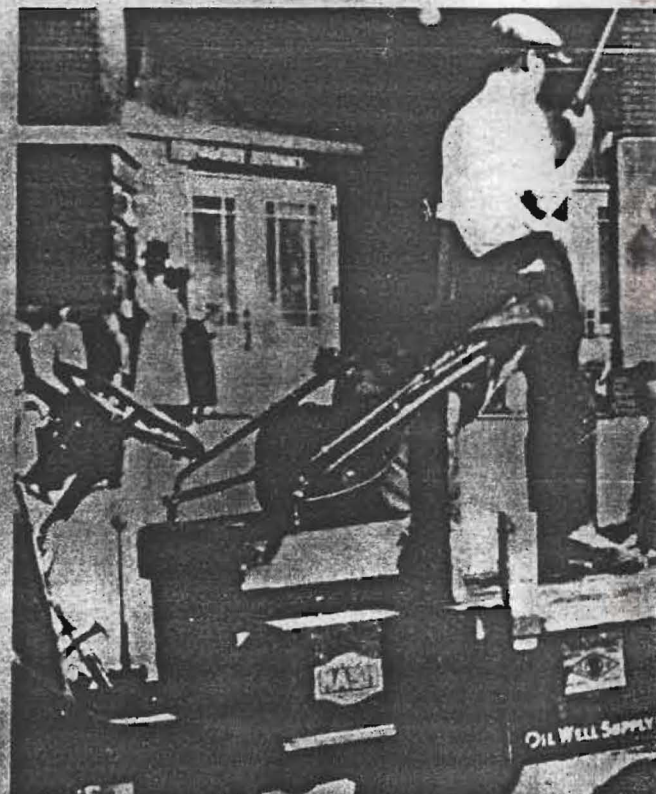




A BLACK WAS MURDERED in front of Tulsa's Convention Hall after he had surrendered. Blacks were marched to the hall and interned there. Tulsa physician

A.C. Jackson, who had been named by the Mayo brothers as "the most able Negro surgeon in America," was murdered on one such march.



TRUCKS took the bodies of blacks killed in the riot to the fairgrounds and to the Arkansas River, where some of the bodies were dumped. Several hundred persons

Book sheds new light on hate-fueled fire a city has tried

from Page 1

me about racism and power," he said. "The school administration handled it in a horrid manner, and everyone was terrified."

TRACING THE HISTORY of Tulsa's race relations, Ellsworth learned that terror was not new to the city or state, despite the fact that blacks lived in the Tulsa area for half a century before whites.

"Oklahoma was seen as a haven for blacks, and there was talk in 1880 of mak-



of 40 or 50 armed men in long black robes and masks. The 17 were taken to a ravine west of the city, stripped, tied to a tree and whipped with "five-eighths or three-quarters hemp." Hot tar and feathers then were applied to their bloodied backs.

Police collusion was charged in the tragedy, and one of the whipped men stated that "There were extra gowns and masks provided, which were put on by the Chief of Police and one detective . . ."

"The 1917 IWW incident revealed how

was arrested and held on the top floor of the courthouse, but a mob of 1,000 took him from his cell and lynched him at a spot along the Jenks road. Tulsa police reportedly directed traffic and helped control the crowd at the scene.

The *Tulsa World* called the event "a righteous protest", stating: "There was not a vestige of the mob spirit in the act of Saturday night. It was citizenship, outraged by government inefficiency and a too tender regard to the professional

TRACING THE HISTORY of Tulsa's race relations, Ellsworth learned that terror was not new to the city or state, despite the fact that blacks lived in the Tulsa area for half a century before whites.

"Oklahoma was seen as a haven for blacks, and there was talk in 1880 of making it the only black state in the union," Ellsworth explained. "Black people came to the area from 1830 to 1860, calling it the 'promised land.'"

