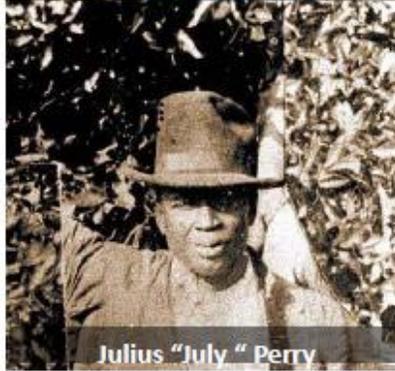
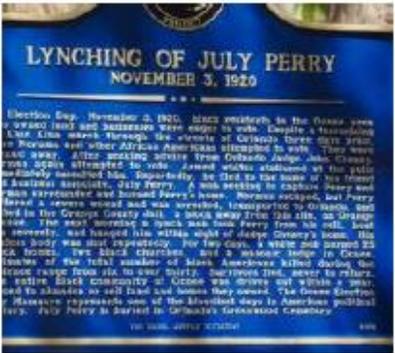


# Commissioner of Education’s African American History Task Force 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) Recommendations Report



## 1920 Ocoee Massacre

March 1, 2021

## Overview

In June 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill (HB) 1213 – Educational instruction of Historical Events, which, in part, requires the Education Commissioner’s African American History Task Force to examine ways to include the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) in the required instruction on African American History (section 1003.42(2)(h), Florida Statutes).

The Commissioner of Education’s African American History Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 1:** Highlight the importance of language and semantics.
- Recommendation 2:** Offer Ocoee Educator Training modules.
- Recommendation 3:** Offer grade-level appropriate activities that reflect student development.
- Recommendation 4:** Include as many primary and secondary sources as possible in a usable format for educators.
- Recommendation 5:** Foster collaboration with postsecondary and community-based organizations.
- Recommendation 6:** Establish a website with direct links to supporting materials.

To observe this mandate, the African American History Task Force solicited ideas from educators

**1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots**

- June 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis signed [House Bill 1213](#) – Educational Instruction of Historical Events, which in part, requires the Commissioner of Education’s African American History Task Force to examine ways to include the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots in the required instruction on African American history. To help meet this mandate, the task force is soliciting proposals for best practices, unit plans, lesson plans, and any other standards-based activities that may be used for the teaching and learning of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots. Submissions will be reviewed through a selection process. Those who have selected proposals will have the opportunity to fully develop the resource. Authors of completed resources will receive a stipend once the completed resource is deemed acceptable.
- To submit an original 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots resource proposal, please visit <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5770609/HB-1213-AAHTF-1920-Ocoee-Election-Day-Riots> and complete the survey by Friday, October 2, 2020. Only one proposal per person will be considered. If you have any questions, contact Dr. Bernadette Kelley at [Bernadette.kelley@famu.edu](mailto:Bernadette.kelley@famu.edu) or (850) 599-3692.

across the state using direct contact through the Florida Department of Education’s school district social studies contacts and the African American History Task Force [website](#). Ocoee lesson plan concept proposals were due in October 2020 with final recommendations to be made available on or before March 1, 2021.

After examining the submissions, the Task Force noted many educators are unaware of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day incident and have little knowledge of how and when to offer instruction about this historical event.

A total of nine (9) proposals were submitted from educators across the state. The majority of the submissions were from Orange County and those counties surrounding Ocoee, Florida (Appendix A).

## Recommendations

The mandate to provide ways to include the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) in required instruction presents the Commissioner’s African American History Task Force with an excellent opportunity to raise its profile and intensify its importance in educational policy throughout the state and nation. Several teachable moments exist for the Task Force in its goal to achieve compliance with the Governor’s mandate including the following recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: Highlight the importance of language and semantics.**

The relationship between language, power, and race construction has been the subject of scholarly inquiry for at least three decades. The chosen words to identify, label, or describe various phenomena warrants consideration.

Relative to the Ocoee incident which occurred in November of 1920, the word “riot” and “massacre” have been used interchangeably. House Bill 1213 which mandates this report, refers to the historical event that happened in Ocoee, Florida, on November 2, 1920, as the “1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots” while the Governor’s proclamation of November 2, 2020, solemnly remembering the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this same event, is entitled: “1920 Ocoee Election Day Massacre Remembrance Day in Florida.” Upon examining the scholarly literature and other references surrounding and recounting this event both “riot” and “massacre” are used.

The word “riot” carries a negative connotative meaning which could be viewed as racially biased. While labeling the Ocoee incident as a “massacre” is closer to an authentic description of what occurred that fateful day, the word “massacre” acknowledges the race-based motive that fueled the violence which destroyed property along with causing the death of many Floridians who were simply attempting to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

In order to address this recommendation, the Task Force suggests the following:

- **Heightening awareness** of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) that began after the denial of the right to vote to Mr. Moses Norman, an African American citizen of Orange County, Florida, on November 2, 1920, through the development or amendment of the Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards that directly reference this historical event;
- **Develop educator training** for all school personnel (administrators, teachers, and staff) that explores how the power of language and the choice of wording constructs has implications leading to negative behaviors.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: Offer Ocoee Educator Training modules.**

The Task Force recommends that Florida’s K-12 educators be required to teach the history of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) in the most grade-appropriate way possible aligned with the Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

Additionally, the recommendation includes the development of a series of professional learning opportunities, workshops, or seminars, to assist educators and stakeholders in acquiring factual accounts of the events of November 2, 1920, and their context.

- Provide access to source references and materials that are grade-appropriate;
- Train and guide K-12 educators in the use of activities and lesson plans developed surrounding the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre); and
- Determine the length and breadth of the workshops or seminars based on the goals and objectives of the school district’s targeted professional development sessions.

Example objectives:

- Educators will be able to use geographic knowledge and skills when discussing the Ocoee events.
- Describe the importance of historiography, which includes how historical knowledge is obtained and transmitted when interpreting events in history.

