

The Tulsa Race Massacre

A Curriculum Packet *for* Oklahoma High Schools

Co-sponsored by
The University of Oklahoma's
Tulsa Race Massacre Coordinating Committee
and
The OU School of Dance

Spring 2021

This program is funded, in part, by Oklahoma Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Norman Arts Council.



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Commemorating the Centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre

Note for Teachers: This packet is designed to give students who watch the dance performance on April 9, 2021 (described on page 3) an understanding of the context of the adaptation. **The excerpts from the book by Eddie Faye Gates on which the dance is based can be found in the second half of this packet.** A curriculum plan that places the race massacre in a broader historical context can be found on the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission website: www.tulsa2021.org/resources. The plan includes activities for students to help them to begin to make sense of 1921 on their own terms.

In 1921, Tulsa's Greenwood District – also known as “Black Wall Street” – was one of the most affluent Black communities in the United States. Yet during the evening of May 31 and the early-morning hours of June 1, 1921, Tulsa exploded. Enraged by rumors that a Black youth had sexually assaulted a white girl, a mob of several thousand white Tulsans orchestrated a violent attack on the Greenwood District.

All told, in approximately twelve hours of white mob violence, the thirty-five square blocks that constituted the district – more than a dozen churches, five hotels, thirty-one restaurants, four drugstores, eight doctors' offices, two dozen grocery stores, a public library, and more than a thousand homes – lay in ruin. It is estimated that as many as three hundred people, mostly Black, lost their lives in the attack on the Greenwood District. This event – one of the deadliest acts of anti-Black violence in U.S. history – is remembered as the Tulsa Race Massacre.

To commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the massacre, the University of Oklahoma is undertaking a yearlong educational initiative. The aim is to provide a critical space for the OU community to remember and reflect on the upcoming centennial as well as to engage the ongoing campus-wide conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion. To read more about the yearlong initiative happening across all three of OU's campuses – Norman, OKC, and Tulsa – visit <https://ou.edu/tulsa1921>.

The project is being coordinated by Professors Karlos Hill and Kalenda Eaton of the Clara Luper Department of African and African American Studies, along with Daniel Simon, assistant director and editor in chief of *World Literature Today*. Together, they are leading the OU Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Coordinating Committee, which serves as the project's central point of contact.



Above: *New Oklahoma History*, by Ebony Iman Dallas, focuses on police brutality and, more specifically, Terence Crutcher, whose car broke down in the middle of the street before he was killed by an officer of the Tulsa Police Department on September 16, 2016. Dallas's work is serving as the logo for OU's centennial commemorations.

I Dream of Greenwood

Choreographed by Marie Casimir & J'aime Griffith

Dramaturgy by Leslie Kraus

Co-sponsored by the OU School of Dance

I Dream of Greenwood is a dance inspired by the personal accounts of survivors of the Tulsa Massacre of 1921, as told to historian and activist Eddie Faye Gates and featured in her book *Riot on Greenwood* (2003). The dancers, along with the audience, will move through the dreamscapes of the children who inherited both the rich legacy of a thriving community and the trauma of one of the worst single acts of racial violence in American history. Through their eyes we hope to relive, remember, and restore.

The performance is connected to a curriculum tie-in that OU's Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Coordinating Committee has arranged with the Norman Public Schools for students in 10th grade English this year. The performance will be professionally filmed in advance and is scheduled to premiere on Zoom from **10-11am on Friday, April 9**, followed by a live talkback with the choreographers/dancers and recent U.S. poet laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner **Tracy K. Smith**. NPS students, librarians, and teachers will participate remotely, as will the audience in attendance at the race massacre centennial symposium being held at OU that day. For those classes that can't attend during 2nd period on the 9th, they will be able to watch the performance earlier that week and submit written questions for the talkback. Copies of *Riot on Greenwood* are available from Eakin Press (www.eakinpress.com).

The dance film will also be screened on a continuous loop that evening during the 2nd Friday Norman Art Walk on The Depot's outdoor screen, which will be set up near Main and Jones Streets.

