



NAACP
Pennsylvania
STATE CONFERENCE

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The Tulsa Massacre – One Hundred Years Later

In the early 20th century, the district of Tulsa, Oklahoma known as Greenwood, was where one of the most prominent concentrations of African American businesses in the United States existed. Because of its prominence and economic prosperity, it was called, *Black Wall Street*. Greenwood exemplified how economic stability and growth creates wealth by being one of the most affluent Black communities in the country. All types of commercial businesses that are relevant to any community economically supported and sustained these Black families who were residents of the Greenwood District. However, on the morning of May 30, 1921, Dick Rowland, a young Black man riding on the elevator in the Drexel Building with a white woman named Sarah Page would change the destiny of Greenwood. The details of what was said to have happened varies, but the accusations that circulated in the white community was that Dick Rowland assaulted Sarah Page. Although this is not what was believed to have actually happened, it was the hatred that had already been brewing that led to the explosive rage of an alleged incident that sparked the actions of whites to intentionally ignite a massive race massacre which burned buildings, murdered more than 300 hundred people (many of whom were business owners), injured far more and ultimately desecrated the Greenwood District. Unfortunately, Jim Crow, jealousy, white supremacy all contributed to the annihilation on May 31 and June 1, 1921.

One hundred years later, Tulsa City Council unanimously voted on a resolution to finally begin the process of recognizing the findings of the "1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report;" while the Governor of Oklahoma has just recently signed off on a new bill, which "restricts public-school teachers and employees from using lessons that make an individual "feel discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex."

"In April, the U.S. Department of Education outlined its proposed priorities for grants for American history and civics education, with applicants asked in part to indicate how they would take into account "systemic marginalization, biases, inequities, and discriminatory policy and practice in American history."

The NAACP believes that more must be done to ensure educators are taught on all aspects of history so that appropriate information on African American history is also integrated into course curriculums.

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest nonpartisan civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities. The Pennsylvania State Conference was established in 1934 and pursues the same mission throughout the Commonwealth.