

Here's a clear example of "Lest We Forget"

A moment in history, a lot of people may have never heard of this.

"Please share."

Many thanks to our forefathers! 88 years ago.



The date was June 1, 1921 when "BLACK WALL STREET", the name fittingly given to one of the most affluent all-BLACK communities in America, was bombed from the air and burned to the ground by mobs of envious whites. In a period spanning fewer than 12 hours, a once thriving Black business district in northern Tulsa lay smouldering, a model community destroyed and a major African-American economic movement resoundingly defused.

The night's carnage left some 3,000 African Americans dead and over 600 successful businesses lost. Among these were 21 churches, 21 restaurants, 30 grocery stores and two movie theatres, plus a hospital, a bank, a post office, libraries, schools, law offices, a half dozen private airplanes and even a bus system. As could have been expected, the impetus behind it all was the infamous Ku Klux Klan, working in consort with ranking city officials and many other sympathizers.



The best description of BLACK WALLSTREET, or little Africa as it was also known, would be to compare it to a mini-Beverly Hills. It was the golden door of the BLACK community during the early 1900s, and it proved that African Americans could create a successful infrastructure. That's what BLACK WALLSTREET was all about.

The dollar circulated 36 to 100 times, sometimes taking a year for currency to leave the community. Now a dollar leaves the BLACK community in 15-minutes. As far as resources, there were Ph.D.'s residing in little Africa, BLACK attorneys and doctors. One doctor was Dr. Berry who owned the bus system. His average income was \$500 a day, a hefty pocket change in 1910.

It was a time when the entire state of Oklahoma had only two Airports, yet six BLACKS owned their own planes. It was a very fascinating community. The mainstay of the community was to educate every child. Nepotism was the one word they believed in. And that's what we need to get back to.

The main thoroughfare was Greenwood Avenue, and it was intersected by Archer and Pine Streets. From the first letters in each of those three names you get G.A.P. And that's where the renowned R and B music group the GAP Band got its name.

They are from Tulsa.

BLACK WALLSTREET was a prime example of the typical, **BLACK** community in America that did businesses, but it was in an unusual location. You see, at the time, Oklahoma was set aside to be a **BLACK** and Indian state. There were over 28 **BLACK** townships there. One third of the people who travelled in the terrifying “Trail of Tears” along side the Indians between 1830 and 1842 were **BLACK** people.

The citizens of this proposed Indian and **BLACK** state chose a **BLACK** governor, a treasurer from Kansas named McDade. But the Ku Klux Klan said that if he assumed office that they would kill him within 48 hours. A lot of **BLACKS** owned farmland, and many of them had gone into the oil business. The community was so tight and wealthy because they traded dollars hand-to-hand, and because they were dependent upon one another as a result of the Jim Crow Laws.

It was not unusual that if a resident's home accidentally burned down, it could be rebuilt within a few weeks by neighbours. This was the type of scenario that was going on day-to-day on **BLACK WALLSTREET**. When **BLACKS** intermarried into the Indian culture, some of them received their promised '40 acres and a mule' and with that came whatever oil was later found on the properties.

On **BLACK WALLSTREET**, a lot of global business was conducted, the community flourished from the early 1900s until June 1, 1921. That's when the largest massacre of non-military Americans in the history of this country took place, and it was lead by the **KU KLUX KLAN**. Imagine walking out of your front door and seeing 1,500 homes being burned. It must have been amazing.



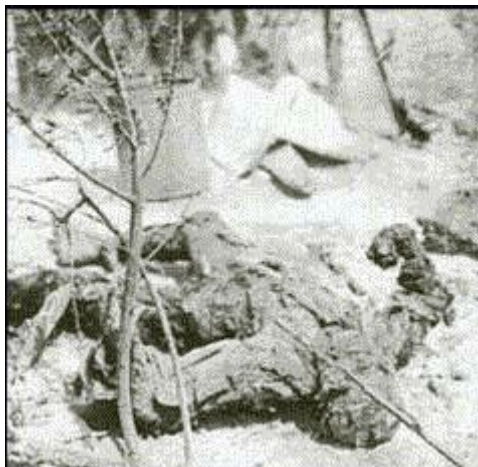
Survivors we interviewed think that the whole thing was planned because during the time that all of this was going on; white families with their children stood around the borders of their community and watched the massacre. The looting and everything--much in the same manner they would watch a lynching.

