Smithsonian
National Museum of African American History and Culture

Guide to 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Oral History Collection

Alana Donocoff, Paul Gardullo, Hollis Gentry and Ja-Zette Marshburn

2021

National Museum of African American History and Culture
Washington, D.C. 20004
NMAAHC-Archives@si.edu
https://nmaahc.si.edu

Table of Contents

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of African American History and Culture
Title:	Guide to 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Oral History Collection
Date:	2004-2007
Identifier:	NMAAHC.A2014.240
Creator:	Turner, Reginald
Extent:	1.38 Terabytes
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Acquired as a gift from The Tulsa Project, Inc. (Reginald Turner, J.D.Clement & The Lomax Company).

Processing Information

This collection was processed, arranged, and described and by Alana Donocoff, Paul Gardullo, Blake McDowell, Hollis Gentry, and Ja-Zette Marshburn in 2021.

Preferred Citation

Guide to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Oral History Collection, 2004-2007. National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution

Conditions Governing Use

Biographical / Historical

In 1921, one of the most devastating race massacres in American history occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma. From May 31 to June 1, mobs of white Tulsa residents ransacked, pillaged, bombed, and burned over 1,000 homes, businesses, and churches and murdered scores of African Americans in the Tulsa's Black community of Greenwood. The history of this event was hidden in plain sight for many generations, invariably vanished from or never placed in the history books across the country. Generations of Tulsa's universal community began to learn of this tragic event over the course of the last few decades through the efforts of the survivors and their supporters. The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Oral History Collection alongside the great work of The Tulsa Project, Inc. sheds light on a community of resilience grappling with complex questions of history and memory, justice and law, reparation and reconciliation.

In the decades that followed, just a partial list of cities exhibits the expansive and dizzying geographic and temporal scope of organized white violence that continued with little recourse or reproach well into twentieth century. Such cities include: Colfax, Louisiana (1873); Clinton, Mississippi (1875); Hamburg, South Carolina (1876); Thibodaux, Louisiana (1887); Omaha, Nebraska (1891); Wilmington, NC (1898); Atlanta, Georgia (1906); and East St. Louis, Missouri (1917). In the summer of 1919, the U.S. was rocked by the white supremacist violence and attacks against over thirty Black communities across the country. This period of overwhelming racial violence was dubbed, "Red Summer" and affected major Black communities in Washington, DC; Chicago, Illinois, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; Clarksdale, Mississippi; and Omaha, Nebraska as well as many others. In these cities like Tulsa, mob violence devastated Black communities through the destruction of property and livelihoods.

The Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma is rooted in the history of westward expansion of the United States in early 19th century. Beginning in 1830s, the first African Americans came to the Oklahoma Territory with Native Americans along the Trail of Tears, the U. S government sanctioned removal of American Indians from their native territory across the country. Some of the African American travelers were enslaved while free Blacks traveled through treacherous conditions alongside white travelers. Dubbed the "Oil Capital of the World" and "Magic City," Tulsa experienced booming economic growth and prosperity during the early 1900s. During the era of post-Emancipation until the onset of the 20th century, African Americans were a part of a newer wave of migration that came to Tulsa from all over the country, including other parts of the Oklahoma Territory.

More than 50 all-Black settlements were established in Oklahoma territory during this era, including Tatums, Langston, Rentiesville, Boley, as well as Black communities of larger cities such as Muskogee, Okmulgee, and Tulsa. By 1900, African Americans composed seven percent of the combined Oklahoma and Indian Territories and five percent of Tulsa's population. In 1905, the Tulsa's Greenwood community was sold to African American settlers. Many of Greenwood's founding families were of mixed-race heritage as result of multiracial migration patterns and organic cultural adaptation to Oklahoma's natural resources and environment. The Perrymans, one of Tulsa's founding families, included Muskogee (Creek), African American, and white members.

In 1907, Oklahoma was admitted into the United States, and the legislature immediately began implementing restrictive race laws. Many mixed-race families lived in the Oklahoma Territory in the late 1800s. But dividing lines between the races were drawn more sharply after Oklahoma became a state. Oklahoma had one of the strictest sets of Jim Crow laws that divided the country, especially in Tulsa. Black Tulsans formed their community along Greenwood and Archer streets and quickly began to thrive as homes, churches and businesses were built and further developed. The community took shape with the construction and proliferation of African American owned cafes, grocery stores, beauty parlors, movie theaters, and dentist, lawyers, and doctor offices. By close of World War I, 10,000 individuals lived in Tulsa's Greenwood District, considered to be one of the most prosperous African American communities in America at the time. Educator, activist, and statesman Booker T. Washington dubbed the district, "Negro Wall Street." Later coined as "Black Wall Street" in the 1950s as scholarship began developing around the massacre.

