



Black Life, History,
and Culture

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Author(s): Edward González-Tennant

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Intersectional Violence, New Media, and the 1923 Rosewood Pogrom

Edward González-Tennant
Monmouth University



Abstract:

This article provides a broad overview of emerging new media technologies as they support the traditional goals of Black Studies. Three specific forms of new media are explored in relation to the tragic history of Rosewood, Florida: virtual world environments, online worlds, and digital storytelling. These technologies were combined to bring the development and destruction of Rosewood to life in the present. A predominantly African American town, Rosewood was destroyed by racially charged collective violence during the first week of 1923. Although, referred to as the Rosewood Race Riot or Massacre, this event is more accurately described as a pogrom. The article also introduces the author's conceptualization of intersectional violence, a deeply contextual analysis of historic violence as it relates to the present. The construction of a virtual world environment and investigation of intersectional violence are made possible by the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to document the spatial and social landscape of Rosewood. The intersection of new media, heritage, and Black Studies is viewed herein as a constellation of methods available to researchers interested in resisting the ongoing, willful erasure of African American lives from the history of the United States.

The historical legacy of racial violence continues to haunt modern America in myriad ways. Scholars who theoretically engage with emerging forms of media have an important educational role to play in regard to the public discussion on racism. We are strongly positioned

to utilize new media to open (digital) spaces thus encouraging candid reflection on the connections between historical, face-to-face violence and present social inequality. This includes experiments at the intersections of new media (see discussion section below), heritage, and Black Studies. New media is the “translation of all existing media into numerical data accessible through computers.”¹ This includes the conversion of analog materials (e.g., photographs, movies, records) into digital formats as well as the creation of fully digital artifacts like virtual world environments and digital storytelling. Traditional approaches to the use of digital technologies within Black Studies have focused on the ability to connect geographically separate individuals and groups to one another as well as the digitization and delivery of documents and databases.² My exploration of new media looks at more complex technologies to resurrect vanished places, key sites revealing long histories of disenfranchisement.³ This emerging tradition maintains the commitment to social justice central to Black Studies while expanding the methods and techniques used to share complex histories with a wider audience via the Internet.⁴ The use of new media to highlight the Black experience is rapidly growing. New media builds upon a tradition begun in the late 1990s with eBlack Studies (<http://www.eblackstudies.org>) and recent movements to construct a “living black history.”⁵

The case study informing this paper is drawn from the historical legacy of the 1923 destruction of Rosewood, Florida. The next section provides an overview of the tragic history of Rosewood with specific reference to how the events of early 1923 reveal larger trends within American society. This portion of the article introduces the concept of intersectional violence and explains how racially charged collective violence in the early twentieth century is directly related to covert forms of disenfranchisement in the present. Tracking the historical legacy of intersubjective violence requires the application of geographic information systems (GIS) to

analyze complementary datasets and provides a deeper contextualization of Rosewood's history. The second half of the article discusses the use of virtual world environments, online worlds, and digital storytelling to bring this history to life. The discussion section provides an overview of the engagement between Black Studies and digital technologies. This discussion demonstrates how new media represents an emerging and complementary addition to eBlack Studies. The conclusion situates these approaches within broader emancipatory projects.

The Development and Destruction of Rosewood, Florida

The former site of Rosewood is located approximately nine miles east of the Gulf of Mexico in western Levy County ([Figure 1](#)). This area is still referred to as the Gulf Hammock, and the 1871 *Florida Gazetteer* describes the area around Rosewood in terms of its outstanding fertility.⁶ The town's name was derived from the large stores of red cedar in the area, source of the town's initial economic viability.⁷ The town itself was never incorporated, but business directories and railroad commission reports state that the town was settled sometime prior to the Civil War,⁸ probably as early as the 1850s, within fifteen years of Florida statehood in 1845.

The area around Rosewood experienced rapid growth following the Civil War due to the completion of the Florida Railroad in 1861. The county opened a school for Whites, and a hotel began operating in Rosewood as early as the 1870s.⁹ A White Methodist church was established in 1878, and two Black churches soon followed in 1883 and 1886. By 1920, after most Whites had left, the town had three churches, a Black Masonic hall, and a Black school where a privately hired schoolteacher named Mullah Brown taught local children. The town had a mix of houses including two-story homes for large families, several two-room homes for smaller families, and a number of one-room shanties scattered across the landscape that were probably used by workers

at a local sawmill.¹⁰ The town also had a Black baseball team, remembered as a significant part of Rosewood's cultural gatherings by descendants decades later.¹¹

The economic fortunes of Rosewood began to steadily decline in the second decade of the twentieth century. The Goins, one of Rosewood's most financially successful families, relocated to Gainesville in 1920. The Cummer and Sons Lumber Company built a large sawmill in Sumner a few years before the Goins left Rosewood. Several Rosewood families were forced to gain employment at the new sawmill.¹² The post office and other businesses moved from Rosewood to Sumner by 1918.¹³ While these economic changes certainly affected Rosewood families, the now majority-Black town continued to survive and the community remained.¹⁴ This came to an end in the first week of 1923.

Racial violence was no stranger to the state of Florida in the years preceding the 1923 destruction of Rosewood. The KKK is credited with either participating in or organizing an attack against Black voters in Ocoee, Florida in 1920.¹⁵ This attack resulted in the burning of a significant number of homes in the town's Black district. One month prior to the Rosewood riot, a group of Whites lynched three Black men in Perry, Florida who were suspected of killing a local White schoolteacher. Following the lynching, the White mob descended upon a Black neighborhood and burned several homes. The story ran for weeks in newspapers across Florida, reminding local Whites of the supposed danger local African Americans posed.¹⁶

What has become known as the Rosewood Massacre or Rosewood Race Riot is referred to as the 1923 Rosewood Pogrom herein. The term *pogrom* better describes the movement toward complete destruction—through either outright killing or forced removal—that typified the events of early 1923. *Pogrom* is increasingly acknowledged by other researchers¹⁷ as the more accurate term for such occurrences in the late 1910s and early 1920s.

On New Year's Day, 1923, James Taylor went to his job as machinist at the Cummer and Sons Sawmill in Sumner, where he lived with his wife Fannie and their young children. While James was at work, Fannie claimed a Black man attacked her at home. At the time, Sumner residents assumed a Black man had in fact committed the crime, even though some Black families suggested and most researchers today agree that the assailant was a White man with whom Fannie was having an affair.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the fabrication of Black assailants by White women represented a growing tradition in America during the late 1910s and early 1920s.

