

Speech of Henry C. Whitlow  
at T.C.H.S. meeting  
3/29/73

Corrected  
Copy is at  
office  
(much  
better)

Might I say from the beginning that most of the material for this talk was taken from the following sources:

1. A study of the Social and Economic conditions of the Negro population of Tulsa, Oklahoma - conducted for the Tulsa Council of Social agencies, by the National Urban League, J. Harvey Kerns, Survey Director, 1945
2. Historical Development of The Negro in Oklahoma, by Nathaniel Jason Washington; Published by Dexter Publishing Co. 1948.
3. A paper, "A Short History" B. T. Washington High School, by W. D. Williams.
4. The Racially Changing Community by Kari Thiele, A Thesis for Masters Degree at Oklahoma University - 1962.

I would also say this talk could be made into a book - but I am not the one to do it - thus this talk will be short.

(All "ad libs" recorded on tape are written in.)  
R. Avery

THE HISTORY OF THE GREENWOOD ERA IN TULSA

After agreeing to a title for this talk, I am sure we should talk about an Era rather than Area. The period of time in which this area was flourishing and making its contribution to the growth of Tulsa. Historically, we are talking about a period of time from the beginning of Tulsa until the late fifties.

Since territorial days, Negroes have been a part of the organized life of Tulsa. Though Negro slaves were owned by some of the early pioneers and later by Indian tribes, slavery was never a flourishing industry in Tulsa or the State of Oklahoma.

Negroes in Tulsa first settled on 1st Street at Madison and Lansing Streets, near the site of the old Midland Valley Depot. In 1905, a strip of land on Greenwood beginning at Archer Street was sold to Negroes. This was the beginning of the naming of the whole Negro community, Greenwood. Until recent years, <sup>the "old timers"</sup> local whites would refer to it as "over in Greenwood," although the Tulsa World Newspaper would tab it as "little Africa", the Tribune's name was "Ole Nigger Town". The Train Porters <sup>their</sup> in announcing the stop in the Jim Crow car would say "Tulsa, the Tusk-Hog Town - "Greenwood the Battling Ground".

In 1908, this site on Greenwood was developed by Negroes as the first permanent business development. The early Negro migrants to Tulsa came from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, hoping to better their conditions by coming to this new territory and State.

The bondary lines for living <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ set very early. The Negro could buy land, live and operate businesses North of the Frisco Railway tracks. Thus, the early community grew along Archer Street -- West to Boston Street and East to Lansing and North to Marshall Street. The Negro was welcomed to work at common labor, service and domestic jobs as Tulsa grew. They were not welcome to patronize the