

Resolution

ENROLLED SENATE
RESOLUTION NO. 24

By: Treat, David, Simpson,
Allen, Quinn, Standridge,
Jech, Daniels, Montgomery,
Newhouse, Pederson, Pugh,
Rader, Murdock, Bullard,
Coleman, Stanley, Howard,
Garvin, Burns, Stephens,
Rogers and Haste

A Resolution recognizing the centennial of the 1921
Tulsa Race Massacre; applauding the Commission;
encouraging Oklahomans; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, early in the 20th Century, an African American
entrepreneurial center, known as the Greenwood District, was born in
downtown Tulsa. Segregation forced African Americans to shop and do
business within the 35-square-block area. The dynamic nationally
renowned business hub became known as "Black Wall Street"; and

WHEREAS, Greenwood became one of the most prominent
concentrations of African American businesses in the nation. The
district showcased the strength, courage and entrepreneurial spirits
of several Tulsans including Simon Berry, Dr. A.C. Jackson, John and
Loula Williams, Mabel B. Little and E.W. Woods, among many others.
Together these individuals overcame Tulsa's oppressive Jim Crow laws
to open numerous businesses including, among many others, a charter
plane service, bus line, hotel, clinic, theatre, confectionary,
garage and beauty salon; and

WHEREAS, Greenwood Avenue, the epicenter of the District, was
compared to other famous and celebrated corridors such as Memphis'
Beale Street and Chicago's State Street; and

WHEREAS, tensions were high following the ever-growing success and notoriety of Black Wall Street. On May 30, 1921, unprecedented civil unrest was triggered following the alleged assault of a white young woman, Sarah Page, by an African American young man, Dick Rowland. A mob of white men and African American men gathered at the courthouse and during the ensuing fight, a gun went off; and

WHEREAS, thousands of armed white men, some deputized by local law enforcement, descended on the Greenwood District the next day and less than 24 hours later, burned to the ground Black Wall Street, and killed an estimated 300 people. In total, more than 1,400 homes and businesses were burned leaving nearly 10,000 people homeless and millions of dollars in damages; and

WHEREAS, the tragic event, originally known as the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, was barely mentioned in history books until 1997 when the Tulsa Race Riot Commission was formed by the state to research and formally document the event; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the Tulsa Race Riot Centennial Commission was formed and helped changed public perspective of the historic event, recognizing it as the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The commission has also successfully introduced curriculum to teach Oklahoma students about the historic event and worked with Rogers State University to film videos to better educate the public. In 2020, the Commission broke ground for the new history center, Greenwood Rising, which will honor the legacy of Black Wall Street before and after the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre; and

WHEREAS, today, the Greenwood District is striving to once again be a flourishing hub for business, education, recreation, culture and entertainment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 1ST SESSION OF THE 58TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

THAT the Oklahoma Senate, with heavy hearts but hope for a brighter future, commemorates the centennial of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, and extends sympathies to the families of those lost and impacted during the tragic event.

THAT the Oklahoma Senate applauds the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission for serving as a model for the city, state and nation by demonstrating unity across racial, religious and political boundaries and proving that differences create opportunities to learn, build and work with one another.

THAT the Oklahoma Senate encourages Oklahomans to visit the Greenwood District to learn about its rich history and the people who contributed to its greatness, as well as to spread the District's message of love and hope.

THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission.

Adopted by the Senate the 26th day of May, 2021.

Presiding Officer of the Senate

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Received by the Office of the Secretary of State this _____
day of _____, 20 _____, at _____ o'clock _____ M.
By: _____