Three events happened in Tulsa prior to 1921 that set the stage for the riot that would destroy more than 1,000 homes occupied by blacks and burn the business district to the ground. "But the main actors in the riot were the police, press and judicial system," Ellsworth said.

THE TROUBLE BEGAN in 1917 when the *Tulsa World* newspaper claimed to have evidence implicating the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the bombing of the home of a wealthy Tulsa oil man. An oil worker had been arrested in the bombing and had denied he was an IWW member, but the *World* editorialized that his denial "confirmed the belief of the detectives that he is a member."

In an Oct. 31 editorial entitled "Patience Has an End," the newspaper endorsed vigilante solutions, comparing IWW members to horse thieves and recommending similar treatment.

"Right here is a good place to disagree with the statement, frequently expressed by Oklahoma editors, that the IWW's and other pro-Hun individuals should 'leave the country,'" the *World* wrote. "As a matter of fact, there is no place for them to go. The only relief is a wholesale application of concentration camps. Or, what is hemp worth now, the long foot?"

The *Tulsa World* once again called for lynchings after 12 men were arrested during police raids of the IWW hall on Brady Street. In an editorial entitled "Get Out the Hemp," the newspaper advised:

"If the IWW or its twin brother, the Oil Workers Union, gets busy in your neighborhood, kindly take occasion to



SCOTT ELLSWORTH's new book uncovers new ground in chronicling the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.

decrease the supply the hemp. A knowledge of how to tie a knot that will stick might come in handy in a few days. It is no time to dally with the enemies of the country. The unrestricted production of petroleum is as necessary to the winning of the war as the unrestricted production of gunpowder. We are either going to whip Germany or Germany is going to whip us. The first step in the whipping of Germany is to strangle the IWW's. Kill 'em just as you would kill any other kind of snake. Don't scotch 'em; kill 'em. And kill 'em dead. It is no time to waste money on trials and continuances like that. All that is necessary is the evidence and a firing squad. Probably the carpenters union will contribute the timber for the coffins."

The Oil Field Workers' Union had organized some 300 oil field workers in the Tulsa area under the IWW banner. Not only were the 12 IWW members found guilty by Judge T. D. Evans (who was mayor of Tulsa during the 1921 race riot), but five people in the courtroom who had served as witnesses for the defense were arrested and tried on the spot and likewise declared guilty.

EN ROUTE TO THE COUNTY JAIL, the 17 prisoners were kidnapped by a gang

and whipped with live tannins or three-quarters hemp." Hot tar and feathers then were applied to their bloodied backs.

Police collusion was charged in the tragedy, and one of the whipped men stated that "There were extra gowns and masks provided, which were put on by the Chief of Police and one detective . . ."

"The 1917 IWW incident revealed how disastrous the consequences could be for a group of Tulsans if the power of an influential newspaper, the city government and the local courts and police was brought to bear against them," Ellsworth said.

The mob that attacked the 17 men called itself the "Knights of Liberty" and was described by the *Tulsa World* later as "a patriotic body." By 1921, the Ku Klux Klan in Tulsa had a membership of 3,200, including a women's klan and a junior klan of teenage boys.

A second incident which contributed to mob rule in Tulsa took place two years later. On March 17, 1919, a white ironworker was shot in the back on the streets of Tulsa. Before he died, he told police his assailants were two black men, but he could give only a sketchy description of them.

THREE BLACK MEN WERE ARRESTED in the case and rumors began to spread that there might be an attempt to lynch them. A group of 15 armed blacks drove to the city jail to investigate the safety of the defendants, and the next day the *Tulsa Democrat* newspaper wrote that "Much talk of trouble with the colored element was heard." Subsequently, three black policemen were fired upon by two white gunmen.

This event in 1919 revealed that there were serious doubts in the black community "as to whether the local white law enforcement establishment could be relied upon to protect prisoners . . .," Ellsworth said.

The race riot came on the heels of still another violent event in Tulsa that shook the city some nine months prior to the riot. A white taxi driver was murdered by a white passenger. An 18-year-old man

reportedly directed traffic and helped control the crowd at the scene.