Levy County Sheriff Robert "Bob" Walker organized a posse, and a pack of bloodhounds was used to track the Black assailant. By the evening of January 1 (a Monday), the posse grew beyond the men initially deputized by Walker, as unidentified individuals began arriving from nearby towns. The mob speculated the assailant must be a recently escaped Black man from a nearby labor camp named Jesse Hunter, who was allegedly seen in the company of Rosewood's blacksmith Sam Carter a few days prior. Hunter became the prime suspect and the mob headed for Rosewood.¹⁹

While under considerable pressure, Carter admitted to giving Walker a ride in his wagon to the nearby town of Gulf Hammock. Carter led the growing mob to the spot where he had taken the accused in his wagon earlier that day. When the bloodhounds were unable to pick up the scent, and after Carter was unable to satisfactory answer the mob's questions, his body was riddled with bullets and his corpse left on the road between Sumner and Rosewood, where it was found the next day. Days later, echoing similar sentiments common to the time,²⁰ a jury found that Carter had been "shot by unknown party [or parties]."²¹

An alternative explanation of why the mob sought Sam Carter was given by Rosewood survivor Lee Ruth Davis. Davis suggested the White man who had actually attacked Fannie

Taylor went to Sam Carter for help. Whether he was unaware that the group was looking for a Black man or feared they might discover the truth is unknown. Davis stated Carter agreed to help the White man because both were Masons. Corroboration of this story was put forth by Arnett Doctor, another descendant of Rosewood families. Doctor modified the story slightly and stated that the White assailant first approached Rosewood resident Aaron Carrier because both were WWI veterans. According to Doctor, it was Carrier who led the White fugitive to Carter's home.²² Both Davis and Doctor agreed that Carter then took the White man out of Rosewood in his wagon.

After Carter's murder, the posse approached other Black homes in Rosewood seeking more information. In the growing frenzy, the posse nearly hanged Aaron Carrier, who was rushed out of the area. The posse also threatened to lynch Sylvester Carrier, a close relative of Aaron Carrier. However, no further deaths occurred in Rosewood for three more days.

Then, on January 4, a "party of citizens" went to investigate unconfirmed reports that an unidentified group of Blacks had taken refuge in Rosewood.²³ What spurred these reports is unknown, and it is likely the group simply wished to attack Blacks after what they probably saw as an anticlimactic ending to the events of Monday. This group targeted Sylvester Carrier, who was unpopular with some local Whites for standing his ground against everyday racism. Upon arriving at Carrier's home, two members of the mob, Henry Andrews and C. P. "Poly" Wilkerson, approached the house's porch and attempted to enter without permission.²⁴ Carrier and others in his home opened fire on the Whites, and a pitched gun battle commenced.

The battle continued into the early hours of Friday, January 5. Dispatches were received in nearby communities and additional Whites began arriving in Rosewood. These additional arrivals most likely included members of the KKK who had been participating in a large New

Year's rally in Gainesville, approximately forty-five miles northeast of Rosewood. Reports of wounded White men in Rosewood roused local Whites so they came for revenge and violence. When Whites left Rosewood for several hours Friday morning to replenish ammunition and take care of their wounded, African Americans in the town left their homes and fled into nearby swamps. Upon returning later that day, the White mob burned down several homes and at least one church. When they entered the now empty Carrier house, they reportedly found the bodies of Sylvester Carrier and his mother, Sarah Carrier, who had been shot during the previous night's gun battle.²⁵ Lexie Gordon, an African American widow of approximately fifty years-old, was repeatedly shot in the back as she fled her burning home on Friday.²⁶ Gordon was the sixth recorded death in Rosewood after Sam Carter, Sylvester Carrier, Sarah Carrier, Henry Andrews, and C. P. "Poly" Wilkerson. The seventh death took place sometime on Friday, when Whites shot Mingo Williams in the head as they drove through nearby Bronson headed for Rosewood.

Hearing about the trouble in Rosewood and the African Americans hiding in the nearby swamps, two Jewish brothers who worked for the railroad took their train out of Cedar Key around 4 a.m. on Saturday, January 6, 1923, and headed toward Gainesville. They stopped at several towns along the way, including Rosewood, Wylly, and Otter Creek, to rescue frightened African Americans. The train took survivors to other cities along the railroad, cities like Archer and Gainevsille, where descendants attempted to make lives for themselves and where many still remain to this day.²⁷

According to some accounts, only women and children were allowed on the train. That Saturday, James Carrier, brother of Sylvester and son of Sarah, returned from the swamps to Rosewood. He was apprehended by the White mob and taken to the Black cemetery. He became the eighth murder as he was lynched near the fresh graves of his brother and mother.²⁸ On

Sunday, the White mob returned to Rosewood one last time and burned the remaining African American homes and buildings. Rosewood was no more.

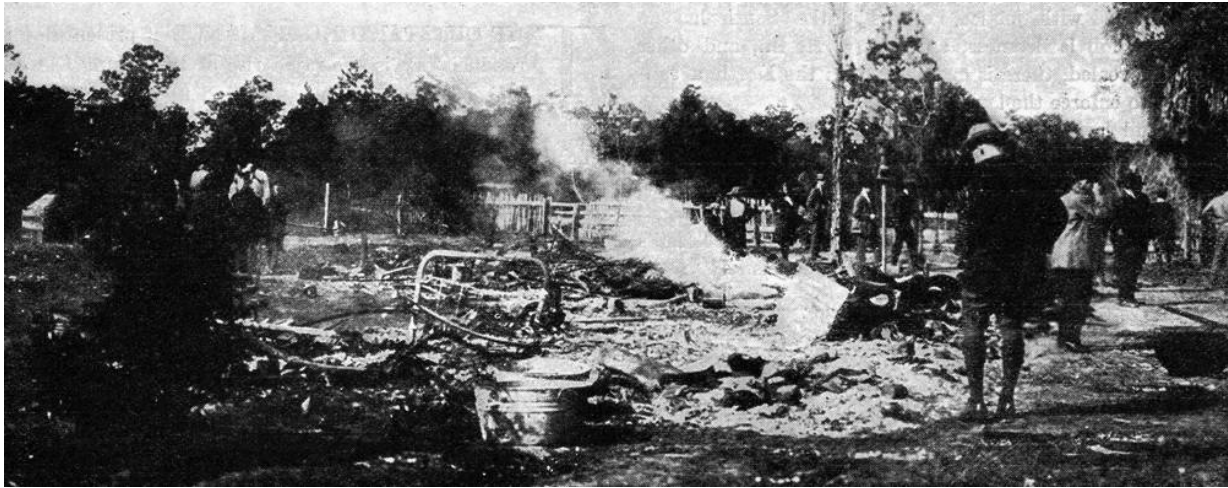


Figure 2. “Scene of Florida’s New Year Race Riot – The Morning After” from *The Literary Digest*, January 20, 1923.

Information Technologies and Intersectional Violence in Rosewood

In addition to exploring the ability of new media to translate scholarly work into public knowledge, this research focuses on the central goal of contributing a deeper contextualization of the events of 1923 by drawing upon intersectionality analysis. Intersectionality represents an approach—a methodology—to analyzing social inequality as the interaction of various identities, and it has found its greatest proponents among critical race theorists and feminists.

Intersectionality as a term, theory, and method is best known from the work of Patricia Hill Collins,²⁹ although the term itself was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw.³⁰ Collins’s research remains instrumental in understanding how structures of inequality draw on socially constructed dichotomies (e.g., White/Black, male/female, good/evil) to reify differences between people. These dichotomies are not equal and each one carries a superior/inferior duality. An intersectional analysis points out, for example, how Black women are doubly represented as inferior, as both female and Black. Several feminists³¹ describe how these dichotomous

differences become entrenched in the minds of African American women. It is through representation and particularly the objectification of minority individuals that oppression is reified in societies. This is a historical process and requires longitudinal research to demonstrate how visible and invisible forms of violence affect communities through time.