**Proposed Workshop Format: Half-Day**

Audience: District Level, Administrative, Community Organizations, Interested Stakeholders

Content:

- Introduction/Review of HB 1213
- Introduction/Review of section 1003.42(2)(h), Florida Statutes
- Curriculum infusion suggestions
- Identification and access to resources for teaching

*1003.42 Required instruction.*

*(1) Each district school board shall provide all courses required for middle grades promotion, high school graduation, and appropriate instruction designed to ensure that students meet State Board of Education adopted standards in the following subject areas: reading and other language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, health and physical education, and the arts. The state board must remove a middle grades course in the Course Code Directory that does not fully integrate all appropriate curricular content required by s. 1003.41 and may approve a new course only if it meets the required curricular content.*

*(2) Members of the instructional staff of the public schools, subject to the rules of the State Board of Education and the district school board, shall teach efficiently and faithfully, using the books and materials required that meet the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction, the following:*

*(h) The history of African Americans, including the history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America, the enslavement experience, abolition, and the contributions of African Americans to society. Instructional materials shall include the contributions of African Americans to American society.*

## **Proposed Workshop Format: Full-Day**

Audience: Instructional Faculty and Staff (K-12)

Content:

- Introduction/Review of HB 1213
- Introduction/Review of section 1003.42(2)(h), Florida Statutes
- Curriculum infusion suggestions
- Identification and access to resources for teaching
- Unit/Lesson/Media Development using:
  - CPALMS
  - District grade-level curriculum guides
  - Assessment development activity
  - Follow-up activities and evaluation for implementation by educators

The above formats are suggestions. Additional support from the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) is required to augment and infuse the intent of HB 1213.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: Offer grade-level appropriate activities that reflect student development.**

Utilize current online teacher planning tool platforms, such as CPALMS, to differentiate between lessons that are suitable for younger students versus lessons for older students to identify materials aligned to the appropriate standard, grade, and subject area if these elements are available. If the activities are not available utilizing current state or district resources, the Task Force recommends establishing a **Curriculum Team** to assist in developing materials to be included in CPALMS.

The violence of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) should be explored in ways appropriate for the age, grade, and maturity of the students.

Currently, there are no direct referenced lesson plans, ideas, or units of instruction connected to the Ocoee event in CPALMS. However, there are several opportunities to align the Ocoee historical events to the Benchmarks, Standards, Subjects, and Grades as available on [CPALMS](#). Additional work is required to align the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) with the current Benchmarks and Standards.

Example Benchmark alignment:

<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Learning Objective</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Knowledge/Strand</b>
SS.8.A.3.16	Examine key events in Florida history as each impacts this era of American history.	<b>Demonstrate an understanding of the causes and consequences of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre)</b>	Social Studies	8	American History

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Include as many primary and secondary sources as possible in a usable format for educators.**

**Primary Source Materials**

Infusion of primary source material in the classroom is a high-impact practice that increases student engagement and enhances content retention. Many of the current benchmarks and standards require instruction for students on how to identify and use primary sources in the instructional setting. Identifying relevant primary sources can be done in consultation with academic historians.

A collaboration with the Museum of Florida History at the Department of State should be established. Through this collaboration, additional resources can be identified and added to [Florida Memory: State Library and Archives of Florida](#). Dr. Joshua Goodman and his colleagues have been contacted to explore this opportunity, and have provided preliminary source materials (Appendix B).

Groups can be called upon to offer primary source resources (e.g., oral histories, newspaper clippings, family mementos). These items could be compiled and produced into useable and adaptable formats that teachers could readily incorporate into their classroom lessons.

**Textbook Materials**

The story of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) should be included in textbooks relating to American History, Humanities, Civics, and Government. Scholars from colleges and universities throughout Florida.

The Task Force recommends content on the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) be included in the bid specifications as a requirement within the social studies materials bids scheduled for solicitation in November 2021.

**Additional Resources**

Additional primary and secondary resources need to be identified and access provided to educators and students of Florida. Included in this report is a collection of scholarly articles related to the events and context of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) (Appendix C).

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Foster collaboration with postsecondary and community-based organizations.**

The mandate in HB 1213 offers the opportunity to continue to raise the awareness of historical events such as the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) through facilitating partnerships between postsecondary institutions such as college departments of education, history, and anthropology, and community-based organizations such as fraternities, sororities, churches, and civil rights organizations

One advantage of this recommendation is that it is cost-neutral but offers maximum return on the small investment of intentional effort. The collaboration with the suggested entities is fostered through the local school districts, colleges, and community organizations.

The African American History Task Force (AAHTF) has a model for this type of collaboration already in place through their [Exemplary School District Status](#) program and criteria. These relationships could be utilized to develop Ocoee curriculum and pilot lessons to share as best practices.

AAHTF Exemplary School District Status criteria:

**1. School Board Approval of the African American History Initiative.**

- Evidence that the school board has developed a plan for the implementation of the Florida African and African American History required instruction.
- Evidence that the plan has been publicized in school district's curriculum guides.

**2. Structured Professional Development**

- Evidence that the school district has developed and implemented an ongoing professional development plan for training teachers, students and school staff in strategies for teaching African American History.
- Evidence that adequate resources have been allocated to structured professional development programs and for enhancing the instruction of African American History in an infused format.

**3. African American Studies Curriculum**

- Evidence of African American History Curriculum Frameworks K-12 has been integrated as part of its school district policy with respect to required curriculum.
- Evidence that the curriculum has been disseminated to curriculum specialists, teachers, media specialists and other educators in the district.
- Evidence that there are adequate teaching resources including books, CDs, digital media, and lesson plans available to support this required instruction.

**4. Structured Teaching Of The African American History Curriculum**

- Evidence that the African American History content appears in lesson plans over the sustained period of 180 plus days.
- Evidence that there are approved methods for teaching and assessing the African American History Curriculum.
- Evidence that there are African American History content infused and linked to the United States History End-Of-Course Assessment and other high-stake tests and requirements.
- Evidence that the African American history content are infused in all subject areas.

