

'The souls can't rest:' Apartment complex residents forced to move after 120+ possible coffins found

FOX 6 NOW | POSTED 1:57 PM, AUGUST 31, 2019, BY CNN WIRE SERVICE



TAMPA, Fla. — Residents at a Tampa apartment complex were being forced to move after a shocking discovery. As it turned out, they were living on top of an African-American cemetery.

"This grassy area has the bulk of remains," said Connie Burton, who lived at the Robles Park Village on Florida Avenue for about 20 years.

In that grassy area, an archaeologist used a radar to discover more than 120 possible coffins.

The Tampa Bay Times linked the forgotten 1900s Zion Cemetery, likely the first in Tampa for African-Americans, to the current public housing complex. The report prompted the **Tampa Housing Authority** to investigate.

"As a child, we had heard that this used to be a memorial site, but we paid little attention to it because, you know, at the time, we needed housing," Burton said.

Yvette Lewis, the president of Hillsborough County's NAACP, said she was shocked by the discovery.

"It's time for the city to right its wrong," Lewis said.

Lewis said for these black pioneers who died in a still-fledgling city, there's been no rest.

"People's resting place are where they are supposed to rest," Lewis said. "And the souls can't even rest because it has been disturbed."

Burton commended the Tampa Housing Authority for the way they handled this revelation. She said she was pleased the Housing Authority was turning the cemetery site into a memorial.

The Housing Authority was set to relocate nearly 30 families living at the complex.