The riots weren't caused by anything black or white. It was caused by jealousy. A lot of white folks had come back from World War I and they were poor. When they looked over into the BLACK communities and realized that BLACK men who fought in the war had come, home heroes that helped trigger the destruction.

It cost the BLACK community everything, and not a single dime of restitution--no insurance claims-- has been awarded the victims to this day. Nonetheless, they rebuilt. We estimate 1,500 to 3,000 people were killed and we know that a lot of them were buried in mass graves all around the city. Some were thrown into the river. As a matter of fact, at 21st street and Yale Avenue, where there now stands a Sears parking lot, that corner used to be a coal mine. They threw a lot of the bodies into the shafts.

Unmarked Graves

TULSA, Oklahoma (CNN) -- Beulah Smith and Kenny Booker, two elderly Oklahomans, lived through one of the worst race riots in U.S. history, a rarely mentioned 1921 Tulsa blood bath that officially took dozens of African-American lives, but more likely claimed hundreds, perhaps even thousands.





The Tulsa Race Riot Commission, formed two years ago to determine exactly what happened, will consider next week the controversial issue of what, if any, reparations should be paid to the known survivors of the riot, a group of less than 100 that includes Smith, now 92, and Booker, 86.

‘The gun went off, the riot was on’. On the night of May 31, 1921, mobs called for the lynching of Dick Rowland, a black man who shined shoes, after hearing reports that on the previous day he had assaulted Sarah Page, a white woman, in the elevator she operated in a downtown building. A local newspaper had printed a fabricated story that Rowland tried to rape Page. In an editorial, the same newspaper said a hanging was planned for that night.

As groups of both blacks and whites converged on the Tulsa courthouse, a white man in the crowd confronted an armed black man, a war veteran, who had joined with other blacks to protect Rowland. A fabricated newspaper story triggered the violent riots that may have left hundreds, if not thousands, dead.

Commission member Eddie Faye Gates told CNN what happened next. “This white man,” she said, asked the black man, “what are you doing with this gun?”

“I’m going to use it if I have to,” the black man said, according to Gates, “and (the white man) said, ‘No, you’re not. Give it to me,’ and he tried to take it. The gun went off, the white man was dead, the riot was on.”

Truckloads of whites set fires and shot blacks on sight. When the smoke lifted the next day, more than 1,400 homes and businesses in Tulsa’s Greenwood district, a prosperous area known as the "Black Wall Street," lay in ruins.

Today, only a single block of the original buildings remains standing in the area. The official death toll was below 100, most of them black, but there was always doubt about the actual number. Experts now estimate that at least 300 people, and

perhaps as many as 3,000, died.



‘We're in a heck of a lot of trouble’

Beulah Smith was 14 years old the night of the riot. A neighbour named Frenchie came pounding on her family's door in a Tulsa neighbourhoods known as “Little Africa” that also went up in flames.

“Get your families out of here because they're killing niggers uptown,” she remembers Frenchie saying. “We hid in the weeds in the hog pen,” Smith told CNN.

People in a mob that came to Kenny Booker's house asked, “Nigger, do you have a gun?” he told CNN.

Booker, then a teen-ager, hid with his family in their attic until the home was torched. “When we got downstairs, things were burning. My sister asked me, ‘Kenny is the world on fire?’ I said, “I don't know, but we're in a heck of a lot of trouble, baby”

Another riot survivor, Ruth Avery, who was 7 at the time, gives an account matched by others who told of bombs dropped from small airplanes passing overhead. The explosive devices may have been dynamite or Molotov cocktails -- gasoline-filled bottles set afire and thrown as grenades.

“They'd throw it down and when it'd hit, it would burst into flames,” Avery said.

Only a single block remains of the 1,400 homes and businesses that made up the area known as the ‘Black Wall Street’

Unmarked graves

Many of the survivors “mentioned bodies were stacked like cord wood,” says

Richard Warner of the Tulsa Historical Society. In its search for the facts, the commission has literally been trying to dig up the truth.

Two headstones at Tulsa's Oaklawn Cemetery indicate that riot victims are buried there. In an effort to determine how many, archaeological experts in May used ground-piercing radar and other equipment to test the soil in a search for unmarked graves.

The test picked up indications that dozens, if not hundreds, of people may have been buried in an area just outside the cemetery.



Something to motivate us all,