In addition to theoretical inspiration, intersectionality is an important methodology for my conceptualization of violence. In this regard, Crenshaw's³² work on difficulties facing minority women as they navigate America's social welfare system is particularly useful. Her analysis revealed how the multiple identities of poor women (e.g., woman, Black) interacted with the multiple identities of welfare workers. The intersection and *interaction* of these multiple identities produces a combative experience, and the resulting tensions obstruct the fair participation of individuals who suffer from the layering of multiple negative representations.

The methodological implication of intersectionality for the study of violence accepts that violence is multidimensional, and then moves beyond this realization to consider context-specific ways the multiple dimensions of violence intersect through time. Therefore, an intersectionality of violence begins with mapping the rates, forms, and degrees of violence through time. My objective is the contextualization of the 1923 Rosewood Pogrom within various patterns and types of violence. I draw upon previous explorations of violence to conceptualize three types: intersubjective, structural, and symbolic. Intersubjective forms, also referred to as everyday violence,³³ include visible actions with identifiable agents, such as lynchings, race riots, and murder. Structural violence³⁴ refers to the ways social institutions harm people and familiar forms include Jim Crow and the sundown town movement. Symbolic violence masks, maintains, and enhances social inequality and specifically refers to the "mechanisms that lead those who are

subordinated to 'misrecognize' inequality as the natural order of things."³⁵ Symbolic violence was both constructed and reified through early cinema and the eugenics movement.

Intersubjective violence remains the easiest type of racial violence to identify. The visible occurrences of race riots and lynching are clear examples of intersubjective violence. The rise in race riots during the early twentieth century has been attributed to a variety of causes: these include the migration of Blacks fleeing Jim Crow, overt bigotry, labor competition, and halting Black political participation. Some have proposed a correlation between race riots and lynching, identifying the possibility that race riots were exaggerated and prolonged versions of the practice of lynching.³⁶ Boskin specifically referred to race riots as mass lynchings.³⁷ While the practice of lynching reached its peak in the 1890s, spikes continued throughout the early twentieth century and are typically interpreted as the results of economic crises.³⁸ Although the rate of lynching decreased after 1900, the subsequent rise in brutality corresponded with an increasingly symbolic aspect.³⁹ Scholars also interpret a reciprocal relationship between the declining rate of lynching and rising disproportional imprisonment and execution of minorities.⁴⁰ Such analysis explores the unequal rates of imprisonment of African Americans⁴¹ as well as the exclusion of Blacks from blue-collar jobs in America⁴² as the legacy of Jim Crow. Studies of race riots and lynching routinely suggest a connection to larger social issues, with scholars often citing structural causes as a primary motivator in the production of face-to-face violence.

Structural forms of racial violence during the early twentieth century restrained the full participation of Blacks in American life. The constellation of tactics hampering the rights of African Americans is typically referred to as *Jim Crow*.⁴³ Jim Crow relegated African Americans to the status of second-class citizens, and racial segregation of African Americans was sanctioned following the 1896 Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. This remained

unchallenged until the Supreme Court decisions concerning educational segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁴⁴

In addition to segregating African Americans from public services, Whites across the country increasingly excluded African Americans from political participation. The various methods employed to prevent Black voting included grandfather clauses restricting the right to vote to those whose relatives possessed the same rights prior to the Civil War. Poll taxes, White primaries, and literacy tests were also common methods used to turn Blacks away from polls. As African Americans organized grassroots efforts to combat these practices, Whites increasingly resorted to intersubjective violence like lynching and race riots to maintain their political dominance over Blacks. Authors such as John Hope Franklin⁴⁵ and Leon Litwack⁴⁶ are instrumental for understanding the full effects of Jim Crow on African Americans, and work by Paul Ortiz⁴⁷ specifically highlights the agency of Black communities. These authors complicate previous representations of African Americans as passive victims subject to the desires of a White majority.

As Jim Crow gathered strength, a specific form of structural violence took shape. Sundown towns began to appear in the late 1800s and early 1900s, reaching their peak in some areas as late as 1970.⁴⁸ Sundown towns were named for the signs often posted at their city limits warning minorities to be out of town by sunset. These communities formed as all-White enclaves, or were created when Whites, usually violently, expelled minority residents. The practice began in the western states of California, Oregon, and Washington where Asian Americans were violently ejected from towns. It then spread to the Midwestern and Northeastern states and, to a lesser extent, the Deep South. White privilege allowed real estate agents, bank officers, policemen, and city governments to keep towns all White through a variety of everyday

practices. These included not renting or selling property to racialized groups, jailing minorities for exaggerated charges, and passing and enforcing unconstitutional ordinances. Many of these structural practices gained further support from symbolic forms of racial violence.

Symbolic violence during this time centered on representing Blacks as culturally and biologically inferior to Whites. The representation of Southern culture and Blacks was part of a much larger trajectory beginning in the nineteenth century. Newspaper advertisements, stories, and cartoons increasingly drew on stereotypes of various minorities during this time period.⁴⁹ Representations repeatedly portrayed minorities as the perpetrators of heinous crimes visited upon innocent, good-hearted Whites. The most powerful form of representation fueling symbolic violence to emerge in the early twentieth century was undoubtedly cinema.

D. W. Griffith's 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* (Figure 3) was the culmination of several trends in early American cinema. First, it was a technological wonder and ran longer and cost more than any other film at the time. Second, it drew upon a developing narrative representing a peaceful, utopic South alongside increasingly racist depictions of African Americans. In addition to constructing representations of Blacks by tying them to a mythical benevolence of plantation society, early cinema informed Whites of their own (mythic) past by representing Anglos as the saviors of civilization. Early cinema simultaneously inscribed a misrepresentation of Blacks as inferior and dangerous, while depicting Whites as heroic and benevolent masters of society. The success of *Birth of a Nation* (1915) provided early US cinema the incentive to explore and represent minorities through essentialized stereotypes. White supremacy flourished after D. W. Griffith's film, uniting and igniting the worst of White fears and portraying African Americans as hypersexual, deceitful, and inherently inferior. While the Ku Klux Klan had been outlawed as a terrorist organization by the US Congress in 1871, the film's heroic depiction of the Klan is

widely credited with bringing the group back. The Klan reformed in 1915 in Georgia, and the success of the film and a new system of recruiting promoted rapid membership growth following WWI. The encoding of Eurocentric values within early cinema created a powerful new form of symbolic violence casting minorities as simple children in need of protection or as dangerous hordes polluting a pure and superior White race.⁵⁰

Cinema fueled popular opinions among White Americans and set the stage for a return to the psuedospeciation of African Americans. This process marked them and other minority groups as less than fully human, as genetically inferior and altogether a separate species.⁵¹ This sentiment gained additional support from the biological sciences in the form of the eugenics movement. Eugenics began in the mid-nineteenth century with the publication of Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* in 1869. Galton, who was Charles Darwin's cousin, stated that intelligence, success, and propriety were the results of good genetics. He urged the British government to encourage children of well-to-do families to marry one another. While Galton paid little attention to the "unfit," subsequent eugenicists increasingly insisted that poor, non-White, and/or mentally handicapped individuals should be segregated from society.⁵² The famous Kallikak studies⁵³ provided the impetus for the development of a eugenics movement in the US. Kallikak is a pseudonym derived from the Greek *kalos* and *kakos*, meaning "good" and "bad," respectively. Goddard studied more than 2,000 family who members descended from the illicit sexual encounter between a successful businessman and a poor prostitute. He characterized more than half as feeble-minded, meaning that they were "unproductive" members of society: poor, uneducated, mentally handicapped, and so forth.

