



CELEBRATE
**BLACK
HISTORY**

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TULSA'S BLACK WALL STREET

The Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was known as Black Wall Street at the start of the 20th century. It began in 1905 after entrepreneur O.W. Gurley purchased 40 acres in Tulsa and began selling plots to fellow Black settlers to establish a community at a time of widespread racial segregation due to Jim Crow laws. Black entrepreneurs and professionals flocked to the area, so much so that Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, dubbed Greenwood “Negro Wall Street.”

Washington's words attracted still more Blacks to Greenwood, and its minority-owned businesses flourished. At a time when many white-owned establishments wouldn't serve Black customers, Greenwood had a wide array of community businesses from luxury hotels, funeral homes, grocery stores and medical centers to movie theaters and restaurants.

Problems began in 1921 when an accusation against a Black man, which was later dismissed, sparked two days of unprecedented racial violence. Mobs of white residents looted and burned 35 blocks of the Greenwood community, destroying 190 businesses, killing 300 citizens and injuring another 800. The riots left 10,000 homeless and property loss claims from the massacre totaled \$1.8 million, the equivalent of \$27 million today.

Although the Greenwood District was rebuilt by the 1940s, it never regained its former prominence; and neither the survivors nor their families have ever received compensation from state or city officials.

Tulsa was one of several Black Wall Streets in the United States. Others include Bronzeville in Chicago, Ill.; Hayti in Durham, N.C.; Sweet Auburn in Atlanta, Ga.; West Ninth Street in Little Rock, Ark. and Farish Street in Jackson, Miss.



A Union of Professionals

NYSUT, a statewide union of professionals, is proud of its history of working with the Black community to advance the civil rights movement and to promote quality education and health care for all New Yorkers.

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