About the Creative Team

Marie Casimir is a Haitian American performer, writer, producer, and lecturer of African and African diaspora dance in the Clara Luper African & African American Studies Department at the University of Oklahoma. She is the founder and director of Djaspora Productions, supporting and producing art that connects artists of color locally and globally. She is a co-founder and producer of the Instigation Festival, a dance and music festival in Chicago and New Orleans. A 2018 Ragdale Artists Fellow and recipient of a OneLove Nola Residency, she has served as an arts and culture consultant for the Consulate of Haiti in Chicago and associate director of Links Hall in Chicago. She choreographed *Women Like Us*, based on the work of Edwidge Danticat, for the 2018 Neustadt Festival at OU. That performance, and *ReBIRTH* by Rara Tou Limen, were co-sponsored by the OU School of Dance and the Oklahoma Arts Council, which receives support from the State of Oklahoma and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Leslie Kraus, assistant professor of dance (modern dance) at the University of Oklahoma, is a performer, choreographer, and educator based between NYC, Seattle, and Norman. From 2004 to 2013 Leslie was a principal dancer and soloist for the Kate Weare Company. She danced in over ten of Kate's creations and held the position of assistant director, touring, restaging, and teaching company repertoire across the country. In 2012 she joined the immersive theatre company Punchdrunk in their hit show *Sleep No More*, where she played the role of Lady Macbeth. In 2014 she traveled with Punchdrunk to London to join their show *The Drowned Man*, where she played the lead role of Woycek. Leslie holds an MFA in dance from the University of Washington, a BFA in dance and choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University, and is also a trained yoga teacher. She co-choreographed a dance for *WLT's* 2019 Neustadt Festival based on the poetry of Margarita Engle.

J'aime Griffith is currently a grad student at the University of Oklahoma studying modern dance. She is an alumna of Grambling State University, where she studied performing arts (dance concentration). After graduation, J'aime moved to New York City to study at the Ailey School and began her professional career with Samba/Salsa Entertainment, Awaken Dance Theatre, and Atmosphere. For the OU School of Dance, she choreographed and designed/constructed costumes for *Am I There Yet* (Young Choreographers Showcase, 2020) and performed *Ashes*, choreographed by Austin Hartel (Contemporary Dance Oklahoma, 2020). Her most recent freelance projects consist of choreographing and dancing *Alpha and Omega* (a dance film in collaboration with the OU Gospel Choir, creative media production students, and dance and nondance majors); choreographing, dancing, and designing costumes for *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around* and *Theme for Malcolm*; and teaching modern dance at Freedom Dance Studio in Oklahoma City.

Discussion Questions in Preparation for the Talkback

1. Several of the testimonies from *Riot on Greenwood* used as the basis for the choreography are narrated by survivors who lived through the Tulsa Race Massacre when they were between the ages of seven and nine years old. How did reading their eyewitness accounts make you feel?
2. Jimmie Lilly Franklin, who was seven in spring 1921, wrote about the massacre: “For many years after the riot, I suffered horrific nightmares. . . . I was desperately afraid to go to sleep because of the fears I harbored about the sinister, menacing, hooded invaders who looted our home of prized possessions and then with lighted torches set fire to our homes” (*Riot on Greenwood*, p. 68). What does this tell us about the lasting effects of violent acts?
3. Ernestine Gibbs (1902–2003), who was eighteen in May 1921, wrote that “going back to Greenwood [after the massacre] was like entering a war zone. Oh, what a pitiful sight! The entire [district] was nothing but ashes and metal” (pp. 69–70). Go to www.tulsaehistory.org and click on Learn > Tulsa Race Massacre to view a gallery of photos from 1921. Choose one photo and describe it to the class. (Trigger warning: many of the photos depict horrific scenes.)
4. In *The Hate U Give*, after Khalil’s death, Starr is confronted with the choice to remain silent or become part of a larger movement. Often when traumatic events happen, people decide to forget and “move on.” What similarities do you see between Mrs. Eldoris McCondichie’s account of “keeping things inside” (p. 87) and the ways Starr mentally deals with details of the night Khalil was killed?
5. Historically, what happened on June 1, 1921, was called “The Tulsa Race Riot.” Some say it was given that name at the time for insurance purposes: designating it a riot prevented insurance companies from having to pay benefits to the people of Greenwood whose homes and businesses were destroyed. It also was common at the time for any large-scale clash between different racial or ethnic groups to be categorized as a “race riot” (www.tulsaehistory.org). Today, most scholars and activists refer to it as the Tulsa Race Massacre. Why does it matter what labels we attach to events?
6. In her essay for the spring issue of *World Literature Today*, Rilla Askew comments on the longtime erasure of the massacre from public consciousness and asks: “How do we recognize this horror, which for so long we kept hidden?” She challenges readers to learn more about American history, to listen to those who have suffered the most and “surrender the narrative” to them, to own our part in past and present injustices, and to “wake up.” As a high school sophomore, what can you teach your classmates and elders about waking up and doing better?
7. On May 31, 1921, the Tulsa Police Department deputized hundreds of white community members at the courthouse, empowering them under protection of the law to invade and destroy the Greenwood community. These acts resulted in the deaths of many innocent people. In recent reports, Oklahoma City and Tulsa both ranked in the top five in the country in the rate of police killings per capita (2013–2020). Brainstorm a list of things police departments and officers can do or are doing to create community.
8. If you aspire to be a creative writer or artist, how might *you* respond to these eyewitness testimonies after having read them? What would you write or create?