Goddard and researchers at the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) began developing programs and had numerous suggestions for fighting unfitnes, including the passage of marriage

laws, sexual segregation, involuntary sterilization, and limits on immigration. The ERO wielded enough power that by the early 1920s, its officers aided the US government in writing the Immigration Act of 1924.⁵⁴ Numerous abuses were committed in the name of improving the human species, including the forced sterilization of thousands of individuals against their will. While the majority of eugenicists advocated for segregating or sterilizing the genetically unfit, more radical members of the ERO supported genocide and euthanasia. Eugenics remained popular in the US until the rise of Germany's National Socialist Party.

The eugenics movement in the Southern US developed along different lines than in other areas of the country. While a preoccupation with immigrants and racial minorities motivated eugenicists at ERO to divide their efforts between segregating the feeble-minded from society and minority races from Whites, Southern eugenicists concentrated almost solely on feeble-minded Whites. Eugenicists affiliated with the ERO discussed at length the inferiority of African Americans,⁵⁵ but eugenicists in the Southern states rarely considered the role of African Americans, believing that no improvement was possible among an already irredeemably degenerate African American "race."⁵⁶ The symbolic violence resulting from this view should not be underestimated, as it produced numerous scientific studies documenting the inferiority of African Americans, further justifying a false ideology of racial superiority among Whites in America.

The view of Southern eugenicists was popularized through a variety of means, including newspapers and radio. Throughout the early twentieth century, newspapers in Florida and elsewhere circulated stories from local health boards describing the supposed benefits of instituting eugenics-based reform. Eugenics in Florida was framed as a service to the taxpayer.

The basic premise suggested the state could prevent feeble-minded individuals from breeding and save the money it might spend caring (e.g., jails, asylums) for feeble-minded offspring.

The three forms of violence briefly described here represent constellations of practices available to social elites. An assemblage can bring about any number of “effects” — aesthetic, machinic, productive, destructive, consumptive, informatic, etc. In regard to violence, this meant that social elites could selectively choose, through a process of *bricolage*—the construction or creation of a work from a diverse range of things that happen to be available⁵⁷—from a wide array of strategies to limit participation by minorities in US society.

Framing intersubjective, structural, and symbolic violence as assemblages presents a new reading of racial violence in American history. As lynchings decreased, the numbers of race riots increased. Lynchings, while becoming less numerous, were increasingly symbolic and gruesome. Capital punishment supplanted lynchings and satiated the murderous urge of a White supremacist society. The racist society of early-twentieth-century America amounted to sets of practices that “create[d] or reproduce[d] structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race.”⁵⁸ However, the racist society of modern America conceptualizes “racism as a sociopolitical concept that refers exclusively to racial ideology that glues a particular racial order.”⁵⁹ In other words, the racist society of the early twentieth century combined elements of overt racial violence with developing systems of structural and symbolic violence. Today, racism is primarily seen as a product of the structural violence, what Bonilla-Silva terms “racism without racists.” Social elites benefit from these arrangements. Drawing on an intersectional perspective, the patriarchal and race-based hierarchies of American society mean that White men are imbued with the greatest privilege, regardless of whether they actively court such privilege in their daily lives. This is not a one-dimensional reading of haves and have-nots: there are degrees

of privilege, and wealthy elites command greater social capital than poor Whites. However, poor Whites still benefit psychically from such arrangements because they support the view of racial hierarchy.⁶⁰ This is visible in current conversations about immigration, which break down along lines of race and nation. Regardless of one's personal perceptions about race and racism, elites benefit from the arrangements of a racist society.

Jim Crow laws and sundown towns highlighted the concentration of elite ideology in the fabric of American society. These forms of disenfranchisement grew quickly between the 1890s and 1920s. The emerging technology of cinema became a tool of racial violence and realized its full potential as a vehicle of symbolic violence at the same time. Views of Blacks as inferior were given scientific credit through the eugenics movement, which enjoyed its greatest vitality in the Southern states between 1915 and 1930.⁶¹

The Friction of Intersubjective Violence in Early-Twentieth-Century America

A nationwide shift occurred between the years 1915 and 1925. Intersubjective violence was supplanted by structural and symbolic forms. American elites and their allies—consisting mostly of Anglo-American men of all classes—successfully transformed American society. An emergent ideology of racial superiority, drawing strength from assemblages supporting structural and symbolic violence, replaced the previous one focusing on intersubjective violence. While the residual ideology still manifested itself, the dominant ideology now drew power from structural and symbolic violence. Violence and racial hierarchy in American society were transformed.

Such a transformation intensely disrupted society. Whites felt that intersubjective violence maintained their racial superiority prior to 1900. At that time, it was the prevailing assemblage of domination available to them. As structural and symbolic forms were reified and became accessible by larger portions of White America, African Americans were viewed as a

collective more than ever before. Changing attitudes towards miscegenation reveal these patterns.⁶² Prior to 1900, interracial sex was met with a mix of apathy and interpersonal violence. Specific reactions to sexual transgressions against the color line depended on factors like social distance, hue of skin, and local attitudes. The representation of African Americans as a genetically inferior collective meant that a wide variety of Black rights, beyond interracial sex and now including political participation, economic success, and educational advancement became an attack on the White race.

The period between 1915 and 1925 represents a unique moment in US history. New ideologies and assemblages of violence were replacing previous ones. Intersubjective forms were supplanted by structural and symbolic means of restricting minority participation in American society. The friction generated by this transformation produced intense reactions when minority communities did not conform to the expectations of a White supremacist society. For Rosewood, the question thus becomes one of identifying, of teasing out, the various ways elites accessed these assemblages at multiple scales. In other words, why Rosewood? Why 1923?

Constructing Rosewood's Spatial and Cultural Landscape

The handful of families currently living in the area where Rosewood once existed have little personal attachment to the history and events of 1923. Most have recently moved to the area and know nothing of the spatial layout of Rosewood in the 1920s. The events of 1923 remain at the very edges of living memory, and survivors have difficulty remembering the spatial organization of a town they last saw as children ninety years ago. Reconstructing the spatial landscape, let alone a virtual version of Rosewood, requires a basic spatial template locating property boundaries and structures in space. The ability to reconstruct this spatial information benefits from the development of geographic information systems (GIS). The methodology for

reconstructing Rosewood's spatial layout involves the following steps: (1) identify the appropriate historic property records, (2) translate the boundary information into a GIS file, (3) identify the owner in the census, (4) add census data to the GIS record, and (5) overlay this information on other forms of data including aerial photographs from the 1940s to help visualize the exact locations of property boundaries and structures. These steps are repeated hundreds of times for a fifty-year period between 1870 and 1930, providing a basic spatial layout.

The resulting historical property GIS dataset provides important insights into the development and destruction of Rosewood. For instance, the McCoys, an African American couple, purchased 115 acres of property when they moved to Rosewood shortly after 1900. Following the 1923 pogrom, this property was sold for \$300 (under considerable duress, we must surmise). This works out to a rate of \$2.90/acre. Another deed dated April 19, 1924, records how the Whites who purchased the McCoy Farmstead subdivided it and sold one forty-acre plot for \$400, a rate of \$10.00/acre.