After World War I, Black veterans returned to seek a "double victory" by securing freedom and equality at home, striking fear among white supremacists. This fear left white Tulsans blaming the prosperity of "Black Wall Street" for the lack to employment opportunities and other misfortunes among the white community. Tulsa city founder and prominent businessman, W. Tate Brady, despite his support of African American financial independence, was a member of white supremacy terrorist group, the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) as well as an active member in the Sons of the Confederate Veterans. A resolute white supremacist, Brady's mansion's design was inspired by the Virginia home of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. He welcomed KKK founder, Nathan Bedford Forrest to that same home in 1915. It was Brady's active membership in the Sons of Confederate Veterans that brought the organization's 28th annual convention to the city in 1918. The latter circumstances along with the ongoing racial tensions set the stage for 1921 massacre.

On May 30, 1921, Dick Rowland, a 19-year-old African American shoe shiner was accused of assaulting a 17-year-old white woman, Sarah Page. Rowland went inside the Drexel Building to use the restroom, the only bathroom allowed to African Americans in downtown Tulsa. Page was an elevator operator in the building. It is unclear if Rowland tripped or the elevator stopped suddenly, but he had physical contact with Page.

Page screamed assault and a scared Rowland immediately fled. The next morning on May 31, Rowland was arrested and jailed in the city's courthouse. Later that afternoon, the city's most popular newspaper, Tulsa Tribune printed the story, "Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator" that claimed Rowland raped Page. Also printed was an editorial with the title, "To Lynch Negro Tonight," which no doubt influenced the rumors of a possible lynching of Rowland as the evening approached.

A large mob of thousands continued to grow over the course of the night outside the courthouse. African American WWI veterans and other members of the Greenwood community began to set up defenses outside the courthouse in order to protect Rowland. Tensions rose and soon an individual fight broke out and a gun was fired. The now weaponized white mob began to move about Greenwood armed with torches, guns, and other weaponry. Some survivors recall aerial bombs released overhead from small planes. The terror was directed at every visible African American in the vicinity, many fled for their lives while their homes and livelihoods were demolished. Historical research has not rendered an accurate number of lives lost in the massacre; it is believed that over 300 African Americans were murdered. Over 35 blocks of homes and businesses were destroyed with damages estimated to be over 1.5 million dollars.

On June 1st, the Oklahoma National Guard arrived, and martial law was declared. They arrested over 6,000 African Americans including children and illegally held them in detention centers throughout Tulsa. They were only released if a white person named them as an employee. Martial law ended on June 3rd, but African Americans were required to carry "green cards" once released from the detention centers as a mechanism to the police the Black population. The next week, Oklahoma governor James B.A. Robertson ordered an inquiry into the massacre. Only 85 people were indicted, mostly African Americans citizens. Rowland was released from jail and not charged for any crimes. Page recanted her claim as well.

Residents of Greenwood filed over 1400 lawsuits for damaged property. Insurance companies denied all claims based on a "riot clause." 1,000 Black Tulsans were forced to live in tents provided by the Red Cross from 1921-1922 because their homes were demolished. Historians estimate that over 700 families left Tulsa and never returned. However, many stayed and worked to rebuild the Greenwood community but experienced great difficulty as the city government actively tried to prevent African Americans from returning to their homes. Zoning regulations were put into effect that would make Greenwood only a commercial area, making it virtually impossible to live there. B.C. Franklin, businessman and father of historian John Hope Franklin, led the charge and filed a suit against the City of Tulsa before the Oklahoma Supreme Court and won, allowing Greenwood to rebuild.

Dozens of Black-owned businesses were rebuilt in Greenwood within a year of the riot, and hundreds more followed over the next three decades. *The Oklahoma Eagle* newspaper founded in 1922, replacing the community's former Black newspaper, *The Tulsa Star* that was destroyed by the riot. *The Oklahoma Eagle*, founded directly after the massacre, reported on African American community, as well as all facets of the massacre, since white newspapers refused to acknowledge the incident. In 1925, in a display of courage, the National Negro Business League held its 26th annual convention in Greenwood. By the 1950s, Greenwood was a thriving Black community despite racial segregation and inequality. Greenwood's mid-century renaissance was a rare occurrence as employment opportunities and fair treatment outside of the Greenwood remained limited. The Tulsa NAACP chapter, along with other activist groups, was formed to fight inequality and racism in wider Tulsa. Despite advances of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, redlining and urban renewal projects dwindled the former Greenwood improvements leaving the area and its residents impoverished and highly segregated.

