

Riots remain today a matter unresolved in our national conscience. More than 80 years after the occurrence of this horrible event, the time has come to bring closure. A March 13th article in the New York Daily News sheds light on the Tulsa Race Riots and the current effort underway to obtain justice for the victims.

Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921 was something of an African American success story. The city's Black community, known as Greenwood, had developed into a prosperous area of shops, hotels, gaming halls and restaurants that was known throughout the Southwest. So significant was its reputation, that the famous Black leader Booker T. Washington would dub Greenwood "the Black Wall Street."

However, the Black community's prosperity was a source of resentment among many of city's white residents. Racial tension in the city was palpable. This and other factors would eventually manifest themselves, with deadly consequences.

The Tulsa Race Riots began May 31, 1921, when police arrested a black youth for allegedly assaulting a white woman, a charge later dismissed. A crowd of whites gathered outside the courthouse where the youth was being held, calling for his lynching.

According to a 2001 report commissioned by the State of Oklahoma, Black citizens from the Greenwood neighborhood armed themselves and went to the courthouse to defend the young man. After an initial period of confusion, a shot was fired and a gunfight ensued.

A white mob then marched to the Greenwood area of the city and began to destroy the 40-block neighborhood. Left unobstructed by police and Oklahoma National Guard troops, the white mob burned nearly all of Greenwood to the ground, leaving nearly 9,000 people homeless. A total of 1,256 homes were destroyed, along with "virtually every other structure, including churches, businesses, schools, even a hospital and a library.

The mob also killed many Black citizens in the process. Officially, the death count for the Riots had been put at 38 people, but the 2001 Oklahoma State report put the figure closer to 300 individuals.

In the immediate aftermath of the destruction, more than 100 Greenwood residents unsuccessfully filed lawsuits attempting to recover damages. A grand jury convened to determine the cause of the riot and actually faulted the city's African-American residents. Subsequently, the issue would seemingly disappear for nearly eighty years.

However, after the publication of the 2001 Oklahoma state report, a group of 150 Riot survivors and their descendants, represented by Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree, sued the state of Oklahoma, the city of Tulsa, the city's police department and its police chief.

Lower courts dismissed the case on the grounds that a two-year statute of limitations on the 1921 incident had long since passed. Prof. Ogletree has argued that the statute of limitations should not have started until 2001, when the state commission appointed to investigate the riots completed its report, and revealed the culpability of state and local government.

In March 2004, U.S. District Court Judge James O. Ellison ruled that the statute-of-limitations should extend to a time when the defendants could receive a fair hearing in court, but he also argued that such an opportunity was present as early as the 1960s.

The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld that ruling in September 2004, but argued that the case should have been brought during 1980s, when a book about the Riots was published—thus giving the plaintiffs the evidence they needed in bringing the case.

Prof. Ogletree has argued that not all the victims knew about the book, and that the government still had not acknowledged its culpability until the state commission report in 2001. Furthermore, until the state commission's report, the official stance of the State of Oklahoma was that the Black citizens of Tulsa were responsible for the Riots.

As a result of the recent decision against the plaintiffs by the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, Prof. Ogletree and his legal team are now seeking to have the case brought before the United States Supreme Court. The Court received a petition brief from Prof. Ogletree and his team on March 9th, and a decision is pending.

Millions of children around our nation recite a daily pledge, an oath of allegiance to a nation which promises "justice for all." Unfortunately, our country has not always exhibited the national virtues described in that pledge. The victims of the Tulsa Race Riots have undoubtedly been denied justice, and now a legal technicality threatens to ensure that they will never obtain it. Let us not allow this to happen—for the sake of the Tulsa Race Riot victims, and for the sake of our nation.

TIME TO FIX RIOT'S WRONGS

By E.R. Shipp

[From the Daily News, Mar. 13, 2005]

To white folks back in the day, it was Niggertown. To black folks during that same time, it was The Black Wall Street. It was the Greenwood section of Tulsa, Okla. And the gap in perception is the frame of the issue that might be decided ultimately by the U.S. Supreme Court: reparations.

Reparations make sense when one can demonstrate that one has suffered a loss. That is not the case for most black folk who, when they hear politicians and college professors say "reparations," are hoping that the government will become their Lotto ticket to wealth.

If the high court agrees to take on the Tulsa case, laid out in a petition led last week by lawyers—led by Harvard's Charles Ogletree—the justices might see that Tulsa is a whole different matter.

The 1921 Tulsa race riot began when police arrested a black youth for allegedly assaulting a white woman, a charge later dismissed. A crowd of whites gathered outside the courthouse where the youth was jailed, and there was a rumor that he would be lynched.

According to the state's 2001 report, men from Greenwood armed themselves and went to the courthouse to defend the youth. A gunfight erupted, and the outnumbered blacks retreated to Greenwood. A white mob followed them and burned the neighborhood.

A "white mob ransacked Greenwood, shooting indiscriminately at African-Americans and burning almost every building in the community. Not only did the state and city fail to stop the destruction, but state and local officials participated in the violence and deputized and armed members of the white mob," states the petition, filed on behalf of the riot's survivors and their descendants.

From the get-go, Oklahomans set roadblocks to any kind of recompense for the hundreds of homeowners and businesses devastated during the riot. And then, after a state commission finally concluded in 2001—four years ago!—that more than attention

must be paid to what transpired, the courts said to these black folks: Sorry. Too late. You should have filed your claims years ago. Too bad. So sad.

So, justices of the highest court in the land, rise to the dignity of your titles and do justice in this case. Do justice by 102-year-old Otis Clarke, a Greenwood victim. Do more than pay lip service to the immorality of what transpired. Reparations in the form of money, not just penance, must be paid for this act of domestic terrorism.

The lower courts said it's too late. But the Supreme Court has the chance to do what's right, and the time for that is now.

HONORING THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MINEOLA ROTARY CLUB

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 17, 2005

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to commemorate two significant anniversaries of Rotary International. On February 23, 2005, Rotary International celebrated its 100th anniversary. From its humble roots in Chicago, Illinois, Rotary International has grown into a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders whose mission is to provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. Since 1943, Rotary International has distributed more than \$1.1 billion to combat polio, promote cultural exchanges, and encourage community service.

I also want to provide special recognition to an important member of this outstanding organization, the Rotary Club of Mineola, Texas, for their sixty-five years of service to Wood County. Throughout its sixty-five year history, the Mineola Rotary Club has achieved great successes in carrying out the mission of Rotary International.

In past years, the Mineola Rotary Club has raised money to provide scholarships to local students, sponsored a reading program at the local library for students trying to learn English, and planted trees throughout the county. In addition, the club is an active fundraiser for the local library, has sponsored programs to teach students Spanish, and has been active with the Meals on Wheels program that brings food to the elderly population in the area.

Through these actions, the Rotary Club of Mineola, Texas, has exemplified the values of service and charity that lie at the heart of American society. As the congressional representative of the members of this outstanding organization, it is my distinct pleasure to be able to honor them today on the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

HONORING BEVERLY HANSON

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 17, 2005

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the work of one of my constituents, Ms. Beverly Hanson of Oceanside.