The spatial analysis of property records and census data reveals larger patterns of land ownership. In Rosewood, patterns of home ownership were bucking regional and national trends in potentially alarming ways, at least in the eyes of local Whites; a unique pattern of Black home ownership began to develop after 1900.

In 1900, 40 percent of African Americans in the area around Rosewood owned their own homes. This was above rates of Black home ownership in Florida at 31 percent and the Southern states at 21 percent. At the same time, only 28 percent of Whites owned their homes in the area around Rosewood. These levels were lower than elsewhere in Florida at 60 percent and the Southern states at 52 percent. By 1910, home ownership in Rosewood for African Americans had increased to 44 percent, while dropping to 30 percent in Florida, but it remained low at 23

percent for the Southern states. White home ownership around Rosewood in 1910 grew to 35 percent, still below the rates for Florida at 55 percent and the Southern states at 50 percent. These trends continued through the early 1920s.

The psychological effect of this development is perhaps best illustrated by the spatial patterning of these new Black-owned properties (See Figure 4). The result is a town sharply divided by race but not like other towns where segregation positioned African Americans in vulnerable positions. Rosewood's spatial segregation resulted in a small pocket of historic White properties increasingly surrounded by Black ones. The resulting spatial organization would have appeared very dangerous to the minds of White Southerners, particularly in a society where African Americans were increasingly represented as sexually deviant and physically dangerous.

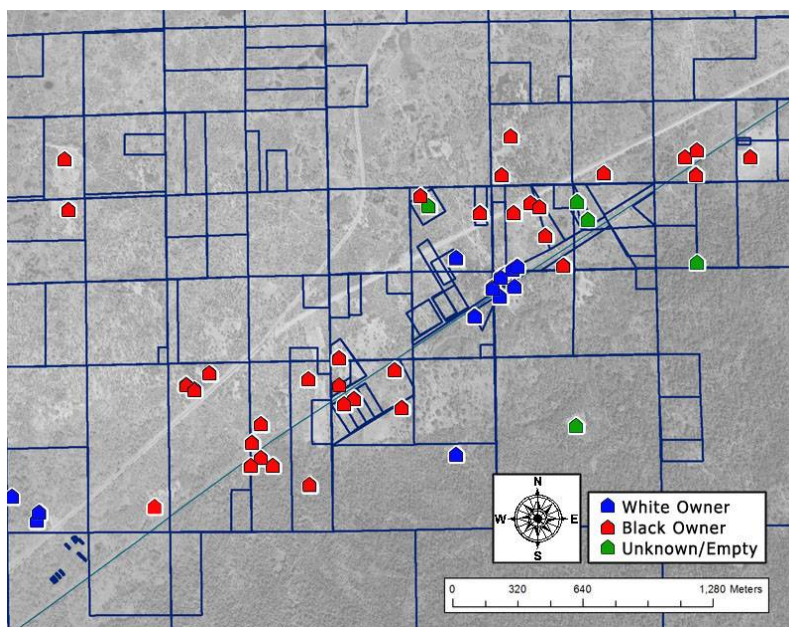


Figure 4. Locations of Black and White Properties in Rosewood.

In Rosewood, Blacks were literally surrounding a historically established White area, resulting in a unique racial landscape. As such, it produced a distinctive reaction. The 1923 pogrom eludes common reasons often cited by researchers to explain the appearance of racial violence. The area

around Rosewood was experiencing rapid economic growth. While a precipitating event did occur—Fannie Taylor’s false claim—the White reaction was more severe than usual.

Transgressions against the color line were known to have occurred before the 1923 race riot but were not met with mob violence.

As intersubjective violence decreased across the country, many locations were forced to physically embody the trauma of a dramatically changing social system. These traumatic events cannot be explained by local, regional, or national trends alone. A deeply contextual reading is necessary to understand why certain locations at specific times witness the explosion of intolerance into racially charged collective violence. The intense expansion of racial violence between WWI and the mid-1920s resulted from the friction generated as structural and symbolic violence surpassed intersubjective violence. It is the combination of economic motivation and transitional forms of violence—not one or the other—that best describes the social climate both required and responsible for the 1923 Rosewood pogrom.

Today, only one documented structure dating to the period before 1923 exists. This is the former home of Rosewood’s White storeowner, J. M. Wright. Every other structure in Rosewood was burned or has been demolished, and nothing of the original town remains. Black residents of Rosewood, those who survived long enough, would have to wait for more than seven decades to receive justice. While a grand jury convened in February 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. This bill opened up the story of Rosewood to an international audience, and within a few years a popular book⁶³ and a major motion picture⁶⁴ appeared describing the events of 1923.

Survivors and descendants continue to research and commemorate the destroyed town of Rosewood. Descendants organize annual events, family reunions, and bus tours publicizing the history of Rosewood in central Florida. These events share the story of Rosewood as both a town and a community. My research into Rosewood's past began through conversation with these groups. While I initially proposed a traditional archaeological project,⁶⁵ the individuals I spoke with were less enthusiastic about such a development. They already knew the history of Rosewood, further illuminated by a dedicated research project undertaken in the early 1990s as part of the state's investigation.⁶⁶ Therefore, I began to investigate alternative ways of researching and representing Rosewood's legacy in the modern world. This involved the historical and landscape analysis described previously. My research quickly moved into an investigation of new media methods after repeated discussions with groups whose primary goal was to spread the story of Rosewood far and wide.

New Media Methods for Black Studies in Rosewood

The tools to re-create Rosewood through a combination of documentary research and new media methods have only recently become available. The following pages explore the central methods of the Virtual Rosewood Research Project, a place to document ongoing research into the community's history, past, and present (<http://www.virtualrosewood.com>). This site provides public access to a variety of content, including various data used in my dissertation research (e.g., census records, oral history transcripts) as well as virtual world environments and digital documentaries. The decision to utilize various media is a conscious strategy designed to maximize access to the data and results for other researchers and the general public. As an engaged project,⁶⁷ this approach balances the requests of descendants with the demands of

scholarly inquiry. The following section focuses on the new media methods currently available to researchers interested in utilizing digital technology to construct a living Black history.⁶⁸

Virtual Rosewood

Virtual reality was developed in the 1960s as part of Ivan Sutherland's work with head-mounted displays and flight simulators.⁶⁹ The directions Sutherland imagined during this time remain important for modern computer-generated imagery (CGI). Sutherland first called for visual realism—where the images on a computer screen or head-mounted display became so lifelike, or photorealistic, that they were indistinguishable from an image in the physical world. The second direction involved a new phrase he coined, *virtual worlds*, to describe “systems in which users are immersed in scenes created completely by computer graphics.”⁷⁰ Finally, Sutherland postulated the creation of an augmented or mixed reality where virtual objects could interact with the physical world and vice versa, an aspiration only recently realized (for an example, see Esquire's augmented reality issue with Robert Downey Jr. at <http://www.esquire.com/the-side/augmented-reality>). Sutherland's first direction has become a staple of the entertainment industry, and CGI is now routinely employed by movie studios in Hollywood and around the world (e.g., George Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic and Peter Jackson's Weta Digital in New Zealand).