Eldoris McCondichie (1911–2010)

Participating Artists



Poet, librettist, and translator **Tracy K. Smith** served two terms as Poet Laureate of the United States and is the Roger S. Berlind '52 Professor in the Humanities at Princeton University, where she also chairs the Lewis Center for the Arts. The author of four books of poems, she received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in poetry. In October, Graywolf Press will publish *Such Color: New and Selected Poems*.



Marie Casimir
Choreographer



Leslie Kraus
Dramaturge



J'aime Griffith
Choreographer

Video production by Scissortail Media
Audio and sound engineering by Andriotis Music & Audio



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Riot on Greenwood

The Total Destruction of Black Wall Street, 1921

Eddie Faye Gates

SUNBELT EAKIN  Austin, Texas

MILDRED MITCHELL CHRISTOPHER,
Jacksonville, Florida, b. October 19, 1913

At the time of the Tulsa riot, my parents, James and Jessie Cunliff Mitchell, lived on King Street between Elgin Street and Greenwood Avenue. My brother is Nathaniel C. Cannon, and my sister is Johnnie Cannon. Cannon's Drygoods Store was a popular store during the old Greenwood days.

I was seven years old during the riot. I remember being awakened by my parents and joining the crowd of black people running from approaching mobs. We were half-naked—in our night clothes, some of us without shoes. I remember when the Guard's truck came upon us. The sun had come up then, and I watched as the sun shined on the men's bayonets. Some of the women screamed; some of them prayed loudly to God to save us. The black men raised a white flag. The Red Cross came. We were taken to the Tulsa fairgrounds, where we were given food and milk. We were given baloney sandwiches, pork-and-bean sandwiches and a cup of milk each. That was my first experience with a pork-and-bean sandwich. I didn't take to it then, and I don't take to it now!

The husband in the white family that Mama worked for, Mr. Pate, came and got us. He carried us to the servants quarters. Then he went back to look for Papa. He brought Papa home to us about twelve or one o'clock.

We lost everything we owned in that riot. Papa went back and looked through the ashes where our house stood. He said he could find no evidence that we

had ever had a happy, normal home life there. He said he couldn't even find evidence of our piano—there were no keys, no wires, no nothing! The mobsters must have taken our beautiful things. All that was left of black peoples' former happy lives was billowing smoke. We saw that smoke, smelled that smoke on our way back from to Tulsa, back to the fairgrounds. What a sad sight. What a pitiful end to our dreams.