After suffering decades of aftereffects from the massacre, Tulsa's African American community demanded justice and reparations from the state of Oklahoma and the U.S. government. In 1997, African American state lawmakers, Representative Don Ross and Senator Maxine Horner, co-sponsored an Oklahoma House Bill to create the Tulsa Race Riot Commission. The Commission was tasked with finding survivors and recording their testimony, gaining accurate accounts of property losses and values, and then make recommendations for reparations. In addition, they worked with forensic anthropologists and archeologists tasked with locating mass graves of massacre victims. In 2001, the committee concluded that each survivor should receive $200,000 and up to $100,000 in property claims. Unfortunately, these recommendations were not passed leaving survivors and descendants with little prospects for restitution.

In 2003, over 200 Tulsa massacre survivors filed a suit against the state of Oklahoma in the case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al*. Survivors and their descendants served as plaintiffs and recounted their experiences during and after the massacre. The legal team was led by esteemed lawyer and educator Charles Ogletree and celebrity lawyer Johnnie Cochran. The suit demanded restitution for the damages and injuries done by the state of Oklahoma and the city of Tulsa. The main argument declared violations of the 14th Amendment of the U. S. Constitution including "deprivation of life and liberty [and property] and the privileges and immunities of United States citizenship". In addition, plaintiffs wanted to establish a scholarship fund to ensure future generations learn the history of the massacre for years to come. The judge ruled against the survivors, claiming that the statute of limitations had passed. In 2005, the lawyers tried yet again for justice by bringing the case to the U. S. Supreme Court, but the court declined to hear the appeal. A few survivors were given the opportunity to speak at a briefing in front of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and other leaders on Capitol Hill, the same year with no action taken.

Over the years, Tulsa cultural institutions and organizations were developed to preserve the legacy of the African American community in Greenwood, Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma. The Greenwood Cultural Center and Mabel B. Little House have showcased the heritage of the community since the 1990s. In 2008, lawyer and filmmaker, Reginald Turner founded The Tulsa Project, Inc., a non-profit group committed to raising funds and awareness on behalf of massacre survivors and their descendants. The same year, Turner filmed interviews of massacre survivors that were later compiled in a documentary entitled, "Before They Die!" The interviews took place from 2004 to 2007 and featured survivors' efforts for justice, government hearings, and legal proceedings as well as Tulsa Commission meetings. The film's sales go towards compensating survivors and serve as an educational tool exhibited in schools, churches, and civic organizations around the country. In 2010, the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park opened in Greenwood to help memorialize the massacre survivors and educate the community. In 2018, Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum called for the opening another investigation into the location of mass graves. In 2019, the Tulsa Race Massacre was added to the Oklahoma Education department curriculum and taught in classrooms.

As the massacre approaches its 100th anniversary in 2021, there are continuing advances for greater education about the massacre and the restitution of justice for the victims, survivors, and descendants of the one of the darkest times in American history.

Historical Timeline

1900	African Americans composed seven percent of Oklahoma territory and five percent of the Tulsa population.
1905	The Greenwood area in Tulsa was sold to African American Settlers.
1907	Oklahoma was made a state.
1917-1918	World War I veterans returned home seeking freedom and equality. In 1918, Tulsa hosted the 28th Annual Sons of the Confederacy Convention.
1919	"Red Summer," Over 30 race riots occurred over the course of 10 months in states across America.
1920	The wealth and prosperity of the Greenwood community, nicknamed "Black Wall Street," led to it to becoming one of the most financially prosperous African American communities in America.
1921: Tulsa Race Riot also known Tulsa Race Massacre takes place from May 30th to June 1st, in the Greenwood community of Tulsa.	May 30: Dick Rowland, an African American shoe shiner is accused of assaulting Sarah Page, a white elevator operator.
	May 31: Rowland was arrested and brought to the courthouse jail.

Afternoon: The *Tulsa Tribune* printed a story, "Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator" that Rowland raped Page and printed the editorial, "To Lynch Negro Tonight."

4:00 pm: Talk and rumors of lynching Rowland had spread. Police and Fire commissions J.M. Adkison phoned to warn Sheriff Willard McCullough of a possible incident.

7:30: A large white mob, numbering in the hundreds, gathered at the courthouse demanding Rowland be released to them.

9:30 pm: The mob had grown to two thousand. Members of the Greenwood community, many World War I veterans, set up defenses at the courthouse in order to protect Rowland from any impending violence from the mob.

10:00 pm: A fight broke out and a gun was fired. The mob began attacking and shooting all African Americans.

June 1

12:00-1:30 am: Gunfire occurred between the white and African American commercial businesses across Fisco yards.

1:00-4:00 am: Over 35 blocks were destroyed, including 1200 homes, and an estimated 300 African Americans were murdered. However, the exact number is unknown.

9:00 am: The Oklahoma National Guard arrived.

11:30 am: Government declared martial law, by this point most of the fighting had already stopped. The final altercation occurred at Noon when the mob fired on African Americans near the Santa Fe railroad tracks. The National guard gathered and arrested nearly all the Greenwood residents, over 6000, detaining them in the Convention Center, sports arenas, and fairgrounds.