**5. University – School District Collaboration**

- Evidence of university involvement in professional development, curriculum and instruction support, etc.
- Evidence of school district university partnership in seeking external funding (federal grants, foundation grants, etc.)
- Evidence that the school district and university partnership has aided in the preparation of pre-professional teachers and other educators.

**6. Parent/Community Partnerships**

- Evidence that the school district's initiatives in African American History has resulted in the development of strategies that include the involvement of parents through awareness information sessions.
- Evidence that there are community partners who are involved in the development and ongoing implementation of the African American History Curriculum.

## RECOMMENDATION 6: Establish a website with direct links to supporting materials.

The African American History Task Force will create and maintain a 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots (Massacre) resources website to include links to: print literature, other websites, museum exhibits, primary and secondary sources, lesson plans, videos, and other resources.

The website will model the current site at <https://www.aahtfevents.com> and include direct references to the 1920 Ocoee Election Day events:

- Training opportunities
- Direct links to resources
- Direct links to Florida Standards
- Links to examples of units and lesson plans for instruction.

### Website Mockup:



#### THE OCOEE MASSACRE OF 1920

In June 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 1213 Educational of Historical Events, which in part, requires The Florida Commissioner of Education's African American History Task Force to examine ways to include the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots in the required instruction on African American history.

Via this webpage, the African American History Task Force will provide districts, schools and educators with best practices, unit plans, lesson plans, and any other standards based activities that may be used for the teaching and learning of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots.

Ocoee is a small town outside of Orlando, Florida where blacks were murdered, their homes and businesses were burned down. All because they dared to vote.

Please stay tuned to this webpage for information that will assist you in meeting this mandate to embed this critical moment in our nation's history into your curriculum. See more below about **The Ocoee Massacre**.



The deadliest day in American politics. A race-based massacre held from the history books. The story told by descendants 100 years later. Their death, survival as slaves are forced from their homes and the push to recognize all that was lost. This is The Ocoee Massacre.



The Massacre was a white mob attack on African-American residents in Ocoee, Florida, which occurred on November 2, 1920, the day of the U.S. presidential election. The town is in Orange County near Orlando. Most estimates total 30-35 black people were killed. Most African American-owned buildings and residences in northern Ocoee were burned to the ground. Other African Americans living in southern Ocoee were later killed or driven out on threat of more violence. Ocoee essentially became an all-white town. The massacre has been described as the "single bloodiest day in modern American political history."



The attack started after efforts to suppress black citizens from voting. In Ocoee and across the state, various black organizations had been conducting voter registration drives for a year. Black people had essentially been grandfathered in Florida since the beginning of the 20th century. Mose Norman, a prosperous African-American farmer, tried to vote but was turned away twice on Election Day. Norman was among those working on the voter drive. A white mob surrounded the home of Julius "July" Perry, where Norman was thought to have taken refuge. After Perry drove away the white mob with gunshots, killing two men and wounding one who tried to break into his house, the mob called for reinforcements from Orlando and Orange County. The whites laid waste to the African-American community in northern Ocoee and eventually killed Perry. They took his body to Orlando and hanged it from a lightpost to intimidate other black people. Norman escaped, never to be found. Hundreds of other African Americans fled the town, leaving behind their homes and possessions.

A bill introduced by Democratic state Sen. Randolph Bracy would split \$10 million among descendants of victims of the Ocoee Massacre.

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION'S  
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY  
TASK FORCE  
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Phone: 904.112.3203

Contact Us For More Information About African American History Task Force Initiatives

Contact Email\*

First Name

Phone

## Appendix A – Lesson Plan Proposal Survey Sample Responses

### HB 1213 AAHTF 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots

Response ID:38 Data

#### 2. 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots

##### About Me

Prefix (i.e. Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms., Dr.) : [REDACTED]

First name : [REDACTED]

Last name : [REDACTED]

Position/Job title : Teacher

District : [REDACTED]

School : [REDACTED]

Work email address : [REDACTED]

Phone number : [REDACTED]

Course(s) taught : [REDACTED]

Certification area(s) : [REDACTED]

What type of resource are you proposing to develop?

A unit plan

Select the most appropriate grade(s) for your proposal.

High School

Provide a 3-5 sentence overview of the proposed resource.

Students will be given 4-8 primary source documents from historic newspapers with supporting questions that they must interpret and analyze. Students will also be expected to identify the different geographical areas where the news of the Ocoee Riots were published. Students will then be provided different historical accounts written by historians since the event occurred and analyze the changes on how the event is presented. Student will be expected to write a 5 paragraph essay that responds to the question: What occurred on November 2, 1920 in Ocoee, Florida?

Provide the 1-2 most relevant state standards that the proposed resource will align to.

Standard 1 : LACC.1112.RH.3.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Standard 2 : LACC.1112.RH.3.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

Provide 1-2 learning goals for the proposed resource.

Learning Goal 1 : Students will use primary source evidence to write their own narrative of what occurred in Ocoee, Florida in 1920.

Learning Goal 2 : Students will be able to identify and discuss how historical accounts of the Ocoee riot have changed in the last 100 years.

Do you certify that the proposed resource is original and the final submission will be free of copyright violations.

Yes, my proposed resource is original and the final submission will be free of copyright violations.

# HB 1213 AAHTF 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots

Response ID:24 Data

## 2. 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots

### About Me

Prefix (i.e. Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms., Dr.) : [REDACTED]

First name : [REDACTED]

Last name : [REDACTED]

Position/Job title : [REDACTED]

District : [REDACTED]

School : [REDACTED]

Work email address : [REDACTED]

Phone number : [REDACTED]

Course(s) taught : [REDACTED]

Certification area(s) : [REDACTED]

What type of resource are you proposing to develop?

A single lesson plan

Select the most appropriate grade(s) for your proposal.

High School

Provide a 3-5 sentence overview of the proposed resource.