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JIMMIE LILLY FRANKLIN,
Los Angeles, California, b. June 12, 1915

My sisters, Muriel and Hattie, and I lived with our parents, Henry Walter and Florence Wells Lilly, in a beautiful home on North Elgin Street at the time of the Tulsa race riot. It was a large home with four bedrooms, one bath, living room, dining room, and an office which was used by Papa, who was a photographer. The house was furnished with beautiful things, including a living room which had a Kimball piano, two sofas, two upholstered chairs, a settee, and four bedrooms full of oak furniture, and a dining room which contained an oak dining room set. Papa had a photographic studio, a darkroom, and several large cameras. Papa also had numerous household, carpentry, and plumbing tools which the mobsters took. (Our uncle, Fred Wells, was a prominent Tulsa physician and surgeon, and he lost all his fine medical equipment when mobsters burned the hospital where he worked.)

My mother and us girls had beautiful jewelry and clothing, almost all of which was stolen. Mobsters took all our birthstone rings, but Mama was wearing her better jewelry and the mobsters didn't get that! They did take our watches, bracelets, and a strand of pearls. Two cars were lost—a Ford sedan and a Ford coupe.

The worst thing about the riot wasn't the loss of those beautiful material possessions, though, no matter how much we loved them. The worst thing lost was my peace of mind. For many years after the riot, I suffered horrific nightmares of the bloody killings, the strewn, mutilated injured, the dead bodies, and of the searing-hot blazing fires that burned our homes to the ground. In my troubled sleep, I had vivid memories of the unusual but defining sounds of airplanes flying low in the smoke-filled skies above, and of the loud blasts of the bombs [sic] that the planes dropped on burning structures as innocent black men were desperately trying to extinguish the devastating fires while striving to protect their families and their property.

As we sat huddled together in the middle of Elgin Street with other homeless women and children, I often dreamed of being so scared. The sheer terror of these frightening events were a constant reoccurrence in the nightmares that came so regularly.

At night I dreaded going to bed. I was desperately afraid to go to sleep because of the fears I harbored about the sinister, menacing, hooded invaders who looted our home of prized possessions and then with lighted torches set fire to our homes. The acrid smell of

smoke constantly burned in my nostrils as I twisted, turned, talked, and cried aloud while I slept so restlessly and dreamed.

The recurring nightmare of seeing Papa Lilly and Grandpa Wells being hog-tied and taken away at gunpoint, to only God knows where, was always included in the invading nightmares. One of my parents shook me as they awakened me gently, softly assuring me that it was just another one of those bad dreams I was having, and reassuring me that I was indeed safe and secure.

For years, my parents kept a small light burning in our bedroom to help chase away the horrific events that invaded the recurrent dreams that for years disturbed and invaded my restless sleep. That was my legacy from the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921! (*See photo on page 60.*)

**ERNESTINE GIBBS, Tulsa, Oklahoma,
b. December 15, 1902**

When the riot broke out in Tulsa, I was doing what I always did during the school year; I was studying. Oh, how I loved Booker T. Washington High School in north Tulsa! And I loved the principal, E. W. Woods, just as much or more. Mr. Woods was such a motivator. He inspired and motivated all—students, teachers, parents—to do our very best. And we did! Even though black



Ernestine Gibbs

schools in Oklahoma were segregated then, and not equal to white school in terms of facilities, books, and money spent on schools, we got the best education possible under those conditions, thanks to educators like Mr. Woods. I will never forget a message he gave to the student body in the 1920s. He said that we (black students) were as good as ninety-nine percent of all people, and better than the other one percent.

So the night of the riot, I was studying for my finals at school the next day. We lived on King Street in the middle of a train track area. A man ran up on our porch

and knocked on the door. He said, "Put out that light! There is fighting and burning on Greenwood." So I put out the light and my parents and my brother went to bed. Soon a young man, a family friend, came from a hotel on Greenwood where he worked and knocked on our door. He was so scared he could not sit still nor lie down. He just paced up and down the floor, talking about the "mess" going on downtown and on Greenwood.

When daylight came, black people were moving down the train tracks like ants. We joined the fleeing people. My mother, a cousin who was staying with us, and I soon lost my brother and the friend who had come to warn us. My poor mother was beside herself with panic and grief when she couldn't find my brother. Everyone was just running hard as they could, trying to get to Golden Gate Park, located on the east side where Crawford Park is now, near Thirty-Sixth Street North. It was just weeds, grass, and trees then. But we made it safely to that place. We lay down on the ground and rested. I remember lying flat on my back, on the bare ground, looking up at the stars, and sleeping fitfully through the pre-dawn morning. We fled to this area because we had been warned to beware of highways and railroad tracks, because whites were shooting down blacks who were fleeing that way. Some of them were shot by whites firing from airplanes in the sky.

