COMMUNITY CENTERED PRAXIS IN CONFLICT ARCHAEOLOGY

CREATING AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF REDRESS WITH THE 1923 RACE RIOT IN ROSEWOOD, FLORIDA

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What can an archaeology of race riots contribute to our understanding of the past? How can this project contribute to the modern world in meaningful ways? The legacy of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow continues to disenfranchise large segments of the U.S. population through unfair hiring practices, unequal access to housing and education, and a general whitewashing of history rendering many of the most egregious instances of racially charged collective violence invisible. Archaeologists have an unrealized, unique role to play in documenting and interpreting these sites as part of the redress movement. This article outlines the ongoing work with the historic site of Rosewood, its related community of descendants and advocates, and the broader public.

The 1923 Rosewood Race Riot

Rosewood was settled in the mid-nineteenth century by a diverse group of people. Rosewood and its neighboring town of Sumner experienced rapid economic growth following the Civil War, followed by negative population and economic growth during the 1890s. By the early twentieth century, Rosewood was majority black and Sumner was a company town with a mix of black and white workers. Then, on New Year's Day 1923, a white woman in Sumner fabricated a black assailant to hide her extramarital affair with a white man. A white mob quickly formed and headed for Rosewood where it encountered the home of Sam Carter, a long-time black resident of the town, first. Initially, they interrogated him by hanging him from a tree by the neck; then, when it seemed the mob might release him, a man leveled his gun at Carter's face, and New Year's Day ended with the sound of a shotgun blast.

At first, it seemed that the violence might end with Carter's murder. However, a little over a day later, whites in Sumner heard that the black assailant had returned to Rosewood with a local resident, Sylvester Carrier. Carrier's distrust of whites was well-known and before the night was out, at least two whites lay dead on his doorstep after attempting to set his house on fire, with his family still inside. Rumor and hatred spread quickly through rural Florida, eventually reaching the Ku Klux Klan in Gainesville, only 40 miles away. Residents of Rosewood knew the response for killing whites would be swift and violent; black men armed themselves and headed into the woods, women and children hid with one of Rosewood's only white residents, John Wright, to wait out the violence. However, by the sixth of January three other blacks had been brutally murdered and the white mob, now numbering in the hundreds, began the systematic burning of Rosewood. During this time a train was brought through town at four in the morning to pick up women and children, who had moved to the swamps and spent the previous few nights hiding after John Wright was unable to guarantee their safety. The train took dozens of families to towns like Otter Creek, Archer, and Gainesville's black district where descendants live to this day.

Residents of Rosewood, those who survived long enough, would have to wait for more than seven decades to receive any trace of justice. While a grand jury convened in January 1923, no convictions were made and the jury's records have been lost. Rosewood lingered at the edges of collective memory for decades. Then, in a 1994 landmark decision, the State of Florida decided to pay compensation to survivors and descendants. The story of Rosewood speaks to a range of larger issues and has much to offer concerning questions about extralegal violence, communal trauma, and America's (un)willingness to discuss the darker aspects of our collective past.

The American Continuum of Violence: Race Riots, Political Participation, and Labor

Race riots offer a direct view into past and present race relations in the United States. These events underscore the social construction of race and racism in our country as well as illuminating race and class relations in terms of which groups possess power at the expense of others (Ortiz 2008:435). Historic race riots were powerful ways of silenc-

ing black political participation, economic advancement, and social progress in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of the worst took place between 1917 and 1923. This included the Red Summer of 1919 when 78 people were lynched, 11 African American men were burned alive at the stake, and 25 race riots broke out across the nation. Riots during these years were the result of numerous social, political, and economic stresses. White supremacy was flourishing after D. W. Griffith's 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*; uniting and igniting the worst of white fears and portraying African Americans as hypersexual, deceitful, and inherently inferior. Also, economic stresses motivated labor groups to agitate for rights and sometimes target minorities. Indeed, some race riots doubled as labor riots between races, often orchestrated by industrialists through the introduction of minority strike breakers. Race riots also underscore the struggle for political rights by African Americans as whites violently obstructed black political participation (Ortiz 2005). Additionally, racially charged violence was often used to seize land from successful blacks. There were hundreds of examples of this practice in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, called "White Capping" for the white caps often worn by whites as they ran blacks off their land (Winbush 2001).

However, the 1919–1923 period is just one moment in a long history of racial violence that can be traced back to tidewater Virginia in the early seventeenth century between white settlers and Native Americans; a struggle reaching its nadir with the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 (Brown 1979:34) and continuing through a variety of structural inequalities today. White on black violence develops in the context of ruthless suppression of slave uprisings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in New York City (1712 and 1741), South Carolina (1741 and 1822), Virginia (1800), Louisiana (1811), and Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831 (Brown 1979:34–38). Other minority groups including the Irish, Chinese, East Indians, and Japanese were also targeted (Schwantes 1982). While such events were short lived, there remain locations across the U.S. situated to comment on all of these intersections. A particularly illuminating project could be formed in the southwest corner of Missouri among one of the largest clusters of collective violence. It includes two race riots resulting from labor concerns in Monett (1894) and Pierce City (1901), as well as two episodes resulting from white supremacist violence directed at black political participation in Joplin (1903) and Springfield (1906). While important archaeological work on other forms of collective violence continues (Saitta 2007), little has been produced in regards to race riots.

Creating an Archaeology of Redress

Barbara Little (2007) has commented on how sites like the African Burial Ground can participate in the truth-telling aspects common to many Truth and Reconciliation Com-

missions (TRC). While most TRCs form as part of national democratic transition processes, they have also formed locally. One example is the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission created to seek justice for the 1979 murders of five civil rights and labor activists by local Klu Klux Klan and Nazi organizations (Bermanzohn 2007). TRCs have become typified by the South African case where amnesty was granted to state actors in the interest of producing an accurate accounting of apartheid. While the granting of amnesty has received serious critique, it should be noted that South Africa's TRC also recommended monetary reparations to victims of apartheid as a way to combat structural inequalities (Castillejo-Cuéllar 2007).