In this lesson, students will have an opportunity to review the developments that led to African American enfranchisement after the Civil War and eventual disenfranchisement following Reconstruction and examine how the political and social structures in Florida during the 1920s contributed to the Ocoee Election Day Riot. During the lesson, students will have an opportunity to reflect on the developments that took place, share their perspectives about the developments, make current-day connections about black voter suppression efforts and how the American legal system has failed to bring perpetrators of violence against African Americans to justice, assess whether reparations should be awarded to the descendants of victims of the Ocoee election day riot, and provide textual evidence to support or refute the information presented by their peers using accountable talk guidelines. The lesson is filled with a number of thought provoking questions that allow students to not only examine the cause, course and consequences of the Ocoee Election Day riot but also closely examine the disparities of the American political and legal systems as it relates to the African American experience.

Provide the 1-2 most relevant state standards that the proposed resource will align to.

Standard 1 : SS.912.A.5.12: Examine key events and people in Florida history as they relate to United States history.

Standard 2 : LAFS.1112.RH.1.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Provide 1-2 learning goals for the proposed resource.

Learning Goal 1 : Draw conclusions about the people, groups, or entities that are responsible for the riot/massacre based on available evidence.

Learning Goal 2 : Assess why it is important for the African American community and the community at large to remember the Ocoee massacre and make connections to current-day black voter suppression efforts in Florida.

Do you certify that the proposed resource is original and the final submission will be free of copyright violations.

Yes, my proposed resource is original and the final submission will be free of copyright violations.

## 2. 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots

### About Me

Prefix (i.e. Mr., Miss, Mrs., Ms., Dr.) : [REDACTED]

First name : [REDACTED]

Last name : [REDACTED]

Position/Job title : [REDACTED]

District : [REDACTED]

School : [REDACTED]

Work email address : [REDACTED]

Phone number : [REDACTED]

Course(s) taught : [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Certification area(s) : [REDACTED]

### What type of resource are you proposing to develop?

Other - Write In: This would be a DBQ (document-based question) lesson modeled after the Collegeboard's AP rubric; it would also be a resource that could be used by General, Honors, AP level classes as scaffolding would be written into the plan. It would be a six document DBQ focused on the question "What was the impact of the Ocoee riots on the city of Ocoee?"

### Select the most appropriate grade(s) for your proposal.

High School

### Provide a 3-5 sentence overview of the proposed resource.

This would be a high school DBQ (document-based question) lesson modeled after the Collegeboard's AP rubric; it would also be a resource that could be used by General, Honors, AP level classes as scaffolding would be written into the plan. It would be a six document DBQ focused on the question "What was the impact of the Ocoee riots on the City of Ocoee?"

### Provide the 1-2 most relevant state standards that the proposed resource will align to.

Standard 1 : - Analyze how images, symbols, objects, cartoons, graphs, charts, maps, and artwork may be used to interpret the significance of time periods and events from the past.

Standard 2 : Utilize a variety of primary and secondary sources to identify author, historical significance, audience, and authenticity to understand a historical period.

### Provide 1-2 learning goals for the proposed resource.

Learning Goal 1 : Students will be able to understand the impact of the Ocoee riots on African Americans who lived there.

Learning Goal 2 : Students will be able to understand the impact of the Ocoee riots on the City of Ocoee.

### Do you certify that the proposed resource is original and the final submission will be free of copyright violations.

Yes, my proposed resource is original and the final submission will be free of copyright violations.

## Appendix B – Primary Source Materials

Goodman, Joshua L. <Joshua.Goodman@dos.myflorida.com>

11/6/2020 5:31 PM

To: Kelley, Bernadette C. <bernadette.kelley@fam.u.edu>

Re: Ocoee Resources

Attachments: Walter-White-Testimony\_12-30-1920.pdf, walter-white-crisis-article-04.pdf, Ocoee3.pdf, Ocoee4.pdf

Hi Dr. Kelley,

Thank you so much for having Katrina and I along for this meeting. I hope the points we raised will be helpful as the group moves forward on this important project. I wanted to pass along a few key documents I found in the course of my research – the files are attached:

- First and foremost, I'm attaching some **testimony from Walter F. White** of the NAACP before the House Committee on the Census, December 30, 1920. In his remarks, White discusses what he saw and heard at Ocoee and elsewhere in Florida during his visit to the state. I'm struck... not so much by White's description of the events at Ocoee and Jacksonville... but rather by how the Congressmen responded to the testimony. The full hearing is far too long to be used effectively in a classroom exercise, but there are portions of it that could be incorporated into some really good lessons analyzing the committee's attitude toward White and their responsibilities regarding voting rights. I think it's very difficult for students to comprehend how brazenly these rights were disregarded, or how cavalierly state and federal officials claimed there was no real disenfranchisement. Rep. Brinson's remarks toward the bottom of page 59 are particularly demonstrative of where many Southern legislators were at the time on this issue. I think this conversation between White and the committee connects Ocoee to the broader national narrative on Black suffrage without "de-Ocoeeing" the story, as someone very aptly put it.
- **Walter White's article in *The Crisis* (January 1921)** describing what he saw and heard in Florida is a good basic description of voter intimidation and obstruction in Ocoee, Jacksonville, and elsewhere in the state. Included is the text of a letter from the KKK to an attorney who was encouraging African Americans to register to vote. Again, the whole article is probably too long to be assigned in most classroom settings, but excerpts from it could be deployed in a number of ways.
- **The two newspaper articles (Ocoee3 and Ocoee4)**, both from Florida newspapers, approach gaslighting in their tendency to downplay or even discount the events at Ocoee. The one offering advice to Black Floridians about paying their own poll taxes also reveals the partisan piece in the Ocoee puzzle... the editor never says the word 'Republican' but he clearly says the "recipe" to stop lynchings is for all African Americans to stop supporting the Republican Party. The Ocoee3 article would have to be used with discretion because of its language, but there are some really teachable bits to unpack here, and Ocoee is the occasion that brings it out.

I hope these will be helpful to the group. If there's anything else I can do to support your work on this or other projects, please let me know. I look forward to meeting again in December.

All Best,

Josh G.