6:00 pm: All businesses were ordered to close, and a curfew was put into effect beginning at 7:00.

June 3: Martial law ended. African Americans were required to carry "green cards" to leave the detention centers until July.

June 8-20: Governor James B. A. Robertson ordered an inquiry of events by a Grand Jury examining the role of the police and sheriff departments. The all-white jury indicted over 85 people, the majority African American, for rioting and illegally carrying weapons. Five city police officers, including the Tulsa Chief of Police, John Gustafson, were also indicted and later fired.

June 8-July 30: 1400 lawsuits were filed by African Americans for damaged commercial and/or personal property. The insurance companies invoked a "riot clause" that dismissed almost all the claims. Rowland was released and was not charged for any crime.

1922

Mary E. Jones Parrish was hired by the Inter-Racial Commission to write an account of the Race Riot. She was a teacher and journalist living with her daughter in Tulsa at the time of the massacre. Parrish interviewed survivors of the riot, collecting oral histories, photographs and a listing of property loses, publishing her findings in *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*. This was the first book published about

	the race riot. A large reconstruction effort began in Greenwood, and 80 businesses opened.
1925	National Negro Business League holds national convention in Tulsa, celebrating the rebuilding of Greenwood.
1931	Buck Colbert Franklin writes an unpublished memoir of the massacre entitled: The Tulsa Riot and Three of its Victims. It was later published by his son, John Hope Franklin and grandson, John W. Franklin in 1997.
1946	The first general history of the riot was published by Loren L. Gill, from the University of Tulsa. Although conducting many oral histories and research, some of his conclusions were later found to be incorrect.
1975	*The Tulsa Race War of 1921* by Rudia M. Halliburton, Jr. was published. Halliburton was a professor at Northeastern State University and his work featured a collection of photographs, many from his students, of the riot.
1997	The Tulsa Race Riot Commission is established to study the riot and recommended reparations for survivors and their descendants. The city didn't comply.
1998	The Commission recommends archeological search for mass graves. This was approved in February 1999. A potential mass grave was found in Oaklawn Cemetery.
2003	Court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al*, was filed by over 200 survivors of the massacre. The suit was denied because the statute of limitations had passed.
2005	The survivors and lawyers attempted to repeal the decision in the Supreme Court, but the Court decided not to accept a case.
2010	John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park opened in Greenwood to help memorialize and educate the community about the race massacre.

Scope and Contents

The Guide to 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Oral History Collection documents the survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre as well as their journey to acknowledgment, justice, and restitution. This digital collection is an edited version of a larger collection created by Reginald Turner, Executive Director and Founder of The Tulsa Project, Inc. The collection consists of interview videos of individual survivors, their descendants, riot witnesses, historians, community supporters as well as the legal proceedings for U.S. government acknowledgement of the massacre and its subsequent devastation. This collection serves to bear witness to one of the most infamous episodes of American history, allowing those who lived through it to convey their experiences directly in their own words.

Bibliography

"Before They Die!" (accessed December 2020). https://beforetheydie.org/.

Brophy, Alfred L. (2002). *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation*. Oxford University Press: New York, New York.

Brown, DeNeen L. "Tulsa mayor reopens investigation into possible mass graves from 1921 race massacre." *The Washington Post*. October 3, 2018. (accessed April 2021). https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/tulsa-mayor-reopens-investigation-into-possible-mass-graves-from-1921-race-massacre/2018/10/02/df713c96-c68f-11e8-b2b5-79270f9cce17_story.html.

Brown, DeNeen L. "'They was killing black people' In Tulsa, one of the worst episodes of racial violence in U.S. history still haunts the city with unresolved questions, even as 'Black Wall Street' gentrifies." *The Washington Post*. September 28, 2018. (accessed April 2021). https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2018/09/28/feature/they-was-killing-black-people/?utm_term=.23cd2ff8f97c&itid=lk_inline_manual_3.

Casteel, Chris, and Jay Marks. "Race-riot recourse blocked Supreme Court refuses appeal after decisions." *The Oklahoman*. May 17, 2005. (accessed April 2021). https://www.oklahoman.com/article/2896719/race-riot-recourse-blocked-br-supreme-court-refuses-appeal-after-decisions.

Cohn, Tony. "Confronting the Past." *Sidedoor*, podcast from the Smithsonian. (accessed December 2020). https://www.si.edu/sites/default/files/sidedoor/ep3_confronting_the_past_transcript_final.pdf.

"Curriculum Resources - Meet the Survivors." *John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation*. (accessed April 2021). https://www.jhfcenter.org/1921-race-massacre-survivors.