The *Tulsa World* called the event "a righteous protest", stating: "There was not a vestige of the mob spirit in the act of Saturday night. It was citizenship, outraged by government inefficiency and a too tender regard to the professional criminal." Police Chief John Gustafson said "It is my honest opinion that the lynching of Belton will prove of real benefit to Tulsa and vicinity. It was an object lesson to the hijackers and auto thieves, and I believe it will be taken as such."

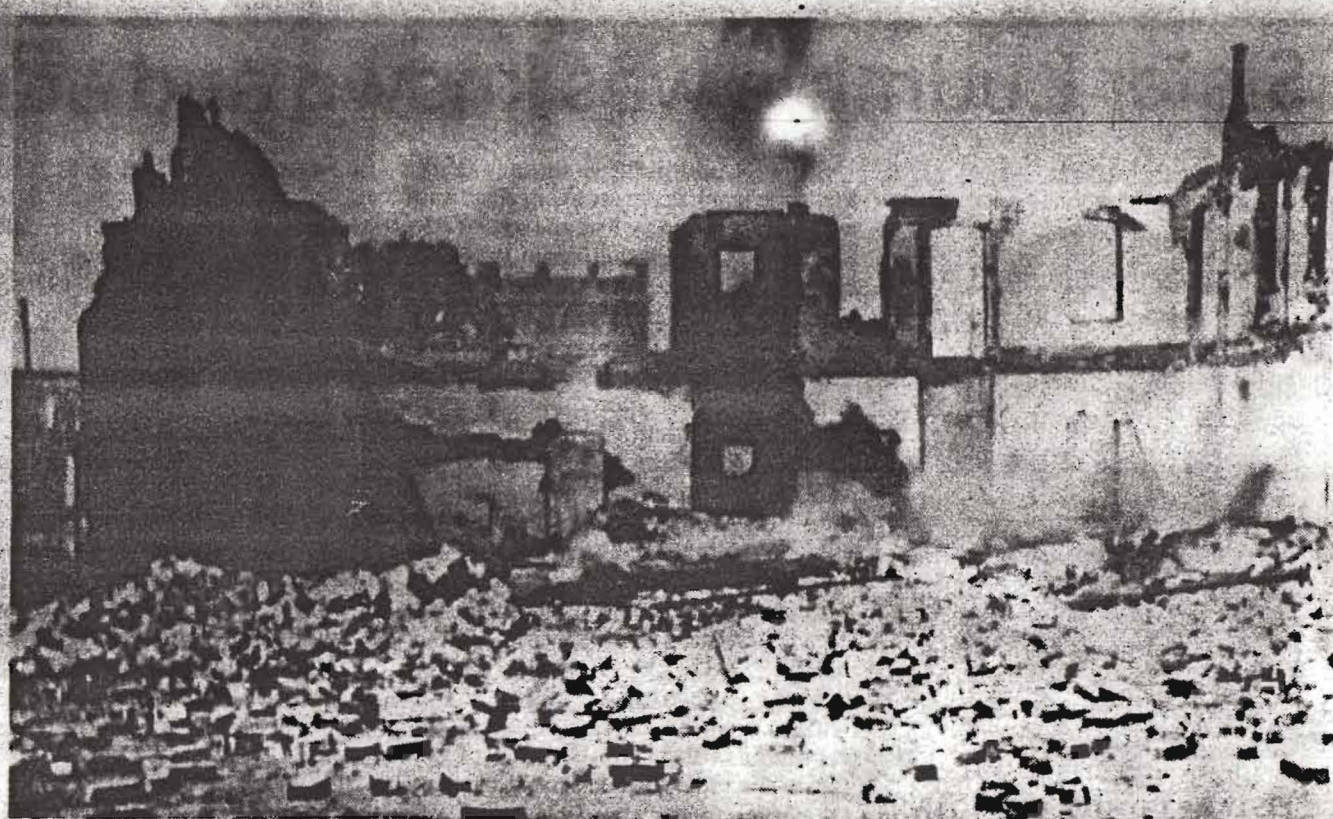
The brutal beating of 17 men, the lynching of another and the obvious lack of police and court protection led up to the conviction by Tulsa blacks that one of their own was in critical danger when he was arrested on May 31, 1921 for attempted assault of a white woman.