Around twelve noon, another group of fleeing blacks joined us. There was a house nearby where whites lived. One of the black men in our group went up to the house and told the owner about the black refugees. He told him how thirsty we were. The white man came back with the black man who had gone to the house to ask for water. He told all of us to come on up to his house. We did, and he gave us all the water we wanted.

After the sounds of shooting had stopped, and the flames seemed to be lessening, some of the black men decided to go back to the downtown area and the Greenwood area to help bury the dead. One young man gave his gun to Mama to keep for him. When the young man came back to where we were hiding, Mama gave him back his gun. We forgot to ask about the dead.

About 4:00 P.M., we were found by the guards and taken to the fairgrounds. We were given mattresses to sleep on and food and drinks. When a white man who knew my mother offered to take us home, we were allowed to leave the fairgrounds. Going back to Greenwood was like entering a war zone. Oh, what a pitiful sight! When we got to our house, we found nothing but ashes and metal. All around, the entire

Greenwood District, was nothing but ashes and metal. The only things that were not burned were iron and metal—stoves, bedsteads, etc.

All the trees were burned. Everything was gone! People were moaning and weeping when they looked at where their houses used to stand. Oh, Lord, it was an awful thing, that riot was. Oh, one good thing happened, though. My brother was found! Trains were running again. So my mother, my cousin, and I caught a train to Sapulpa to stay with relatives, since we no longer had a home in Tulsa. When we got there, there was my brother! During the heat of the riot, when he got lost from us, he and a friend ran west, and they jumped into the Arkansas River to dodge bullets aimed at them. They swam across the Arkansas River to safety. Then they walked to Sapulpa to our relatives' house. My mother was just overjoyed to find my brother alive. She just hugged him and kissed him, and cried. Oh, I will never forget that riot as long as I live. I can shut my eyes and still see the smoke, fire, and ashes that destroyed our beloved Greenwood. I'll never forget it. No, not ever!

**OLIVIA J. HOOKER, White Plains, New York,
b. February 12, 1915**

My parents, Samuel D. and Anita J. Stigger Hooker, came to Tulsa from Holmes County, Mississippi. At the time of the riot they owned a home on Independence Street which was valued at \$10,000 and a store at 123 North Greenwood Avenue which was one of the most prominent stores in the Greenwood District. The home was damaged but not destroyed in the riot. Furnishings valued at \$3,000 were either stolen or deliberately smashed and destroyed. Jewelry valued at \$1,000, furs valued at \$1,000, and silver valued at \$500 were also stolen. The estimated total loss of goods that were displayed at the store was \$100,000. That makes a total loss of \$104,000 to our parents during that riot. There is a record in the Tulsa Court on this, for my father sued the insurance company. A judge threw the case out in 1926 or 1927. Papa's chief witness had a "lapse of memory" on the stand. Papa never got over the chicanery of that witness!

My parents were distraught over the loss of the many beautiful things they had purchased with their hard-earned money. The mobs hacked up our furniture with axes and set fire to my grandmother's bed and sewing machine. After the riot, my mother saved all the artillery shells that mobsters had put in all our dresser drawers!

We did go on with our lives after the riot, but the memories of what happened to us then will never go away. The injustices we suffered the two days of the riot, and the injustices we suffered after the riot when insurance companies failed to pay riot victims for their losses, and when court officials summarily threw out all riot victims' cases between 1926 and 1936, are blots on Tulsa's image that have not been erased to this day.

I graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and went off to college. After I graduated from

college I became a teacher. For years, I was at Fordham University in White Plains, New York.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: In a personal letter to the author after the completion of the Tulsa Race Riot Questionnaire, Olivia J. Hooker had this to say:

"I am so enjoying your book *They Came Searching: How Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa*. Some of the people featured in your book were dear childhood friends of mine, such as Robert Fairchild and his sister, Ruth, who was one of my close friends. We were all in the same class with John Hope Franklin and his sister, Anna Franklin. Helen Foushee and AlmaLene Williams were my other close friends, and also Jewel Smitherman. I was chief 'baby tender' for Jewel's younger sister, Verdell Johnson.