Ellsworth, Scott. (1982). *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Fenwick, Ben. "Tulsa's Racist Massacre Was Buried, but Digging Has Begun." *New York Times*. 14 July 2020, p. A17. (accessed December 2020).

Gates, Eddie Faye. (2003). *Riot on Greenwood: The Total Destruction of Black Wall Street*. Eakin Press: Fort Worth, Texas.

Gates, Eddie Faye. "The Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921." *Harvard Blackletter Law Journal*. Vol. 20, 2004. (accessed April 2021). https://harvardblackletter.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/10/20-JREJ-83.pdf.

Gates, Eddie Faye. (1997). *They Came Searching: Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa*. Eakin Press: Forth Worth, Texas.

Gara, Antoine. "The Bezos of Black Wall Street." *Forbes Magazine*. (accessed April 2021). https://www.forbes.com/sites/antoinegara/2020/06/18/the-bezos-of-black-wall-street-tulsa-race-riots-1921/?sh=edee943f3217.

Genzlinger, Neil. "Olivia Hooker, 103, Dies; Witness to an Ugly Moment in History." *The New York Times*. November 23, 2018. (accessed April 2021). https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/23/obituaries/olivia-hooker-dead.html#:~:text=Olivia%20Hooker%2C%20who%20after%20surviving,She%20was%20103.

Harvey, Renne. "Eddie Faye Gates Tulsa Race Massacre Collection." *Gilcrease Museum*. May 5, 2021. (accessed May 2021). https://collections.gilcrease.org/articles/eddie-faye-gates-biography.

Heath, Dreisen. "The Case for Reparations in Tulsa, Oklahoma: A Human Rights Argument." May 29, 2020. *Human Rights Watch*. (accessed April 2020). https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/11/tulsa-reparations0520_web.pdf.

Henderson, G., & Johnson, M. L. "Black wall street." *Emerge*, 11, 66-72. February 2000. (accessed December 2020).

Hirsch, James. (2002). *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy*. Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston and New York.

Jackson-Fossett, Cora. "Robert D. Holloway, Race Riot Survivor, Passes On." *LA Sentinel*. May 10, 2010. (accessed April 2021). https://lasentinel.net/robert-d-holloway-race-riot-survivor-passes-on.html.

Johnson, Hannibal B. (1998). *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District*. Eakin Press: Forth Worth, Texas.

Keyes, Allison. "A Long-Lost Manuscript Contains a Searing Eyewitness Account of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921". *Smithsonian Magazine*. May 27, 2016. (accessed December 2020). https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/long-lost-manuscript-contains-searing-eyewitness-account-tulsa-race-massacre-1921-180959251/?no-ist.

Krehbiel, Randy. "Eldoris McCondichie 1911-2010; Riot Survivor was matter of fact." *Tulsa World*. September 15, 2010. (accessed April 2021). https://tulsaworld.com/news/government/riot-survivor-was-matter-of-fact/article_1ed2ff77-d59e-5682-9bf6-2b4e69e58b90.html.

Madigan, Tim. (2003). *The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Thomas Dunne Books: New York, New York.

Nelson, Melissa. "Race riot investigation opens old wounds 78 years after brutal conflict investigators sift through ashes." *The Oklahoman*. November 21, 1999. (accessed April 2021). https://www.oklahoman.com/article/2675982/race-riot-investigation-opens-old-wounds-78-years-after-brutal-conflict-investigators-sift-through-ashes.

Oklahoma Commission to Study the Race Riot of 1921 (2001). *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

"Otis Clark; Otis Clark, who has died aged 109, survived Tulsa's race riots to become butler to Joan Crawford; in later life became the world's oldest travelling evangelist." *Telegraph Online*. June 19 2012. (accessed April 2021).

"Rochester Women 'The memories of what happened to us then will never go away'. *University of Rochester*. February 28, 2020. (accessed April 2021). https://www.rochester.edu/newscenter/olivia-hooker-62-phd-witness-activist-servicewoman-scholar-362802/.

Rutherford, Dan. "The Glory of Greenwood." *Tulsa World*. March 10, 1997. (accessed April 2021). https://tulsaworld.com/archive/the-glory-of-greenwood/article_75801376-0fc8-5525-aeb3-3eb1d6bc1256.html.

"Tulsa race massacre of 1921." *Britannica Academic*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Sept. 30 2020. (accessed December 2020). https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Tulsa-race-massacre-of-1921/605834.

"Tulsa Race Riot survivor dies at 94 "Mama Knight" will be honored by Tulsa leaders at Tuesday services." *Tulsa World*. July 14, 2009. (accessed April 2021). https://tulsaworld.com/obituaries/tulsa-race-riot-survivor-dies-at-94/article_81df6bc6-7e8c-5329-85e7-8b7a2bfd88cd.html

"United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma." February 28, 2003. (accessed April 2021). https://tulsareparations.z19.web.core.windows.net/suit.htm.