DICK ROWLAND, 19, CLAIMED he had accidentally stepped on the foot of a elevator operator when he entered her elevator. After she screamed, Rowland was arrested and held on the top floor of the courthouse. Despite the lack of any evidence that Rowland actually tried to assault the woman, the *Tulsa Tribune* carried a sensational front page headline in its afternoon issue: "To Lynch Negro Tonight." Two hours after the paper hit the streets, an angry mob of whites began to form at the courthouse, as had happened nine months earlier. Only this time, another mob of blacks also convened at the site.

"Nobody knows who fired the first shot," Ellsworth said. "Witnesses said a white man tried to disarm a black war veteran and that started it."

Approximately a dozen blacks were shot on the spot. The white mob then forgot about the black prisoner at the courthouse and turned its vengeance toward the city's north side: the black Greenwood section of town.

TULSA WAS BURNING! In a matter of hours, a vast section of Greenwood was ashes, the blackened and stiffened corpses of its inhabitants protruding from the remains. Truckloads of bodies were



were murdered in the riot, although the exact number never was known. The Red Cross estimated as high as 300 deaths.

REMAINS OF THE RIOT stand gutted and still smoking on what was the prosperous business section of Greenwood and Archer in north Tulsa. Forty square

blocks of the black community were left in ruins after the race riot of 1921.

d to forget

driven to the fairgrounds and dumped there. Half of the city's 10,000 blacks were imprisoned in hastily set up detention centers. Hundreds were reported killed.

One group of enterprising entrepreneurs sold postcards of photographs of the riot, including photos of corpses. The actual count of dead never was known because the city commission prohibited funerals in Tulsa. The city also passed a fire ordinance designed to keep blacks from rebuilding their community, but this was successfully defeated by a local black business firm. The city refused

by Charlene Scott Waruken
EOC staff

A Catholic Mexican American woman who saved the lives of two black youngsters during the Tulsa race riot 61 years ago still wonders what happened to the little boys she plucked from danger.

Mary Morales Aleman is in her 80's now, but the memory of her frightening experience during the notorious riot still remains fresh in her mind.

"I was born in Monterey of a Spanish and French mother," she began to tell her story from the wheelchair in which she spends most of her time.

"I came to this country at the age of 19, after graduating from the International Baptist College in Monterey."

MARRIED AT AGE 14, she was still childless

whites had gathered in separate mobs at the county jail at Sixth Street and Boulder Avenue because of rumors that a young black prisoner might be lynched that night.

"I went outside and saw airplanes coming from the north to the south," Aleman said. "One of the planes had a gun like a machine gun on it that squeaked. It was like a war."

THE BLACK COMMUNITY was being attacked not only from the ground, but from the air as well. Several witnesses reported that the planes flew low to the ground and that shots were fired at the populace below.

"I saw two little black boys running and screaming," Aleman continued her story. "So I ran to the middle of the street and grabbed those kids. I was

Race
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One group of enterprising entrepreneurs sold postcards of photographs of the riot, including photos of corpses. The actual count of dead never was known because the city commission prohibited funerals in Tulsa. The city also passed a fire ordinance designed to keep blacks from rebuilding their community, but this was successfully defeated by a local black law firm. The city refused to accept outside offers of relief monies, promising to pay for the rebirth of Greenwood.

More than 1,000 homeless black Tulsans were forced to sleep in tents during the winter of 1921-1922. White Tulsans did not rebuild black Tulsa, but black Tulsans persevered to undertake the task themselves.