**Josh Goodman, Ph.D.**

**Archives Historian, State Archives of Florida**

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[FloridaMemory.com](http://FloridaMemory.com)

**STATEMENT OF MR. WALTER F. WHITE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE.**

Mr. WHITE. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, my name is Walter F. White. I am assistant secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. My office address is 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City. My residence address is 2301 Seventh Avenue, New York City. The request has been made several times by members of this committee for definite facts—definite information. I want to give you in a few minutes some of the facts which were found by me on a recent trip which I made into the State of Florida for the purpose of investigating the election of 1920 in that State. I went into Florida, arriving there on the Friday following the election. I just want to tell you of the conditions in the city of Jacksonville, where the colored population is approximately equal to the white population of that city. In that city the bulk of the colored population lies in the second, sixth, seventh and eighth wards. There was a great deal of activity among the colored population of Jacksonville just as there was in all sections in having

the citizens, male and female, qualify, register and vote on November 2. A large number of colored men and women registered in Jacksonville. A few days prior to election it was announced that a new arrangement would be made in Jacksonville, whereby each voting booth would have four entrances, one for white men, one for white women, one for colored men and one for colored women; and two persons were to be taken from the head of each line simultaneously, thus eight persons would be allowed in the voting booths each time. Those were the instructions given out by the election officials.

In that city a few days before election, on the Saturday night before election, on October 30, a parade was held by the Ku Klux Klan, and the number marching in the parade was estimated to be approximately 1,000, in full regalia. They marched through the streets of Jacksonville for the purpose of showing what that order is going to do to maintain white supremacy.

COMMITTEE ON THE CENSUS,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES,  
*Washington, December 30, 1920.*

The committee on this day met at 10.20 o'clock a. m., Hon. Isaac Siegel, chairman, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will please come to order. Mr. White will proceed.

**STATEMENT OF MR. WALTER F. WHITE—Resumed.**

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, at the conclusion of my testimony of yesterday I was telling of an investigation which I made during election week in the State of Florida, and of the election riots which took place in Orange County, in a little town by the name of Ocoee. Several days prior to election in this particular town, word was sent by local individuals and by the Ku Klux Klan in the form of a warning to the colored people of that town if any Negro attempted to vote on election day there would be trouble. . On election day a man by the name of Mose Norman, who was well-to-do and owned an orange grove worth approximately \$10,000, his own home, and an automobile, went up to the polls to vote. There he was set upon by the crowd who beat him up and told him to go home. The news accounts stated that he had never registered or paid his poll tax. The records of the county registrar at Orlando, the county seat, showed that Norman had paid his tax and registered in proper fashion.

Mr. LARSEN. That is in substance what you stated yesterday, and I think that you stated that it was hearsay testimony, that the records showed that he had paid his tax, unless the records have since been doctored. That was what you said, was it not?

Mr. WHITE. Yes, sir; a man who examined the records at Ocoee told me that he knew. At any rate, Norman left the polls and he went to the home of July Perry, another colored man who lived in a colored settlement near Ocoee. Shortly after the disturbance at the polls the mob surrounded the settlement, applied kerosene to the buildings and set fire to them, and fired upon the colored people. In the trouble that followed there were 20 buildings owned by colored people and two churches burned down, a schoolhouse and a lodge hall. The colored people who were in those houses, according to the testimony gathered, were not allowed to come out. If any of them attempted to flee from the burning houses they were either driven back into the flames or were shot down. The newspaper accounts stated there were 5 Negroes burned, but the testimony gathered places the number at from 32 to 35. Among those killed and burned alive were a number of women and children, and among the victims were a mother and her two-weeks old infant.

Another case was that of a colored physician, at Quincy, Fla., the owner of a drugstore and other property, including an excellent home. He is one of the leading men of the town. He was ordered to get out of town for having advised other colored people to qualify, register, and vote. That man's name is W. S. Stevens. He has refused to leave town. On election day he went down to the polls, where the mob seized upon him, spat in his face, and dared him to wipe his face under pain of death. He still remains there in town, determined to die rather than leave simply because he advised colored people to register and vote.

Another case is that of two brothers, Daniel J. Jones and B. J. Jones, colored men, of Live Oak, Suwanee County, Fla., owners of a large merchandise business, also undertakers. Four weeks before election these brothers were taken from their homes by members of the Ku Klux Klan in regalia and beaten severely for committing the "crime" of advising colored people to qualify, register, and vote, and were then ordered to leave town. One of the brothers has left town for parts unknown. The other brother was lying at the point of death when I was in Florida from a stroke of paralysis, which his physician said was brought on by the beating he received.

The CHAIRMAN. When were you last in Florida?

Mr. WHITE. I was in Florida during election week. The reports of these riots appeared in the New York papers of November 4. I left New York on the afternoon of the 4th, arriving in Florida on Friday, the 5th. I was there approximately 72 hours after the trouble took place.

Mr. BRINSON. That was this last November?

Mr. WHITE. Yes, just a few weeks ago. I give these cases, based upon my personal investigation, to show something of the methods adopted to suppress the Negro vote. The statement was made

## ELECTION DAY IN FLORIDA



WALTER F. WHITE



**A**N unknown number of dead, men of property and standing forced to leave their homes and families under threat of death, thousands of qualified voters debarred from casting their ballots—these constitute a portion of the results of the elections of 1920 in the state of Florida. To that list might well be added an increased bitterness on the part of both white and colored people towards each other and another black mark entered in the books of colored people against the whites for what the former had to suffer.

It is not possible to write of race relations in the South today without giving due prominence to the revival of that sinister organization, the Ku Klux Klan. There is hardly a town or community to be found which does not have its branch. Certain it is that wherever one goes in the South one hears of the "Klucks" and what that order is going to do to maintain "white supremacy". Clothed in great secrecy and hinting of dire things to come, the pretensions of the noble "protectors of southern womanhood" would be ludicrous were it not for the vicious deeds already performed by branches in some of the smaller towns and rural communities. If one looks at the Ku Klux Klan solely from the viewpoint of the larger cities of the South like Jacksonville, Atlanta and Birmingham where the Negro population is concentrated in certain sections, the efforts of the Klan are pathetically amusing and are treated as such by colored people. Forty years ago when the original Ku Klux did effective work in terrorizing, murdering and pillaging the Negroes of the South it was dealing with four million recently emancipated slaves with all of the characteristics following in the wake of two and a half centuries of human bondage. They were ignorant, superstitious, easily frightened, poorly organized, distrustful of each other and still believing that they were inferior to white men. It was a comparatively simple matter to envelop the Klan with a cloak of supernatural power and to send a colored man shivering to cover until a parade had passed.