Wall, Barbra Mann. "The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot and the 'Angels of Mercy.'" *Nurses on the Front Line: When Disaster Strikes, 1878-2010*. New York: Springer Pub. Co.: 2011.

"Wess Young, Tulsa Race Riot survivor, community activist, dies at 97." *Tulsa World*. October 3, 2014. (accessed April 2021). https://tulsaworld.com/obituaries/localobituaries/wess-young-tulsa-race-riot-survivor-community-activist-dies-at-97/article_8fccf667-df0f-5a3c-bcf9-f2527af37010.html.

Yarrow, Andrew L. "John hope franklin, scholar of African American history, is dead at 94." *New York Times*. Mar 26, 2009. (accessed April 2021).

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Activism

American South
American West
Hate crimes
Identity
Justice
Law
Race discrimination
Race relations
Race riots
Tulsa Race Massacre, Tulsa, Okla., 1921
Violence

Types of Materials:

Oral history

Names:

Arnold, Juanita Burnett, (1909-2005)
Bates, J. B., 1916-2008
Campbell-Webster, Beatrice
Clark, Otis Granville, (1903-2012)
Eddy, Clyde, (1911-2008)
Ellsworth, Scott
Franklin, Archie Jackson, (1915-2006)
Franklin, Jimmie Lilly, (1915-2009)
Franklin, John Hope
Gates, Eddie Faye
Holloway, Robert, (1918-2010)
Hooker, Olivia J., Dr., (1915-2018)
Jackson, Eunice Cloman, (1903-2004)
Knight, Thelma Thurman, (1915-2009)
McCondichie, Eldoris Mae Ector, (1911-2010)
O'Brien, William [Bill]
Ogletree, Charles, Jr.
Rogers, Jewel Smitherman, (1918-2010)
Rogers, John Washington, Jr.
Young, Wess Hubert, (1917-2014)

Places:

Tulsa (Oklahoma)

Container Listing

Series 1: Eldoris McCondichie, 2004

Scope and Contents: Eldoris McCondichie was born September 8, 1911 in Tyler, Texas. The family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma and her family lived in the Greenwood district. During the massacre they hid in the chicken coop before attempting to flee to the nearby town of Pawhuska. She returned to Tulsa and remained, working as a chef, and running her own catering business. She served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. McCondichie died September 10, 2010 in Tulsa.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 2: Dr. Olivia Hooker, 2004-2007

Scope and Contents: Dr. Olivia Hooker was born on February 12, 1915 in Muskogee, Oklahoma in the Greenwood District of Tulsa. During the race massacre, the family's clothing store was destroyed. She and her four siblings hid under their dining room table while their possessions were demolished. The family left Tulsa and moved to Columbus, Ohio. While at Ohio State University, Hooker tried to join the Navy multiple times but was denied. She was eventually recruited by the Coast Guard becoming the first African American woman to serve actively in the Coast Guard. Hooker transitioned to a career in education, earning a teaching and master's degree in psychological services. She worked with prisoners with disabilities and children with Down syndrome. She taught at Fordham University for over twenty years. Hooker served as a plaintiff, along with her siblings Naomi Hooker Chamberlain and Samuel L. Hooker, in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. She died in White Plains, New York in 2018.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 3: Jimmie Lilly Franklin, 2004

Scope and Contents: Jimmie Lilly Franklin was born June 12, 1915. During the race massacre, Franklin and her family lived in the Greenwood District of Tulsa. Their family home was destroyed while they were still inside. Franklin and her two sisters, Muriel Mignon Lilly and Hattie Lilly Dunn served as plaintiffs in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. Franklin currently lives in Los Angeles, California.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 4: Otis Granville Clark, 2004-2007

Scope and Contents: Otis Granville Clark was born February 13, 1903 in Guthrie, Oklahoma. At the time of the race massacre, Clark and his family lived in the Greenwood District of Tulsa. According to his testimony at the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al*. in 2003, he was caught in the middle of a gun battle. His friend was shot standing next to him and they both fled for their lives. Clark's stepfather and their family dog disappeared during the riot and were never found. The family home and property were destroyed by fire. Clark escaped on a railroad box car to Milwaukee and later moved to Los Angeles, California. He worked in domestic service for many actors including Clark Gable, Charlie Chaplin, and as a butler for Joan Crawford. After being jailed during prohibition, Clark was ordained as a preacher and later a bishop traveling the world as a missionary. Clark died May 22, 2012 at 109 years old.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 5: Juanita Burnett Arnold, 2004

Scope and Contents: Juanita Burnett Arnold was born July 27, 1909 in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the Greenwood District. During the Race Massacre, the family fled for their lives. She served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. Arnold died March 2, 2005 in Tulsa.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 6: Eunice Cloman Jackson; undated