Knowledge that the capitalist nature of American society results in structural inequalities has become a prominent focus among reparations activists (Munford 2007). While many acknowledge that current racial inequalities for African Americans derive from slavery, increasing numbers are fighting for Jim Crow reparations. This secondary position has developed because the arguments for slavery reparations remain difficult to justify in public and two successful cases for Jim Crow redress exist. Rosewood, as the first example typifies, this secondary position and the architects of the 1994 Rosewood Compensation Bill framed it as a personal claims suit against the state, distancing themselves from the terminology of reparations (D'Orso 1996). This bill paid significant sums to survivors, variable amounts to descendants, and set up a minority scholarship. The 2004 decision granting compensation to victims of the 1921 Tulsa riot has had to downplay the idea of slavery reparations, even though some of the most vocal advocates see the connection as paramount (Ogletree 2007). These two examples drew on the 1980 Supreme Court order to pay $122 million to Sioux tribes for a treaty violation in 1877 and the 1988 $1.25 billion compensation to Japanese Americans for unlawful internment.

At present, activists are urging the federal government to develop a redress commission to investigate the legacy of structural inequality in America (Martin and Yaquinto 2007:21). A variety of tactics are being explored, and recently the need to educate the US public about redress is motivating groups like the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA), Black Radical Congress (BRC), and the TransAfrica Forum to step up education efforts. Archaeologists can participate in this aspect of the redress movement as we seek to politically engage the modern world. Of course, the continuum of what constitutes engaged archaeology varies. It includes working closely with communities as a form of applied archaeology (Shackel 2004), raising awareness of social injustices (Davidson 2004), interrogating the historical development of dominant ideologies in modern America (McGuire 2008), and challenging historical representations that disadvantage entire continents (Schmidt 2006). Recently, a growing movement

among archaeologists mirroring a movement in applied anthropology framed as "community centered praxis" (Singer et al. 1992) which attempts to, by de-privileging us as experts, situate community concerns as central to archaeological projects (Mullins 2003). Participating in the redress movement allows archaeologists to engage anywhere along this continuum (which should not be taken as hierarchical or exclusionary).

Virtual Rosewood

At present, a combination of new information technologies, historical research, and community engagement highlight our approach to investigating Rosewood. It remains difficult to conduct traditional archaeological work at the site and new information technologies are being drawn upon to digitally reconstruct the community (Davidson and González-Tennant 2008). We are drawing on an established tradition of counter-mapping, defined as the use of cartography by a group "or ethnic minority to assemble data, generate maps and other graphic representations, and disseminate these materials for the purpose of better understanding" a wide variety of topics expressed spatially (Maantay and Ziegler 2006:275). This includes creating interpretive maps for tours of Rosewood today.

We are also re-creating the vanished social landscape of Rosewood and its neighboring communities. The setting is being re-created by using geographic information systems (GIS) to map property boundaries from historic metes and bounds descriptions. Re-constructing properties in this way produces new understandings of the intersections between ownership and kinship. The combination of plat maps, tax records, and census data from 1920 allows us to include both property owners and their renters on the landscape, and begin understanding the class relations in these communities. You can follow this aspect of the project online at www.virtualrosewood.com. Re-creating historic property boundaries presents a unique and verifiable method for determining the true extents of White Capping. This use of historic property data to argue for official redress represents a clear, achievable, and important contribution in seeking justice for historic wrongs.

Additionally, oral history complicates simplistic, dichotomous stereotypes of historic North Florida communities as Black and/or White; and allows researchers to challenge dualisms still dominant in American/Western society. Rosewood and its surrounding communities were a heterogeneous mix of White, African, and Native American as well as various non-White European minorities such as the Irish, Greek, and Jewish communities who had not yet become white. Oral histories flesh out the ethnicity of two "white" heroes who helped women and children escape the burning of Rosewood. These Jewish brothers risked their lives to take a train through Rosewood in the middle of the night and rescue survivors.

We are constructing a number of outputs for the Virtual Rosewood project. The aforementioned website will ultimately host an interactive version of the re-created landscape allowing visitors to guide themselves through the lost community. We are partnering with 3D specialists at the University of Florida's Digital Worlds Institute (http://digital-worlds.ufl.edu) to create large-format, digital documentaries using the 3D reconstruction of Rosewood. The specific goal is to use such environments to take audiences through an architecturally reconstructed landscape of the area prior to the 1923 race riot. As the documentary moves from one place to another in this digital environment the voices of survivors, descendants, and kin will replace the narrator and discuss their connections to specific sites, structures, and homes encountered in the 3D documentary. This is aimed at producing a truly collaborative and literally multivocal interpretation of Rosewood. These digital documentaries will be used to generate dialogue among local groups connecting the catalysts for a 1920s race riot to modern-day race relations.

In terms of an engaged archaeology we are outlining a variety of community-centered strategies. The website, public talks, and immersive experiences are forms of truth-telling. We are partnering with redress groups at the University of Florida to raise awareness of ongoing social inequalities (including other violent, ongoing chapters of Florida's White Supremacist history). We are changing aspects of the project to address concerns from a heterogeneous group of survivors, descendants, and interested parties. Descendants and their advocates have embraced the potentials offered by new media and are helping us design new applications. My hope is that this project will provide a suite of techniques transplantable to other contexts and will aid reparations activists with new forms of persuasive data for their social justice work.

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