Today, however, the setting is changed.

A new generation of Negroes has arisen with thousands of university, college, high school and grammar school graduates among them; possessing property and the respect for self that accompanies such possessions. I have talked with many Negroes and with many white men in the South. I have found a far higher order of intelligence among Negroes than among whites, when one compares the two races grade for grade. In regard to the Klan, even the uneducated Negro looks upon it with amused contempt. His white brother, in most cases, cherishes a fatuous belief common to provincial and circumscribed minds that terrorist methods will be efficacious in "keeping the nigger in his place".

In Jacksonville, for example, a parade of the local Klan was held on Saturday night, October 30. Large numbers of colored people turned out to view the parade. One old colored woman of the antebellum type that is fast disappearing, called out derisively to the marching Klucks:

"White folks, you ain't done nothin'. Them German guns didn't scare us and I know them white faces ain't goin' to do it now."

That remark epitomizes the feeling. Phrased in better English it likewise expresses the sentiment among the larger number of educated colored citizens of Jacksonville. But beneath the amused tolerance there is a grim realization that the Klan will not spend its energy in marching—that the sinister purposes of the movement betoken no good to colored people. Negroes are prepared for trouble in every part of the South where I have been. They realize that they are outnumbered and outarmed and that death is the inevitable fate of many if clashes come.

The situation in the smaller towns and isolated rural communities where the Negro population is widely scattered is of a more serious nature. There the Klans can wreak their vengeance on any Negro who dares offend them by being too prosperous or being suspected of some crime, great or small, or by incurring the displeasure of any white man of the community. This vengeance extends to white men who offend

some loyal member of a Klan or who dares show too great friendliness for Negroes—whether for selfish or other motives. It is not considered improper but just the contrary for a white man or boy to debauch or consort with a colored woman, but no white man can treat a Negro as an equal. As a case in point read a Klan warning sent to a prominent white lawyer of a Florida town who advised Negroes to qualify, register and vote in the recent election. It reads:

We have been informed that you have been telling Negroes to register, explaining to them how to become citizens and how to assert their rights.

If you know the history of reconstruction days following the Civil War, you know how the "scalawags" of the North and the black republicans of the South did much as you are doing to instill into the Negro the idea of social equality. You will remember that these things forced the loyal citizens of the South to form clans of determined men to maintain white supremacy and to safeguard our women and children.

And now you know that history repeats itself and that he who resorts to your kind of a game is handling edged tools. We shall always enjoy WHITE SUPREMACY in this country and he who interferes must face the consequences.

GRAND MASTER FLORIDA KU  
KLUCKS.

Copy  
Local Ku Klucks  
Watch this man.

An example of what can be done and what has been done in a small town is the election riot at Ocoee, Orange County, Florida. For weeks before November 2, word had been sent to the Negroes that no colored man would be allowed to vote. The statement was emphasized with the threat that any Negro attempting to cast his ballot would be severely punished. One colored man disregarded the warning. He was the most prominent man in his community, owned a large orange grove worth more than ten thousand dollars, his own home and an automobile. He had always borne the reputation of being a safe and sane leader among his people and had never been involved in trouble of any kind. And therein lay his unpopularity. He was too prosperous—"for a nigger". He, Mose Norman, attempted to vote. He was beaten severely and ordered to go home. The press reports stated later that he had not paid his poll tax nor had he registered. On this point and the succeeding events, may I quote the statement of a white man of the town who said:

".....he was denied upon the ground that he had not paid his poll tax, when, as a matter of fact, the records of this county (if they have not been doctored since) will show that he had paid his tax. The press claimed that he made a threat that he was going home to get his gun, and see that he did vote. I do not believe that anyone, situated as he was, would have been foolhardy enough to make such a threat. After the polls closed, a number of armed men went to his house, without a warrant and without authority of law as is claimed by those approving their action, to arrest this Negro. Two white men were shot in the Negro's backyard. From that time on for three days the community ran riot. I do not believe it will ever be known how many Negroes were killed. Every Negro home, schoolhouse, church and lodge-room in that community was burned, in some instances with women and children occupying the houses, and thus burned to death. . . . The foregoing is a fair sample of conditions which exist in most parts of the state."

The story is essentially as told above. When Norman left the polls he went to the home of July Perry, another colored man, who likewise was unpopular with the whites in that he was foreman of a large orange grove owned by a white man living in New England—a job which the community felt was too good for a Negro. When the mob attacked the colored community the colored people fought in self-defense, killing two white men and wounding two, according to news accounts. Citizens of the town told me that eight or ten whites were killed but that they could not allow the information to become known, fearing the effect on the colored population. However, the mob surrounded the settlement, set fire to it, shot down or forced back into the flames colored men, women and children who attempted to flee. The number murdered will probably never be known. The figures generally given varied from thirty-two to thirty-five. One lean, lanky and vicious looking white citizen of Ocoee of whom I asked the number of dead, replied:

"I don't know exactly but I know fifty-six niggers were killed. I killed seventeen myself."

Whatever the number, two of those known to have died, were a colored mother and her two-weeks old infant. Before the ashes of the burned houses had cooled, eager members of the mob rushed in and sought gleefully the charred bones of the victims as souvenirs. As I stood on the spot approximately seventy-two hours following the slaughter, the remains looked as though



THE SIXTH WARD POLLING-TENT, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, COLORED SIDE. ABOUT 400 IN LINE DURING ENTIRE DAY

some one had gone over them with a fine-toothed comb.