Scope and Contents: Eunice Cloman Jackson was born August 17, 1903 in Lake Village, Arkansas. Jackson and her family moved to the Greenwood District of Tulsa in 1917. During the massacre, they were captured by the police and detained in the Convention Center. They were not released until Jackson's mother's white employer "claimed" the family. Jackson's stepfather was part of a crew of gravediggers that buried bodies in Oaklawn cemetery. They returned to discover their home was not destroyed, as they lived on a street with mostly white neighbors. Eunice married Samuel M. Jackson in 1923 and they became active members rebuilding the Greenwood District. Although they separated, they remained business partners co-owning Jackson Funeral Home later Jack's Memory Chapel. The business is still open today. Eunice Jackson served as a plaintiff in the court case*Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. Jackson died June 15, 2003 in Tulsa.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 7: Wess Young, 2007; undated

Scope and Contents: Wess Young was born February 20, 1917 in Madill, Oklahoma. At the time of the massacre, Young and his family lived in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Young was captured by the National Guard and unlawfully detained at the Booker T. Washington High School. The family's home was destroyed, and they were forced to live in camps on the fairgrounds for months. He was drafted and served in the army during World War II. Young returned to Tulsa to work as a bellhop, cook, and later a machinist. He served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. Young died September 30, 2014 in Dallas, Texas.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 8: J.B. Bates, 2004

Scope and Contents: J.B. Bates was born on June 13, 1916 in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the Greenwood District. After the Race Massacre, Bate's father and uncles were taken to a detention center. Bates' mother took J.B. and his sister and hid in the chicken house. Bates' grandfather was murdered during the riot. Their possessions were destroyed but his house remained standing. They lived with relatives until they were able to return two-weeks later. Bates would later become a Tulsa Public School custodian. He served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. Bates died in 2008 in Tulsa.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 9: Beatrice Campbell-Webster, 2004

Scope and Contents: Beatrice Campbell-Webster was born March 5, 1914. She lived in the Greenwood District of Tulsa during the massacre and her family home was destroyed. She and her family escaped to the nearby town of Alsuma where they were captured by the National Guard and unlawfully detained. The family was separated into different detention centers; the men taken to the Ball Park and the women to the Convention Hall. She left to live with family in Texas and returned to Tulsa when their father rebuilt their home on the same property. Campbell-Webster served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. She currently lives in Los Angeles, California.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 10: Clyde Eddy, undated

Scope and Contents: Clyde Eddy was born January 1, 1911 in Tulsa, Oklahoma and lived there all his life. During the Massacre, Eddy was ten years old and witnessed the mass burial of victims at the Oaklawn Cemetery. Eddy was white witness to the massacre and not a victim. He was a mechanical engineer and co-owned multiple businesses. He died May 28, 2008.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 11: Jewel Smitherman Rogers, undated

Scope and Contents: Jewel Smitherman Rogers was born June 12, 1917 in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the Greenwood District. During the Race Massacre, the family home was burned to the ground. Rogers was self-employed working as a Tax Preparer. She served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. She died on March 7, 2010 in Perris, California.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 12: Thelma Knight, undated

Scope and Contents: Thelma Knight was born May 30, 1915 in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the Greenwood District. During the Race massacre, the family was forced to flee their home and live in Newblock Park in a tent. When they returned, their family home was destroyed. Knight was the first African American elevator attendant at Renberg's department store in Tulsa. Knight served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. She died in July 2009 in Dallas, Texas.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 13: Robert Holloway, undated

Scope and Contents: Robert D. Holloway II was born in 1918 in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the Greenwood District. During the Race Massacre, their family home and business was destroyed. His grandfather saved all the children from the mob by hiding them in bushes and fleeing the city after dark. Holloway later joined the army serving as a corporal in Hawaii and Japan during World War II. He moved first to New York, New York then Pasadena, California working as a salesman. In 2010, Holloway was given a commendation by the city of Pasadena acknowledging his contributions, accomplishments and being a "living witness to the Tulsa, Oklahoma Race Riots." He died April 13, 2010 in Los Angeles, California.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 14: Series 14: Archie Franklin, undated

Scope and Contents: Archie Jackson Franklin was born November 11, 1915. At the time of the massacre, Franklin lived in the Greenwood District in Tulsa. His family home was destroyed in the fire. Franklin served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. He died June 17, 2006 in California.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 15: John Hope Franklin, 2007; undated