A handful of programs dominate the entertainment industry in terms of creating 3D content. These include 3DS Max (<http://www.autodesk.com/3dsmax>), Maya (<http://www.autodesk.com/maya>), and Vue (<http://www.e-onsoftware.com/>), among others. These are expensive software packages with full licenses typically costing thousands of dollars. In the past, the steep cost and lack of training resources limited the exploration of these programs to specialists. Fortunately, software companies are increasingly licensing their programs for

educational use, typically resulting in discounted or free versions assuming no profit is made from the resulting models. Autodesk, a longtime 3D software leader that produces 3DS Max, Maya, and AutoCAD, now offers free three-year licenses to students and educators (<http://students.autodesk.com>). Additionally, in order to encourage adoption of its software, Autodesk offers a large library of training resources. These are complemented by online training resources such as Lynda (<http://www.lynda.com>), Computer Graphics Tutorials (<http://cg.tutsplus.com>), and a wide range of training videos freely available via sites like YouTube and Vimeo.

Additional programs are freely available to use for the creation of virtual content. These include the increasingly popular Google SketchUp (<http://sketchup.google.com>). SketchUp is free to download and use, a large range of training resources exist for the program, and a “3D Warehouse” exists with thousands of models available to download and use for free (<http://sketchup.google.com/3dwarehouse>). Another popular free and open-source 3D program is Blender (<http://www.blender.org>). While training resources for Blender are widely available, it is a much more complex program to learn, and many common tasks have unique methods in comparison to other 3D programs. In short, Blender is usually considered one of the least user-friendly programs for the construction of 3D content.

My program of choice for constructing a virtual version of Rosewood was 3DS Max. The production pipeline for producing a 3DS Max version of Rosewood begins with modeling [individual structures \(Figure 5\)](#). The overall design of structures modeled for Virtual Rosewood is based on information from property documents, census records, historical photographs, and personal accounts. Oral histories report on the general appearance of historic homes in and around Rosewood.

Mary Hall remembered asking her mother and sisters about their house in Rosewood often; they explained, “We had a big two-story house and we still lived there [after her father died] because it was a lot of us children.” Dr. Annett Shakir remembered his mother telling him that relatives, the Carriers, had “a two-story house and with a porch on it, lace curtains, and manicured lawns. My grandmother also played piano. So, there was a piano in the house.” Earnest Parham, who was 18 in 1923, remembered substantial houses in Rosewood, such as the Bradleys, whose home “wasn’t painted but it was a big substantial house.” Eva Jenkins, who was thirteen in 1923, had one of the clearest memories of her home in Rosewood. She described it as follows:

Our house had three bedrooms and this big hall down the middle (open hall) and a kitchen and dining room and it was onto the house; a lot of people said theirs were separate from the house, but ours was all joined, we had front porch and back porch, and two big old magnolia trees in the front yard, oak tree with a swing on it. But anyhow they had nice furniture.

Some of the property deeds include basic building descriptions. Other times, census records provide a basic idea of the numbers of people living in a structure, indicating whether a building was home to a large or small family, used as a boarding house, and so forth. The size and construction of public buildings like stores, churches, schools, and the Masonic lodge were fairly standard for the area at the time, and photographs of similar historic structures from nearby locations were used as templates.

After building a 3D model, the next step is texturing it. Texturing, as the name suggests, refers to the placement of colors, patterns, and/or images onto the 3D model. It involves a flat image pasted onto a 3D surface. Once properly textured, models are rendered to increase their photorealism. Rendering refers to the final production of an image or video using the textured 3D model. The process involves the computer calculating how light would interact with the 3D

model as though it were a physical thing. [This produces shadows and adds an increased sense of realism \(Figure 6\)](#). After individual structures are built and textured (nearly fifty separate buildings were constructed and textured for Virtual Rosewood), they can be placed together in a virtual world environment and navigated by users.

Delivering high-quality 3D content in an interactive way via the web was nearly impossible just a few years ago. Today, an increase in Internet access speed allows large amounts of content (such as virtual world environments) to be quickly and consistently accessed. New software has also appeared facilitating the delivery of 3D content. The ability to deliver such content via web browsers allows larger numbers of visitors to explore virtual world environments without a large investment in computer hardware and technology—a key element in reaching communities still affected by the digital divide.

A popular program for delivering virtual content via a web browser is the Unity3D game engine. A game engine is a program designed for the creation and development of video games. Unity3D can use models created in various 3D programs, including 3DS Max, Blender, and so forth, without the need for third-party software to convert between formats. Unity 3D also offers one-touch convenience for uploading virtual world environments to the Internet. The learning curve for experienced creators of 3D content is minimal for Unity 3D. Unity 3D is available as a 30-day unlimited trial. This is usually long enough to create a rich virtual world environment and upload it to the Internet. [Virtual worlds created with Unity3D retain the look and feel of a video game \(Figure 7\)](#), and navigation using a mouse and keyboard is fairly straightforward.

Visitors to the Virtual Rosewood Research Site can explore a fully reconstructed version of the town, as it existed prior to 1923. The placement of models on the landscape was informed by the GIS work described above, and the virtual world environment is viewable on the website

via the freely downloadable Unity3D browser plugin. While the expertise required to create a virtual world environment like the one just described may seem daunting, other methods for creating virtual content and delivering it online are available through Second Life.

The Virtual Rosewood Museum in Second Life

Second Life (<http://www.secondlife.com>) is a massively multiplayer virtual world (MMVW) and is often referred to as an online world. Second Life is an open world allowing members to explore at leisure. Joining and participating in Second Life is free, although owning land and building objects requires a monthly fee. Upon joining, users create an avatar, give it a name, and fill out their profile. Users move around the virtual landscape by walking, running, flying, or teleporting between locations. Land in Second Life is divided into regions. Users can purchase various sizes of land, from small plots of 512 square meters to entire regions of 65,536 square meters. The user community and individual property owners create the majority of sites and objects in Second Life, and the trade in objects and services has created a booming virtual economy exchanging Second Life's currency (Linden Dollars) with real-world currencies.⁷¹



Figure 8. Virtual Rosewood Museum in Second Life.

My use of Second Life centers on the creation of a virtual museum. The museum's basic design is that of a repurposed historic building converted into a local history museum (Figure 8). This decision is based on the fact that at least one structure has survived the 1923 riot—the house

of a local storeowner, John Wright, credited with protecting several families during the first week of 1923. The Florida Department of Parks and Recreation and a group of interested researchers (myself included) are looking into the possibility of repurposing this building to use as the foundation for opening a memorial museum in Rosewood. Second Life allows me to prototype what this museum might look like.

The virtual museum allows visitors to experience the site in a number of ways. In the repurposed building, visitors can explore the history of Rosewood through museum-like displays, including a diorama of the town as it stood in the early 1920s (Figure 9).