An amazing aftermath of the occurrence was the attitude of the white inhabitants of Orange County. Talking with numbers of them, the opinion of the majority seemed to be that nothing unusual had taken place—that the white people had acquitted themselves rather meritoriously in checking unholy and presumptuous ambitions of Negroes in attempting to vote. Even the white children of Ocoee felt that an event similar in enjoyment to a circus had taken place. One bright-faced and alert girl of eleven when asked what had occurred, told happily of how “we had some fun burning up some niggers”. There was no thought of horror at the deed—it was accepted as a matter of course.

Some of the methods used in the smaller towns in eliminating the Negro vote and particularly the colored woman vote were unique. In Orange and Osceola counties, a colored woman would attempt to register; on being asked her age, for example, she would say twenty-four. She would then be asked the year in which she was born. Many of them being illiterate, would not know. The registrar would then probably say, “If you are twenty-four, you were born in 1892, weren't you?” The applicant, seeking to get the ordeal over, would reply in the affirmative. Before she had been away from the place very long a warrant for perjury had been sworn out against her and she had been arrested. I found many

cases equally as flagrant where Negro women had been imprisoned for such “offenses” as these.

In the same manner men would be intimidated and threatened. A white lawyer told me laughingly of how a Negro would approach a registration booth in his county, Orange, and ask if he could register. The officials there, in most cases of the poorer order of whites, would reply, “Oh, yes, you can register, but I want to tell you something. Some god damn black ——— is going to get killed about this voting business yet.”

In Quincy, Gadsden County, the leading colored man of the town, a physician, owner of a drug store and other property including an excellent home, on election day was surrounded as he approached the polling booth to cast his ballot, by a crowd who spat in his face and dared him to wipe his face. His “crime” was that of advising colored men and women to register and vote. He has since been ordered to get out of the town but remains—determined to die rather than submit. He has always been a good citizen and highly respected by both white and colored people.

Two brothers of Live Oak, Suwanee County, who also were good citizens, prosperous and the owners of a large merchandise business, were called from their homes two weeks before election day, beaten almost to death and ordered to leave town immediately for the same offense of urging Negroes to vote. One has gone; the other lies



SAME POLLING-TENT, WHITE SIDE. 75 IN LINE AT 12.40 P. M.  
There were 1569 colored women alone registered in this ward and yet only 2633 votes  
in all were reported

at the point of death from a stroke of paralysis brought on by the beating.

Nor are these isolated cases but rather are they typical of what took place in many parts of the state. The West Palm Beach *Post* of October 30 carried an article with the significant statement, "Sheriff R. C. Baker will have several deputy sheriffs at the polls to arrest *black* violators of the election laws as fast as they appear and ask for ballots." The inference is that only Negroes violated the election laws while it is generally known that white Democratic voters openly carried memoranda into the booths, which is directly contrary to law. Only Negro Republicans were arrested for this violation.

In Jacksonville, where Negroes form slightly more than half of the population of 90,000, the situation was different. In spite of parades of the Ku Klux Klan, vicious newspaper propoganda designed to intimidate Negro voters, and the announcement two days before election that 4,000 warrants had been sworn out in blank form for the arrest of Negroes, the colored vote turned out *en masse*. Most of the colored people live in the second, sixth, seventh and eighth wards. An active campaign was carried on after the passage of the suffrage amendment which resulted in the registration of more colored than white women in all four of the wards. Frantic stories threatening domination by "Negro washerwomen and cooks" failed to bring out the white

women to register. To the number of women was added the large registration of men, white and colored, in the spring of 1920. Yet, in the second, seventh and eighth wards the total vote did not equal the registration of colored women alone, while in the sixth ward the total number of votes cast was only a few more than the number of women, white and colored, registered. Every possible effort was made to hamper the voting of Negroes. The polling places were arranged with four entrances—one each for white women, white men, colored women and colored men. No delay was caused to white voters. More than four thousand colored men and women, whose names, addresses and registration certificate numbers are in the hands of responsible colored citizens of Jacksonville, stood in line from 8:00 A. M., the hour of opening, to 5:40 P. M., the hour of closing the polls, and were not allowed to vote.

Unless the problem of the ballot is solved, either through reduction of Southern representation, a force bill or by some other means, and the entire problem of race relations solved through clear thinking and just dealing, our race riots and similar disturbances are just beginning. This may sound pessimistic and as though the problem were viewed only from the standpoint of an alarmist. That is not the case. It is based upon the innermost feelings and thoughts of twelve million Americans who seek to be free.

## Advice to Negroes (Deland Daily News) December 24, 1920

**ADVICE TO THE NEGROES.**  
(Deland Daily News.)

The wicked Ku Klux Klan is said to be organized in New York. Anent this matter, the "national association for the advancement of the colored people (negroes always get long names for their organizations) charges that thirty of their race were killed in election riots in Florida. Why didn't the association make the number 300? One number would have been as easy to prove as another. The News can give its negro friends a recipe which will at once overcome all lynchings in the North, East, West and South and end election riots against their race. It is this: Pay your own poll taxes, go to the polls and vote as men and not as serfs directed by one dirty white man who hides behind your backs. The negro is colonized to beat white men by other designing white men who have not the respect of their own color and who can control an election only by the use of the inferior race. The negro is killed and the white buzzards who use them laugh behind their backs.

## The N.A.F.T.O.C.P Lied (Tampa Tribune) December 19, 1920

**"THE N. A. F. T. A. O. C. P. LIED"**

On the 18th of November The Tribune published this editorial paragraph:

"The national association for the advancement of colored people, headquarters in 'Hos-ting,' announced that thirty negroes were killed in the Ocoee difficulty on election day. The N. A. F. T. A. O. C. P. lied!"

On December 11th, The Tribune received a letter from "Walter F. White, assistant secretary of the national association for the advancement of colored people, 70, Fifth Ave., New York, which said: (quoting the paragraph)

"May I offer in contrast to your unsubstantiated statement the facts which were proven by a careful investigation which I made at Ocoee a few hours after the lynching. My information was secured from white people who boasted of their participation in the mob.

