

## **Triumph After Destruction: Finding Community in Greenwood After the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre**

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The history of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and its aftermath has immensely deepened my understanding of community resilience. Growing up in Tulsa, I attended George Washington Carver Middle School and Booker T. Washington High School, graduating in 2021, a century after the massacre. It was within these schools that I first encountered the devastating yet inspiring stories of the massacre and its long-silenced aftermath. Here, I learned about the perseverance and strength of those who lived through this tragedy and rebuilt Greenwood, igniting a passion in me to uplift the stories of marginalized voices.

This project was completed in three phases. First, I focused on building a strong foundation by familiarizing myself with the history of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre through extensive reading. I reviewed key texts that provided both historical context and scholarly analysis of the massacre and its aftermath. This phase was crucial in shaping the direction of my research for the rest of the summer. In phase two, I delved deeper into the history of key institutions and spaces that have served as the backbone of community life in Greenwood across generations as well as personal narratives of survivors. My research focused on churches, educational centers, and cultural spaces that, despite the devastation of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, remained sources of resilience, healing, and identity for Black Tulsans. In the final phase of my project, I focused on compiling and synthesizing the research I had gathered throughout the summer.

As I sifted through these stories, common themes of resilience, determination, and the deep sense of home in Greenwood emerged, providing a powerful lens to view the community's recovery after the Tulsa Race Massacre. The theme of resilience was apparent in nearly every story I encountered. Black Tulsans remained committed to restoring their community. Churches, businesses, and cultural institutions were rebuilt, often without outside support, showcasing the strength of a community determined to persevere. This collective resilience was not only about physical rebuilding but about reclaiming a sense of dignity and pride in the face of injustice.

Determination was another key theme throughout my research. Many survivors and their descendants refused to leave Greenwood despite immense pressure and economic challenges. Even without the financial resources to go elsewhere, they chose to stay and rebuild. Their determination to restore what had been lost—homes, businesses, and a way of life—was driven by a deep-rooted belief in the value of their community and their right to exist in Tulsa.

Lastly, the concept of home played a crucial role in the decision to stay and rebuild. Greenwood was more than just a place. It was home to generations of Black families who had established deep roots in the neighborhood. The massacre, which sought to erase their presence, only strengthened the community's connection to Greenwood. Leaving meant abandoning not only physical possessions but the bonds of community, culture, and identity. As I compiled my findings, these recurring themes of resilience, determination, and home became central to my understanding of Greenwood's recovery. They reflect the strength of a community that ensured that Greenwood's legacy continues to inspire future generations.

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