville to Lachoochee and other places.

Answer: Let me say that also with that in his description of when they went into the woods, one of the things that was very painful to him was when Gary Moore first broke the story and he of course was very surprised but at the same time was very upset because it was so public. And, I said to him, well dad, its in the St. Petersburg Times, you are a celebrity and he said to me, Annett, he said, you mean you want people to know that your dad had to run into the woods like a scared rabbit and that just always stayed with me. Because he had so much pride. Ah, but he also was pained that they had to run and he had to leave the family, although he was just a little boy. But there was nothing he could do about

it. He also said to me on several times that they heard whoever came after them calling for the children to come out of the woods, they were very skeptical because they thought it was the white people was trying to fool them to come out. So, they kept moving deeper and deeper into the woods instead of coming right out at that time. They were children and they didn't know any better and they were frightened and so he talked about that, quite often.

Question: Okay, from what you recall your daddy telling you and other survivors of Rosewood, do you have an idea of how many people were killed? Say from the first of January to maybe the fourth or fifth. I think it took place over a four or five day period. In terms of whites and blacks. And, and who was the first person to die, and if you could, you just give me, cause I know that with the the survivors and they have spoken to the direct descendants that you are able to tell me from what you have learned from not just your father, but from other survivors about those fatalities, as it relates to those individuals who were killed.

Answer: As I said, the, the family, my father and his family were in the Carrier's home and as you know after Christmas you know you are sitting around playing, or whatever, and from what I can understand, someone

sent a message to the Carriers for Sylvester Carrier to, to come out of the house. And he refused to just come out of the house, and just to leave the family. Ah, the first person that was killed was my grandmother, whose name was Sarah Carrier. And she was killed, because the white people came and I ah I guess asked them to come out of the house or whatever and when they did not they started shooting. And they just shot through the house and she took the bullet, okay. So, she was the first person to die. Ah, from that point they, the white people, the white men busted into the door, and ah Sylvester was there defending the family, and ah the sheriff's name was, I can't, I'm drawing a blank now.

Question: Was it Henry Andrews or Polly Wilkerson?

Answer: Polly Wilkerson. That name is the name that I always will remember. He was killed when he came into the door and I guess his deputy, his assistant was with him, Henry Andrews, and so, my uncle really my great uncle was shooting and they fell in the door way. And then just a lot of shooting going on. My dad said that he remembers stepping over several bodies to get out of the house, I guess, and as they were going down, with the shooting, well after they left or whatever and went into the woods. There were just other people who were shot, now I

don't know names. I don't know how many, there were several people killed.

Question: Would you say that between five and fifteen people was killed, would that be too large a number? I have read newspaper accounts that said there were from seventy-five to one hundred people were killed, I mean I'm really trying to get a handle on this because I think this is a very important part of our study and as much information as we can get, I think we need to in order to make this as much of a complete study as we possibly can.

Answer: I can only speculate in, with that kind of activity, of course that there would have been about or well over seventy-five to one hundred people killed during the days, those two, three, four days but at that particular time at the Carrier's house, I would say in the house and in the yard, from my father talking, we are talking about five, six, seven people, in that vicinity, in that area. Now, between there and the woods, maybe some more people. And like I said over a period of time.

Question: So, that's, that's a good point. Bringing up about your perception of the number of people killed. We think that's important, but we are not going to dwell on that, if we could get some idea and our

biggest problem is trying to substantiate the numbers we heard that there was a mass grave but we have been to Rosewood, we have spoken to individuals, to date, we have not found that mass grave. Its not to say that it doesn't exist, but ah, that would be something, we could use guys in forensics to take and establish how many ah human beings were buried there, ah ah, we think it's important because we are trying to set the record straight as we possibly can and, and the ah the black press reported the incident, uh, the white press, and there are just numbers from one on up to many, and, and I know that we will not be the final word, but we would like to be as scholarly as we possibly can in establishing that so when people do read newspaper accounts, they can go back to the study that the Board of Regents ah, has you know commissioned us to do, and see that we have at least tried to document as much of that as possible.

