



Darius Kirk looks at a mural depicting the Tulsa Race Massacre in the historic Greenwood neighborhood ahead of centennial commemorations of the massacre in Tulsa, Okla. The horror and violence visited upon Tulsa's Black community in 1921 didn't become part of the American story. Instead, it was pushed down, unremembered and untaught until efforts decades later started bringing it into the light. (AP Photo/John Locher, File)^[1]

Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial

This weekend marks **100 years** since the **Tulsa Race Massacre**. The events of the massacre have been largely **omitted** from local, state and national histories over the last century, but thanks to the accounts of brave survivors, we know about the terror that unfolded between **May 31 and June 1, 1921**, when a white mob attacked residents, homes and businesses in the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma, known as the '**Black Wall Street**'^[2].

Greenwood, one of the most affluent black communities in the country, was founded in 1906 on Indian Territory where development began, just prior to Oklahoma becoming a state. As time went on Black community leaders, businessmen, entrepreneurs, educators, doctors and lawyers worked toward making Greenwood a thriving district.



A greenwood district street. Photo credit: Smithsonian Institution

The massacre began Memorial Day weekend after a young Black man, **Dick Rowland**, was falsely accused of assaulting a young white woman, **Sarah Page** in an elevator at the Drexel Building. Rowland was subsequently arrested and it was reported that he would be **lynched**. A group of 75 Black men subsequently gathered near the jail, to prevent the lynching.

The sheriff persuaded the group to leave the jail, assuring them that he had the situation under control^[3]. But, as they left, complying with the sheriff's request, a member of the mob of White men allegedly attempted to disarm one of the Black men. A shot was fired, and then, according to the reports of the sheriff, "**all hell broke loose.**"

White rioters, many of them **deputized** and given weapons by **city officials**, rampaged through the Black neighborhood that night and morning **killing** men and **burning** and **looting** stores and homes. On **June 1**, after the **National Guard** imposed **martial law**, the massacre ended.



Impact of the Greenwood district following the race massacre. Photo credit: Oklahoma Historical Society.

About **10,000** Black people were left **homeless**, and property damage amounted to more than **\$1.5 million** in real estate and **\$750,000** in personal property (equivalent to **\$32.65 million** now), while it is believed that as many as **300 died** and **thousands** were injured.

It is one of the worst known incidents of **racial violence** in **American history**.

On the 100 year anniversary, a “**Remember and Rise**” concert organized by the **Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission** was abruptly **canceled** due to political tensions, largely revolving around the issue of **reparations** for the violence^[4].

1) <https://apnews.com/article/tulsa-racial-injustice-race-and-ethnicity-fc9c5f49f5be1d14a5a6f8321b210239/gallery/cf5ad3bf0e80471ebd6a32c0252dcdb6>

2) https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/tulsa-race-massacre#section_1

3) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsa_race_massacre

4) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/05/29/tulsa-race-massacre-centennial-reparations-tensions/>



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Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn represents the 42nd Assembly District in Brooklyn covering Ditmas Park, Flatbush, East Flatbush and Midwood. She is currently the **Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs)**, and serves on the following committees: **Housing, Government Operations, Education, Banks, Health, and Higher Education**. She is also a member of the **Task Force on Women's Issues** and sits on **Governor Cuomo's Domestic Violence Advisory Council** and **Mayor De Blasio's MWBE Task Force**.