"May I quote one of these 'Gentlemen' of Ocoee who states in a letter I have before me:—

"After the polls closed a number of armed men went to his (Mose Norman's) house, without a warrant and without an authority of law as is claimed by those approving their action, to arrest this negro. Two white men were shot in the negro's back yard. From that time on for three days, the community ran riot. I do not believe it will ever be known how many negroes were killed. Every negro home, school house, church and lodge room in that community was burned. In some instances, with women and children occupying the house and thus burned to death."

At the demand of this association the Federal department of justice ordered Federal District Attorney, Herbert S. Phillips, of Tampa, to make an investigation and report on the Ocoee incident.

In The Tribune of Saturday morning Federal District Attorney Phillips says:

"My investigation of the Ocoee race trouble showed that there were five deaths during the clash, two of these being negro women, one negro man, and two white men." Mr. Phillips also stated that the investigation which was conducted by his agents established the fact that no Federal election laws were infringed, that there was no effort to prevent duly qualified negroes from voting, and that there was no effort to terrorize the negroes.

Evidently, then, the Ocoee "Gentleman" who gave the assistant secretary of the negro advancement association the "information" in the letter above, did not give it to the Federal District Attorney. He knew it was a lie when he wrote it to White.

In the light of the investigation by the Federal Department of Justice, The Tribune reaffirms its conclusion of November 18:

"The N. A. F. T. A. O. C. P. lied!"

## Appendix C – Additional Resources

### Museum Exhibits

#### **Yesterday, This Was Home: The Ocoee Massacre of 1920**

Orange County Regional History Center

<https://www.thehistorycenter.org/exhibition/the-ocoe-massacre/>

### Articles and Books

#### [A Perfect Storm: The Ocoee Riot of 1920](#)

C Hoffmann, C Hoffman, C Strom - The Florida Historical Quarterly, 2014 - JSTOR

... articles from Orlando Morning Sentinel, Orlando Evening Reporter- Star, Florida Metropolis, Savannah Press, Orlando Weekly Magazine, Tampa Morning Tribune, New York Times; Bianca White and Sandra Krasa, **Ocoee**: Legacy of the Election Day **Massacre** Webster, TX ...

#### [Racial Massacre in Atlanta: September 22, 1906](#)

C Crowe - The Journal of Negro History, 1969 - journals.uchicago.edu

... Northern riots between 1862 and 1865 in New York, Cincinnati, and other cities were largely **massacres** of blacks as were the political riots ... RACIAL **MASSACRE** IN ATLANTA ... As late as 1921 whites in **Ocoee**, Florida started a riot when a small group of Negroes tried to vote ...

#### [Memorializing Racist Massacres](#)

CL Armstead - ... and Antiracism: International Struggles for Justice, 2001 - books.google.com

... They argued that since the **Ocoee massacre** was an attack on the citizenship rights of blacks, it was an attack on everyone ... Memorializing Racist **Massacres** Conflicts of Race and Gender Contemporary relations between white women and black women rest upon a brutally...

#### [Reimagining the Ocoee Showcase: A Plan for Visual Representation of the Imagined but Undocumented](#)

E Hallman - cs.ucf.edu

... The events of the 1920 **Ocoee** Riot (also known as the **Ocoee Massacre**) can be summarized as follows: On November 2, 1920, a landowning African American named Mose Norman tried to vote and was turned away ...

#### [Black Historical Erasure: A Critical Comparative Analysis in Rosewood and Ocoee](#)

C Ram - 2020 - scholarship.rollins.edu

... PASSING THE BILL: A HISTORIC MOMENT A SUMMATION: THE OCOEE MASSACRE ... 20th century Florida: the Ocoee Election Day Massacre and Rosewood Massacre. The purpose and function of this paper will critically compare both violent episodes ...

### [America's First Lynching Memorial](#)

... of Rosewood, Florida, which confronts the Rosewood **Massacre** of 1923; The 1898 Foundation of Wilmington, North Carolina, which confronts the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898; and The Democratic Foundation of **Ocoee**, Florida, which confronts the **Ocoee Massacre** of 1920 ...

### [Legacies of Lynching: The Odyssey of Oscar Mack](#)

[JC Chambliss](#) - 2019 - [ajs.hcommons.org](http://ajs.hcommons.org)

... Rollins College) worked with students in his modern African American History course to document the details of the lynching with Curtis Michelson, a former member of Democracy Forum, a social justice group formed to record the details of the 1920 **Ocoee Massacre** ...

### [Anatomy of an Atrocity: The Madden Branch Massacre and Guerrilla Warfare in North Georgia, 1861-1865](#)

[JD Sarris](#) - The Georgia Historical Quarterly, 1993 - JSTOR

... be a refuge for Unionists and other disaffected southerners, such as the north Georgia who were **massacred** at Madden ... The Madden Branch **Massacre** ... in age from sixteen to twenty- two. Parris' band crossed into Tennessee, following the course of the **Ocoee** River, which in ...

### [Minority Disenfranchisement During the 2000 General Election: A Blast from the Past or a Blueprint for Reform](#)

[ML Dixon](#) - Temp. Pol. & Civ. Rts. L. Rev., 2001 - HeinOnline

... Past, Orlando Sentinel G1 (Feb. 4, 1996). 24. The Democracy Forum, Historical Overview of the **Ocoee Massacre** Story <<http://www.ocoeeproject.com/overview.html>> (accessed Apr. 19, 2002). 25. Id. 26. Id. [Vol. 11:311 Page 5 ...

### [Dead men bring no claims: how takings claims can provide redress for real property-owning victims of Jim Crow race riots](#)

[M Fussell](#) - Wm. & Mary L. Rev., 2015 - HeinOnline

... The **Ocoee** Riot, also known as the **Ocoee Massacre**, is but one in which hundreds of black citizens disappeared in a matter of days. The takings claim analysis is well-suited to the particular facts of the **Ocoee** Riot, but it applies to other race riots as well ...