Answer: Well, like you said, I've heard from family members also that there was a mass grave, ah, I've heard, ah, my dad has called names like of course like Sam Carter, ah who was one of the first and then there were someone else who they said they even made him dig a grave or they dug a grave and made him stand over it and they shot him. So,

you've heard about incidences, and I know that if just hearing different stories that we are talking about, just from stories over fifteen people were killed when they stepped over bodies. That's just one of those things my dad said stepping over bodies, so I would, and I can only speculate also that we are talking about, you know more ah than ah fifteen people being killed, right in the Carrier situation and then as I said, over the three or four days of the shooting sprees and people being killed.

Question: In terms of Governor Hardee, at the time, do you recall any of the survivors talking about the commitment from the Governor sending in troops, or I think it was Bob Walker, who was a sheriff, what did those law enforcement officers, as well as the governor do to try to get an handle on the Rosewood incident?

Answer: From just listening to , family stories, as I said, the sheriff was killed when he walked in through the door with his deputy, ah, the, I understand that the Governor made a call to see, ah if he should send in troops and whoever was in charge said they had the situation under control and don't worry about it. The Governor then went fishing and did not send in the troops at that particular time I do know from talking to family members and just listening to them that there was not an effort

made to come and protect the citizens of Rosewood, that there were no effort made by the law enforcers of, during that time in that particular area, there were no efforts made by the Governor, I guess after he had been told the situation was under control and I don't know but no one ever followed up and again for three or four days this went on and no one came into to try to protect ah these people.

Question: Dr. Shakir, from what you can remember the survivors telling you, did any of the families after the incident had subsided and months following it, did any of the family members try to go back into Rosewood to re-claim their land?

Answer: Oh, no. Not at that time. No. Ah, you have to remember during the times 1923, first of all, and that these people were so frightened that they just wanted to get out of sight. The story I have is from my father who was a child, and of course he would not have been in a situation to go back, but from listening to him, and the other survivors, the adults just left the areas. Some of them stayed in the states, some of them left and went north, of course. Some of them changed their names, in fact, we've had relatives that, you know, as far as the fifties and the sixties that we heard they were still living. Because the incident was so

frightening to them, they did not try to go back and to claim any property at that particular time. They were distressed.

Question: What do you think happened to all the property that Blacks owned in Rosewood during the incident? Was the land sold, or was it an area that nobody inhabited, you just had trees and shrubbery to grow up in the area that once was Rosewood. Have you followed that?

Answer: Ah, yes, in fact I have a cousin, of course Arnett, who has documentation on a lot of it. I can't give you the details of it but some of the property, I guess people just went down and claimed it. You have to remember also that it was like kind of a swamp area and the problem at that time it was not in the eyes of some people valuable, but of course the value of the land came with people wanting to move into that kind of area. Okay, like a resort area or what ever. There, I have heard stories also that when some of the survivors moved to the Gainesville area, that there were people there saying to them, I will give you a place to stay if you will sign your property over to me. In other words, you have to remember these people had no place to stay, except with relatives. And if relatives did not come or if they had no place to stay, they had to get a place.

Question: So, in other words, they sold their land in some cases under

duress.

Answer: I don't think they sold it, I think they just signed it over, they didn't get any money for it. They just signed it over. That was just some of them. And the rest, I just think people just grabbed it and you know I guess and decided they were the rightful owners of it. Or they was the owners of it.

Question: Have you gone back or, let me rephrase the question. Have you gone to the place that once was Rosewood?

Answer: I think they had a reunion there, ah I think it was ah, they went back for a family reunion in Gainesville, and they took a trip over to Rosewood and they visited John Wright ah

Question: That's just fine. I have gone to Rosewood and the only thing that would have made me know that it was Rosewood was a sign that said Rosewood. The research team got out and we walked the area that we thought was Rosewood and we found that, you know, that it was a pretty large area and that there were indications of some kind of industry and works and what not, and we are probably going to go back down again to take another look at it. Dr. Shakir, I really appreciate you taking the opportunity to talk to me because it's very important that we get the

information from the survivors and direct descendants of Rosewood. We feel that this will indeed help our study. What we are trying to do is to produce the most scholarly study as we can. We thought that one way to do this was to interview the survivors and the direct descendants. The last question, and this is just a question for me, What do you ultimately want to see happen as it relates to Rosewood in the Rosewood incident in 1923. You know, I've spoken with some of the descendants, and they simply want the state to recognize that, indeed, this incident happened and to make it a part of the overall history of Florida. Now, what would you like to see come from our investigation, and just from what happened in Rosewood?