"Have you ever thought of writing a book about 'Great Teachers from Booker T. Washington High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma?' Even after all these years, I attribute much of my love of learning to 'Dad' Mitchell, Gertie Berry, Mr. Roberts, Horace Hughes, and, of course, to the music teacher Carrie Persons, as well as to Mr. J.T.A. West, who was my Papa's closest chum! I was delighted to read so much in your book about Maurice Willows and the noble actions of the Red Cross during the riot. I had never known about his pioneering spirit. Say hello to my dear friend Jeanne Goodwin and to Keith Jimerson, my good friend at Rudisill Library."



Dr. Olivia J. Hooker

VERA INGRAM, Tulsa, Oklahoma,
b. March 4, 1914

I was seven years old when the Tulsa Race Riot broke out. My father, Ike Wilson, was working when some men came into the Greenwood neighborhood and told the men to "Get your guns. Come on. We're going downtown to save that boy from being lynched!" They were talking about Dick Rowland, a young black man who had been accused of assaulting Sarah Page, a young white woman. Papa was a janitor at a barbershop on Greenwood, and he had to finish cleaning up the shop. Then he came home and got his gun and went to join the men. He told Mama he was "going to take care of some business." But Mama (Augusta Wilson) knew he was going to join those men who had gone downtown to save that boy from being lynched. She begged Papa not to go, but he said he just had to go. But first, he hitched up some horses to a wagon and had us all pile into the wagon, along with some neighbors, and he sent us out of the Greenwood District to seek safety farther north. We went as far as Lynn Lane, where we stayed all night, hiding in thickets and bushes and sleeping on the ground. I remember seeing bullets being shot from airplanes, seeing the bullets fall to the ground all around us. I saw one woman get shot by bullets that came from a plane.

When the riot was over and we returned home, it was such a sad homegoing. Greenwood was burned to the ground. Our house, which was at 1342 N. Lansing Avenue, was nothing but ashes. I had a big brown bear that I had named "Teddy." I thought a whole lot of Teddy. I slept with him every night. Ever since I had had a memory, I never remember going to bed without old Teddy. But in the rush of leaving our house when the

mobs were coming into Greenwood, I left old Teddy behind. I never saw him again. I sure did miss old Teddy. I still do!

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ELDORIS MAE ECTOR McCONDICHIE,
Tulsa, Oklahoma, b. September 8, 1911

At the time of the riot, my parents, Howard and Harriet Ector, lived at 1431 North Iroquois Street. Our home was not burned in the riot, but we were just scared to death during that riot. As a child, I suffered with fears and nightmares after the riot. Some of those fears, bad feelings, and sadness linger on to this day!

On the morning of June 1, 1921, I was sound asleep when my mother shook me hard and said, "Wake up!"



Eldoris Mae Ector McCondichie

Wake up! The white folks are coming and they're killing all the colored folks." I was just petrified. In my nine-year-old mind, I pictured white folks lining up colored folks of all ages and just going down the line killing every colored person in Tulsa! I was so frightened that as we ran with the crowd of folks down the street, going north, parallel to the Midland Valley Railroad tracks, I broke away from the group and ran into the nearest dwelling I saw off the street. It was a chicken coop, and there were some colored people already in there hiding. But my father ran after me and he crawled to the furthest corner of the coop, where I was curled up, just frozen with fear. He dragged me out and we kept running.

I felt that the world was coming to an end. I was just scared to death. On top of everything else going on, airplanes flew low over us as we were running. They were low enough to shoot dead anyone on the ground underneath them. I heard the bullets dropping on the ground, and I saw colored folks dodging bullets, yelling and screaming, and running for their lives. But the

thing that frightened me the most—more than the white mobs right behind us, more than the airplanes, was the sight of the huge, billowing, mountain of black smoke over Greenwood. I later learned that smoke was from the burning homes, schools, churches, and businesses in the beloved Greenwood area. I thought that smoke and fire would catch up with us and that we would all be burned to death.