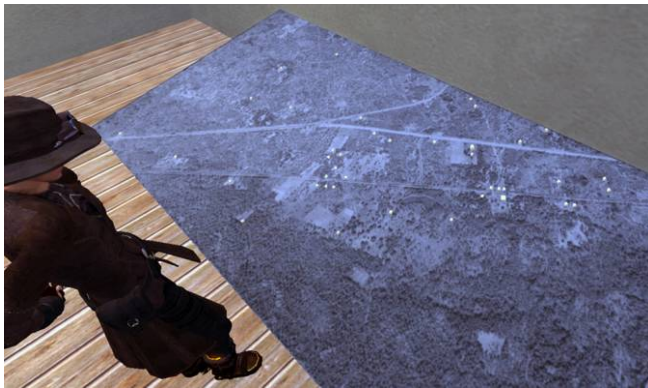


Figure 9. Diorama in Virtual Rosewood Museum, Second Life.

A handful of structures representing the homes of African American residents in Rosewood include a timeline of the riot itself (Figure 10). There are also quiet areas where visitors can relax and chat with one another, as well as a memorial statue and garden.



Figure 10. Timeline of 1923 Pogrom and Sample Structure, Virtual Rosewood Museum, Second Life.

Second Life provides, for a fee, a complete package for the creation and delivery of virtual reconstructions of historic sites. Second Life allows a user to control many aspects of their virtual land. For instance, while building and outfitting the virtual museum, I kept the land closed to others. Now that the land is open to visitors, I have placed restrictions on it, including removing visitors' ability to fly. In order to deliver the virtual museum content, all a creator has to do is open the land to visitors. The content is delivered in the same format it was created, without the need for converting between formats or using additional software, a concern for the methods discussed above.

A primary reason I was drawn to Second Life is its effectiveness as an education tool for social justice. Recent studies demonstrate that educators are increasingly viewing Second Life as an appropriate technology encouraging active learning, particularly with at-risk and economically disadvantaged communities.⁷² My experience with the Virtual Rosewood Museum supports this view. In the first two years of the Virtual Rosewood Museum's existence, I have met numerous individuals and led more than a dozen tours. The site continues to attract new visitors daily, a trend which has increased over time. The majority of visitors are individuals exploring the history of Rosewood on their own. Other times, groups contact me and arrange for a guided tour of the site. [These opportunities allow me to interactively explore the history of Rosewood with other visitors \(Figure 11\).](#) The ability to interact while navigating the online world replicates similar experiences at heritage sites and allows for the organic exchange of ideas.

Another aspect of the Virtual Rosewood Museum that corresponds to traditional museums is the ability to deliver video content to visitors. Touch screens displaying prerecorded videos have quickly become a staple of history museums and archaeological parks. This is

reproduced at the Virtual Rosewood Museum with the construction of a movie theater. Inside this modern-looking building, visitors can individually access and watch a twenty-six-minute digital documentary exploring the history of Rosewood, the 1923 pogrom, and the lives of survivors and descendants during the past ninety years. The creation of a digital video to share research into Rosewood's history corresponds to the traditional medium of documentary film. However, unlike traditional film, digital storytelling presents an important intersection regarding the democratization of historical research.

Digital Storytelling and the 1923 Rosewood Pogrom

Digital storytelling traces its roots to a series of workshops in Los Angeles during the early 1990s. These workshops proved so successful that a Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) was created shortly thereafter and remains the national center for working with digital media to tell personal stories.⁷³ Indeed, the impulse to share personal lives continues to characterize digital storytelling. Joe Lambert's recent book by the CDS⁷⁴ captures this spirit as well as outlining the components, themes, and methods for creating digital stories.

In addition to describing the varieties of stories people tell, Lambert discusses the specific methods storytellers employ when crafting digital stories. As the majority of digital storytelling projects focus on one or a handful of individuals, these suggestions focus on bringing out the emotional aspect of personal experiences. As digital stories are often personal stories, the importance of confessing one's true feelings and opinions is paramount. Lambert stresses the importance of emotional content because it creates a more interesting story and reflects reality in more genuine ways. In addition to the personal content, planning the actual structure of the story is highlighted. This includes clarifying the story's meaning by the use of storyboards and other traditional aspects of filmmaking. Lambert encourages the use of music, but warns against using

copyrighted material; instead, he encourages digital storytellers to utilize copyright-free music and to always provide attributions for content created by others.

My goal for adopting a digital storytelling approach as an emerging method to share historical research was motivated by numerous concerns. A major benefit digital storytelling has over traditional film/documentary making is cost. Digital stories can be created with little investment of time and resources. The requisite equipment can be broken down into three parts: a laptop or desktop computer, camcorders or digital voice recorders, and programs for editing both audio and visual content. One or two decades ago, these components could easily cost thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars. Today, low-cost computers and digital video recorders are increasingly available to people around the world. Many modern mobile phones have the required hardware and sharing capacities to create and share digital stories quickly and effectively. Free video editing software now comes standard with all major operating systems. Windows Movie Maker comes standard with Windows, and iMovie is included with all Macintosh computers. Linux users can choose from a wide range of video editors including Cinelerra (<http://www.heroinewarrior.com/cinelerra.php>) and Kino (<http://www.kinodv.org>).

Another concern motivating my exploration of digital storytelling was the use of the Internet as the primary delivery method for sharing my research. The availability of structured videos online allows broader segments of the public to quickly access the products of scholarly research. The Internet also eliminates the cost of producing hard media such as DVDs, further reducing the cost of sharing research.

My utilization of digital storytelling resulted in a twenty-five-minute documentary, prepared in consultation with descendants for use in educational bus tours to the area around Rosewood. A central mission of these bus tours, and in fact many of the descendants, is to keep

the story of Rosewood alive. I was attracted to digital storytelling's emphasis on small-scale, personal perspectives. The resulting digital documentary uses video recorded in 2009 during interviews I conducted with the last two living Rosewood survivors. The video describes the historical and geographical context of Rosewood from settlement in the mid-nineteenth century until the 1923 pogrom. It concludes with firsthand accounts of life for the families and the community during the past nine decades, as related by the two survivors. It also briefly describes the virtual reality research explored previously in this paper.

A particularly touching moment in the documentary occurs when Robie Mortin, born in 1915, describes meeting her father for the first time following the events in early 1923. Mortin's father recognized early on how the accusation of rape and subsequent attacks on Rosewood residents might turn into large-scale violence. He sent Robie, who was seven at the time, to nearby Williston with her sister. After hearing about the destruction of Rosewood several days later and not being able to meet up with their father, the two girls assumed he had been killed. They began looking for work and over the next couple of months made their way to Riviera Beach, north of Miami, to work as migrant farmers. Robie Mortin shares what happened one morning when she went to a newly constructed church several months after the riot:

There was a ditch that separated Riviera Beach from Kelsey City, there was a long ditch there. [They] had a bridge across it, and of course all the milk houses were there, and the Hearst Chapel AME Church there. They had built that church right on that side of the ditch. So, we went to church, and would you believe our daddy was there, and we didn't know where he was, we didn't know where he was, hadn't seen him in months. We walked into the church that Sunday, and there was our father.

Robie Mortin's words, delivered in her soft, ninety-four-year-old voice (Image 2), touch the viewer in an unmistakable way. The emotional impact of her brief story demonstrates the

trials and, in this one example, bittersweet experiences that make a life scarred by trauma bearable.



Video1. Robie Mortin Recounts Meeting Her Father in 1923, June 2009.