Ellsworth found many "gaping holes" while trying to research the story of the riot. "I was told police records had burned, and when the early issues of the *Tribune* were later microfilmed, someone had ripped out the front-page article and removed part of the editorial page. The original bound volumes of the newspaper have also been destroyed."

The author said he had been "both discouraged and encouraged to tell the long forgotten story of the riot."

THE TULSA NEWSPAPERS had not done any major articles on the riot in 50 years," he said. "I was encouraged by historians who thought it was important to look into this and by older persons who were happy that someone was taking an interest in their lives.

"I was discouraged by people who consider the riot to be a blot on the city's history — and don't want anyone to bring it up. I call this the 'segregation of memory.' As a city or nation or human race, we cannot candy coat our past. The riot was a central event of the history of Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma — and should receive the attention it warrants.

"In terms of density of destruction and ratio of casualties to population, it has probably not been equaled by any riot in the United States in this century."

Race
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the little boys she plucked from danger. Mary Morales Aleman is in her 80's now, but the memory of her frightening experience during the notorious riot still remains fresh in her mind.

"I was born in Monterey of a Spanish and French mother," she began to tell her story from the wheelchair in which she spends most of her time.

"I came to this country at the age of 19, after graduating from the International Baptist College in Monterey."

MARRIED AT AGE 14, she was still childless when she moved to Tulsa and settled down on Quincy Street on the city's north side.

"When the race riot began, I had come to Tulsa to teach Spanish lessons for six months," she recalled. "My husband was working in a restaurant. We operated a Mexican restaurant for years here.

"I remember he ran home and told me to 'close the doors, close the doors!' Men had started shooting and we heard noises that sounded like thunder or a bomb exploding."

As hordes of whites descended upon their section of town, shooting, burning and looting, blacks fled and sought refuge and safety in other parts of town.

"My husband said the blacks were fighting back and that they might try to get inside our house," Aleman said. "I stood at the door and saw the colored people running."

The riot began on the evening of May 21, "already summer weather," as Aleman recalled. Blacks and

the little boys she plucked from danger. Aleman said. "One of the planes had a gun like a machine gun on it that squeaked. It was like a war."

THE BLACK COMMUNITY was being attacked not only from the ground, but from the air as well. Several witnesses reported that the planes flew low to the ground and that shots were fired at the populace below.

"I saw two little black boys running and screaming," Aleman continued her story. "So I ran to the middle of the street and grabbed those kids. I was like a mother hen, but I thought we were going to be killed. I expected to die, but I did not let loose of the children."

As she stood with her arms around the boys in the middle of the street, she prayed and yelled at the planes, begging them not to shoot.

"One of the pilots was looking at us through binoculars," she explained. "I think they did not shoot when they saw I was not a black mother."

The Hispanic woman took the frightened boys into her house and fed them to calm them down "because their hearts were pounding so."

"I never knew their names. They said their parents had told them to run and save themselves when the riot began. They left in a hurry to see if their parents were still living."

THE DIRECTOR OF A SQUAD of grave diggers reported that 150 blacks died in the riot, but Tulsa's black newspaper, *The Oklahoma Eagle*, claimed that as many as 300 were killed.

"We were just lucky," reflected the elderly member of St. Francis parish who has been widowed twice and has two children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

"It was faith," she corrected herself. "I believe you have to have a strong faith to live. My mother taught me different things to say to the good Lord, and I still thank Him for what He did for us that day."

After the riot, Aleman spent a year working with the Red Cross, helping blacks restore their lives. The City's promise to rebuild the black community came to nothing, but the Red Cross expended more than \$100,000 in relief work from June to Christmas Eve, 1921.

The riot is just a memory now to people like Mary Morales Aleman, who survived and lived to tell her great-grandchildren about it. Still, after all these years, she continues to ponder it.

"I wonder if those two little boys still live here — and if they remember me?" she asks with a gleam in her eye.



MARY MORALES ALEMAN