When we got to the Pine Street area, my father stayed behind to help the wounded and to take care of the dead. Mother, my brother, and I continued on with the crowd, which was going on farther north. A kind white man let us stay at his house. He said, "Y'all come on in. As many as can fit in this house, come on in." The kindness of that man was so comforting to us who were fleeing for our lives. I'll never forget that kindness. We kept on running north, and in Pawhuska we stayed in the home of a black family.

After the National Guard gained control in Tulsa on June 3, people were allowed to come back to the Greenwood area. We returned to our home in the Addition, which had not burned. But we went on up to Greenwood to see the damage that had been done. I walked with my father, who held my hand, from Greenwood to Archer and then on over to Detroit Avenue. It looked like a war zone. Our beautiful Greenwood District, with the famous Black Wall Street business district, existed no more. It had been burnt off the earth!

On Detroit Avenue, I saw something that just became engraved in my mind. It became a symbol of the riot, an icon you might call it. You see, Detroit Avenue is where the wealthiest black people in Tulsa lived—people like Dr. A. C. Jackson, Dr. Bridgewater, and other prominent black doctors, lawyers, teachers, and professionals. Well there was one house that just mesmerized me. That is, the *remains* of that house mesmerized me. For the house had been burned to ashes, along with all its contents that would burn. But along one wall, the fireplace still stood and a section of the wall that had two little windows in it. Well a part of a curtain had remained untouched and was gently blowing in the wind. I was just puzzled by this sight. I wondered how, with everything around it burning, how could that little piece of curtain have survived. I still see that image in my mind to this day.

Another thing that escaped burning during the riot was our church, the little white frame church on a hill on Independence Avenue. Not that mobsters didn't try to burn it. They did. We saw evidence of how the walls

of the church had been splashed with some kind of flammable liquid, repeatedly. There was evidence that there had been some combustion, but that the flames would always go out. There was no serious damage to the church, just a black smear on the wall. Our minister, Rev. Burgess, would never let us paint over that smear. He wanted it left for all to see. He said it was a legacy—a gift from God—to us. He said it was proof that God saved our church from the devil. People still talk to this day about the miracle of God that occurred the day of the riot.

Although the church didn't burn, it was left in shambles. It seems that mobsters just went into a frenzy destroying and vandalizing the inside of the church (perhaps because they were angry because it wouldn't burn). Our minister was so distressed about the riot. He died soon after. I remember that when I went to pay my last respects to our beloved minister, I had to step over riot debris which church members had not had time to clean up. Everyone said that terrible riot killed our minister as surely as if he had been shot or burned. His heart was so saddened by what he saw. He just couldn't live with it. There were so many casualties of that riot. I was a casualty myself. For most of my life, I've had nightmares and fears going back to that riot. And I kept things from my children. I would not tell them anything about Tulsa's past history. I didn't want to saddle them with my fears, and I didn't want them to be bitter toward white people. So I just held a lot of things inside myself. It is only after all this focus on the riot the last three and a half years that I have opened up and talked about Tulsa's history—the good and the bad. And my fears have lessened. I am finally coming to terms regarding that riot. I am finally gaining some peace. But I still can't get the image out of my mind of that little piece of curtain gently blowing in the wind in that former elegant home of a prominent black Tulsan!

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Mrs. McCondichie, with her warm, gentle demeanor and excellent recall of events, has been a favorite with the print and electronic media that have covered the Tulsa race riot. She recently fretted because she could not remember the favorite Negro hymn of Allen Burgess, pastor of the little church that wouldn't burn during the riot, but she has found it! And here it is:

THE TRUMPET OF ZION

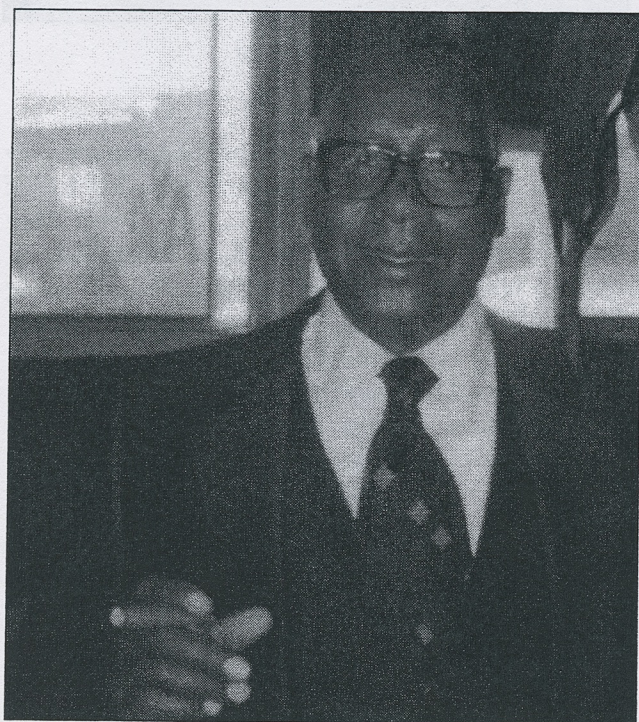
Blow ye the trumpet of Zion
Sound aloud the Holy Command,

The earth's habitation trembles
Who shall be able to stand.

What a weeping and a wailing
From among the sinful throng,
Men are dying, nations falling
For the day of the Lord is come.



James Steward, right, as a child a few years after the riot.



James Steward as an adult.

DOROTHY WILSON STRICKLAND,
Chicago, Illinois, b. November 6, 1912

My parents, Chester and Dora Jordan Wilson, moved from Gainesville, Texas, to Tulsa. At the time of the riot, they lived at 419 E. Latimer Court. My father also built a store on Elgin Street. The store burned down in the riot.

We were asleep when the riot broke out the night of May 31, 1921. Dad's store must have been one of the first buildings set afire by the mobs. I remember that officials came and got Daddy and took him down to where the store was. When he came back, I asked Mama, "What did they do to Daddy?" When he had left he was standing tall and upright. When he came back he was stooped over and pitiful-looking.

I guess authorities thought they had control of the Greenwood District the night of May 31, so when Daddy came back from his burned-out store, we all went to bed. But authorities did not have control of Greenwood at that time. Fighting, looting, burning, and commotions went on all night. Finally, Daddy decided we had better get out of the area. So we hurriedly got dressed and got into Daddy's grocery truck and fled to the Mohawk Park area, where some other black people were hiding in the bushes, undergrowths, and ditches around the park. We had left in such a hurry, I hadn't had time to dress properly, which happened to a lot of other fleeing blacks, who were also improperly dressed. It had been warm inside our house, so I was sleeping only in my panties. But as we were getting ready to get in Daddy's truck to run for our lives, Mother rushed me. She said, "It might be cool tonight. Get a coat." So I

grabbed my little red winter coat. That's all I had to wear during the rest of our time as riot refugees—my panties and that little red winter coat. I don't remember why, but the little coat often gaped open and showed all of my body except for the little panties. I guess the coat didn't have any buttons on it. And would you believe it, I lost those little panties! It happened like this. While we slept on the ground at Mohawk Park, mothers tried to keep their young children warm with their own bodies. Well, during the night, I had to relieve myself. A kind woman knew Mother was trying to keep her youngest child warm, so she told Mother not to move and that she would take me to a bush behind where we were sleeping. And she did. But she told me to take my panties off and she would hold them for me. She didn't want me to soil them. So I did. And wouldn't you know it, that is the exact time that the mobsters found our Mohawk Park hiding place! That good, kind lady pulled me up so fast and got me back to the fleeing group that my panties were left behind. I tried so hard to keep that little red coat together to hide my nakedness. But sometimes, it just gaped open and I was exposed. I was so embarrassed, so ashamed. To this day when I think about that riot, I can shut my eyes and still feel that shame and embarrassment washing over me!

When the Guards did finally find us, we were taken to a shelter where a kind white lady gave me a cup of hot milk. I can still hear her sweet voice as she handed me the milk. She said, "Here, baby, drink this." I replied "No, thanks, I don't like hot milk." So that sweet lady went and got me an apple. I still don't like hot milk, but looking back, maybe right in the middle of a riot, I shouldn't have been so particular!