Discussion

The above discussion of new media methods for Black Studies draws upon a number of developments in related disciplines. These include interdisciplinary theoretical developments as well as methods from information science and the digital humanities. Research into minority heritage increasingly involves a multidisciplinary approach. Realizing the potentials of multidisciplinary studies has been a part of Black Studies since its inception as an academic discipline in the 1960s and 1970s. The incorporation of the emerging forms of new media previously outlined is well suited to investigations of the African American past and supports the public outreach often at the heart of this scholarship.

Alkalimat and Bailey provide a cogent summary of the development of Black Studies and its interaction with digital technology.⁷⁵ They credit a profound engagement with social activism as a central motivation for the establishment of Black Studies in the 1960s and 1970s. This

project formed in response to the maintenance of elite privilege in America's educational institutions, and this early commitment to examining racism in the academy became important in related fields. For instance, Delgado's analysis of civil rights law demonstrated how circular citation between White academics actively disenfranchised minority voices within mainstream academic discourse.⁷⁶

The dedication of Black Studies to social change was initially and intentionally seen as a holistic enterprise. Early leaders directed the emerging discipline to openly engage with issues of racism, sexism, and classism while respecting and encouraging conversation between a wide range of theoretical perspectives.⁷⁷ An early method towards this goal centered on the dissemination of instructional materials between academics and Black Studies programs across America. Unlike other disciplines, the youthful vigor and multidisciplinary nature of Black Studies encouraged the active exploration of digital technologies as they emerged in the 1990s. While initial work to share research and pedagogical strategies relied on hand-delivering or direct mailing of study guides, by the late 1990s and 2000s the World Wide Web became an important vehicle for sharing interdisciplinary research into African American history.

Today, eBlack Studies specifically refers to the combination of digital technology and the historically informed concerns outlined in the previous two paragraphs. Earlier projects focused on the use of the World Wide Web to deliver scholarly works, support online discussion, and broadcast lectures and conferences. A representatively successful project in eBlack Studies is Cyberchurch. Central goals of this project include developing an online directory of Black churches to further the goals of liberation theology and the creation of databases to assist scholars researching African American religious life. Future goals for the next generation of eBlack Studies, as outlined by Alkalimat and Bailey, center on the digitization of paper

documents and organizing the resulting digital files into online web portals.⁷⁸ Recent innovations in website creation and publishing now exist to support the use of the World Wide Web as a delivery vehicle for various artifacts (e.g., documents, photographs, and video). These include content management systems (CMS) like George Mason University's freely available Omeka (www.omeka.org). A CMS provides a more convenient and less technically complex method for organizing and delivering materials online. They provide non-specialists the ability to create visually stunning and complex websites. These programs are important developments because they democratize technology and broaden the range of individuals and groups capable of documenting as well as sharing such documentation with broader audiences. In essence, they fundamentally support the translation of academic research into public knowledge.

Other explorations of virtual world environments related to African and African American experiences have been undertaken in recent decades. The Virtual Oakland Blues & Jazz project (<http://7thstreet.org/>) created a video game exploring a post-WWII jazz scene in Oakland, California. The Soweto '76 Archive (<http://www.soweto76archive.org/>) is virtually reconstructing an urban environment related to pre-apartheid life in South Africa. The Virtual Harlem Project (<http://www.evl.uic.edu/cavern/harlem/>) uses virtual world environments to teach about the Harlem Renaissance. Each of these projects concentrated on a single new media technology, while the Virtual Rosewood Research Site combines multiple forms of interactive content. These earlier projects represent crucial explorations of new media for Black Studies, particularly the Virtual Harlem Project, which developed a collaborative model for education linking the humanities and sciences.⁷⁹

The vast majority of African American heritage in the United States is literally buried beneath our feet. Sites, experiences, and lives betraying the master narrative of American history

as one of equality are all around us but remain largely unexplored. The maintenance of White privilege requires the willful destruction of Black heritage resulting from an intellectual miasma supporting a national amnesia that removes the African American experience from our collective memory.⁸⁰ New media methods for Black Studies represent a set of powerful practices. These are tools supporting the creation of a more accessible history. A sense of place and time is vital to the survival of any cultural group, particularly oppressed and marginalized ones. The approaches explored in this paper bring these histories to life. The creation of new media artifacts is not the end goal but rather one methodology in sync with a much larger project: a project resisting the willful erasure of African American heritage.

Sizable obstacles do exist regarding access and utilization of digital technologies. The digital divide still restricts access to these technologies based on cultural background and socioeconomic status.⁸¹ While a thorough discussion of the digital divide is beyond the scope of this article, new media for Black Studies does speak to these issues. As the costs of computer hardware and Internet access continue to fall (imagine what mobile phones will be capable of in a few short years), scholars of the African American past have a responsibility to create virtual spaces documenting and examining the Black experience. Addressing the sharp inequalities underlying the digital divide represents a long-term struggle. Part of this larger project is the creation of new media that speak to African American communities. Although media have a long history of subjugating minority and colonized groups,⁸² they can also support emancipatory projects if audiences are engaged in alternative ways.⁸³ There are two perspectives on the role of the audience in relation to media. The first presents an essentialized view, one that sees audiences as simply accepting the intended message. The second and more hopeful view suggests that audiences are active in how they consume media. This “active audience” supports

the creation of media as “tools available to disenfranchised members of society that can be used to undermine existing power relations and instigate societal change.”⁸⁴ As the erosion of the digital divide continues, new media for Black Studies as described in this article provides a key set of techniques for the creation of Black spaces online. These spaces are central to demonstrating the value of digital technologies for minority communities, and help destabilize the (re)inscription of negative identity politics within virtual spaces.⁸⁵

Conclusion

This article explores the utility of new media (e.g., virtual world environments, digital storytelling) for supporting the central tenets of Black Studies, particularly eBlack Studies. New media represents a crucial intersection for Black Studies, particularly when multiple technologies are combined within one project. New media fosters the translation of existing data into new materials. The combination of land and census records in a GIS allows for the visualization of a vanished landscape. The words of informants—their descriptions of their houses, for instance—can be translated into actual virtual reconstructions, memories rendered (virtually) material. New media can help educators represent intersectional violence. Intersubjective violence is conveyed via the personal narratives of suffering present in the digital documentary. Structural violence is literally mapped out via the unique spatial arrangements revealed through GIS analysis. Symbolic violence is represented in newspaper clippings and movie posters included on the website and embedded within the digital documentary. New media’s ability to merge multidimensional data provides a new methodology for engaging the intersectional analysis of violence in educational contexts.

The new forms of knowledge produced by the synthesis between historical research and new media accomplish a number of things: they highlight the experiences of descendants and

other interested parties, provide tools for critically engaging with history and media, and offer researchers new approaches for crafting the way historical knowledge is accessed and interpreted by the public. New media offers an innovative set of tools not found in the “master’s house.”⁸⁶ These are methodological tools supporting liberation, a constellation of approaches not regulated by gatekeepers and tradition. The early twenty-first century is a time of rapid telecommunication change and advancement. Individuals and communities are gaining access to these technologies at an ever increasing rate. The relative disciplinary youth and vigor of Black Studies remains central to our exploration of new media for emancipatory ends. The utilization of new media described in this article provides new ways of articulating the intersectionality of African American history. Such work remains crucial and contextualizes specific moments in relation to broader historical developments. It makes history accessible, and the maintenance of a historical identity is central to a community’s survival.

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²⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁵ Ibid., 43–44.

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