Scope and Contents: John Hope Franklin was born January 2, 1915 in Rentiesville, Oklahoma. Franklin's father, Buck Colbert (B.C.) Franklin was a renowned attorney in the Greenwood District. During the race massacre, his family home and office were destroyed by fire and Franklin worked out of a tent. B.C. was also held in a detention center after the massacre ended. B.C. was instrumental in helping Greenwood to rebuild, bringing a court case against the city of Tulsa's rezoning laws. John Hope Franklin earned his master's and PhD. at Harvard University. Franklin was a historian, educator, and author. He taught at multiple universities and colleges including Howard University, Brooklyn College, Duke University, and internationally at Cambridge University. Franklin published over ten books on African American history from slavery through the twenty-first century. Franklin was dedicated to reshaping America's racial identity through history and the lasting effects of slavery. He served as a plaintiff in the court case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.* in 2003. He is well known for helping to write the legal brief used in the Supreme Court Case, Brown v. Board of Education. Franklin also participated in the march from Selma with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1995, President Bill Clinton awarded Franklin with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Franklin was the first African American president of the American Historical Association. He was the founding chairman of the Scholarly Advisory Committee for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Franklin died March 25, 2009 in Durham, North Carolina.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 16: Bill O'Brien, undated

Scope and Contents: William [Bill] O'Brien is a local historian in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He assisted the Tulsa Race Riot Commission looking for mass grave sites from the Tulsa Race Massacre. His collection of work, *William M. O'Brien Research Papers, 1921-2000*, is held in The University of Tulsa Department of Special Collections and University Archives. In addition, he published, *Who Speaks for Us? The Responsible Citizens of Tulsa in 1921*.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 17: John Washington Rogers, Jr., undated

Scope and Contents: John Washington Rogers, Jr. was born March 31, 1958. He is the great grandson of J.N. Stratford, owner of the Stratford Hotel in the Greenwood District of Tulsa. Stratford, a lawyer as well, was one of the chief architects of the Greenwood District. The hotel, the largest black-owned in America, was destroyed during the massacre. Rogers and his family fled to Kansas and then Chicago as the police blamed him as an agitator in the riot. Rogers mother, Jewel Lafontant was the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Chicago Law School and the first to argue in front of the Supreme Court. Roger's father, John Rogers Sr. was a Tuskegee airman during World War II. He went on to become a judge in Cook County. A family of firsts, Rogers formed and is the CEO of Ariel Capital Management, the first African American owned mutual fund firm in America. Rogers is devoted to sharing and teaching the history of the Tulsa Race Massacre. He was one of the principal financiers of the *Before They Die!* Documentary that includes the oral histories in this collection.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 18: Eddie Faye Gates, 2004

Scope and Contents: Eddie Faye Gates, born February 5, 1934, is a researcher who conducted oral history interviews with survivors of the Tulsa massacre. Gates was born in Preston, Oklahoma to a family of sharecroppers working with her family in the fields picking cotton. She graduated from Dunbar High School in 1951 and earned a scholarship to attend the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama but left before graduating. She returned to education earning her bachelor's degree from the University of North Dakota. She earned her master's degree in history from the University of Tulsa. She began teaching social studies in the Tulsa Public Schools and taught for 22 years. In 1998, Gates was appointed to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission. As chair of the Survivors Committee she made it her mission to preserve the history and stories of African Americans during the race riot, interviewing over 200 known black survivors, over 300 descendants of deceased riot victims, and about 100 white eyewitnesses to the riot. She donated her collection of research to the Gilcrease Museum with over 100 oral histories and 600 photographs. She published two works on Tulsa; *They Came Searching: How Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa* in 1997 and *Riot On Greenwood: The Total Destruction of Black Wall Street* in 2020. She also published, *Miz Lucy's Cookies and Other Links in My Black Family Support System: An Autobiography* in 1996.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 19: Dr. Scott Ellsworth, undated

Scope and Contents: Dr. Scott Ellsworth was born in March 1954. Ellsworth is an author, historian, and professor at the University of Michigan. Ellsworth teaches African American history, southern literature, and crime and justice in the United States today. He has also worked at the Smithsonian Institution as a historian. Ellsworth earned his PhD. at Duke University in 1982. He was a member of the Duke Oral History Program and in 1992 was the author of *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, the first inclusive history of the Tulsa Race Massacre. Ellsworth served as one of the lead historians for the Tulsa Race Riot Commission and remains involved in the legal battles for reparations for survivors and finding unmarked graves of the massacre victims.

Return to Table of Contents

Series 20: Survivors at the Supreme Court, 2005

Scope and Contents: In 2005, survivors of the Tulsa Race Massacre filed an appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The case, *Alexander, et al., v. Oklahoma, et al.*, was lost, stating that the statute of limitations had passed, and it was too late to seek restitution for damages. Led by attorney Charles Ogletree, survivors Otis Clark, Genevieve Tillman Jackson, Thelma Knight, Wess Young, and Robert Holloway offered testimony detailing their experiences during the massacre. The Supreme court denied the appeal and would not hear the case.

Return to Table of Contents