Answer: Well, ah first of all, I am an educator by profession and I have a Ph.D. in Curriculum Development from Florida State. I most certainly would like to see the State recognize the massacre as a part of Florida history. Although it was a very negative situation, I think that only until we acknowledge our mistake of things that have happened in the past can we be prepared to help ah our society in the present and prepare us for the challenges of the future. And so, I certainly think that along with a lot of other things, positive things, as well as something of this nature we owe it

to the citizens to include it in the curriculum of our schools, to include it in our textbooks, to give our citizens a true picture of what happened in the State and the direction we should go. Ah, I think also that because I know the emotional, psychological and economic stress that has been placed on the members of my family. And that these people were good law abiding citizens who believed in doing the right thing, who believed in preparing their children to make contributions to society, believed in supporting the State of Florida, and believed in the dream that we should be compensated, that its a challenge to try to break a cycle ah of economic poverty, for being educationally deprived and of just struggling. And in spite of the Rosewood massacre, my family has stood together, they've been strong, they provided for their children, they have not been people who did not abide by rules and regulations that govern us all. And I think they should be applauded and/or compensated for that. I would also like to see an educational fund set aside in the name of Rosewood so that the descendants of Rosewood survivors can have an opportunity to further their education. I think this is very important, I happen to believe that education is the key to providing and supporting a good society. And so an educational fund is one of the necessities. And then,

of course, I would like to see a kind of a memorial at the Rosewood site. I have not emotionally been able to go back there because I know it does not reflect physically what it was at that particular time. I also know that emotionally, and psychologically, the community spirit that was there, was not there. Although I do feel that there would be something there that would let me know and also my family know that this is our roots, this is where we were. And so, I would like some kind of memorial set up there. I've even had a vision personally having a museum to tell the story, to say that we can take people through it and I don't know, I understand John Wright's house is still there, I don't know who owns it, but if the State could purchase it and make a museum out of it and to just kind of tell the story of what happened again so that we can prepare ourselves for the future. And of course, I would just like the Governor, somebody, just to say I'm sorry.

Question: Dr. Shakir, I would like to thank you very much for this interview.

Interviewer: Larry E. Rivers

Interviewed Mrs. Lillie Washington at the Florida A&M University Black Archives Research Center and Museum on September 24, 1993.

Brief Introduction/Rivers: Hello Mrs. Lillie Washington! My name is Larry E. Rivers and I am most appreciative to you for allowing us time to talk to you about Rosewood and what happened in Rosewood in 1923.

Question: Before we talk about Rosewood in 1923, I'd like for you to tell me a little bit about yourself, for example, when you were born, where you were born, your parents, and if you can remember, your grandparents.

Answer: I was born in Rosewood and my mother left Rosewood when I was very young. She went to a place called Wylly Florida that was two or three miles down the road. So she lived there for a time (a good while). I was around about nine years when she left there and went to a place called Lenin, Florida. That was not too far from Rosewood, and I was not in the riot. My mother got up one morning and she got to thinking about her family and she said, "The Lord has shown me where there was a riot in Rosewood - that something was happening in Rosewood." So, we were living with my brother-in-law and they had one of these telephones in there. It rings and so my brother-in-law says this telephone has been ringing all night and all day and I'm going to eavesdrop and see what's going on. So when they picked it up the white was calling from different places saying come on and help us to kill the Negroes out in Rosewood. My mother became worried and from time to time we would go out into the yard and play. It wasn't far from the road. It wasn't a highway, but it was a dirt road. We could see the white people in the trucks with their guns sticking up in the truck and cars right behind them. This went on all day and all night and we would standing out in the yard looking. As time went on my brother-