

## **Introduction: Oral History of the Tulsa Race Massacre**

If you grew up in Tulsa before the late 1990s, you might not have learned about the Tulsa Race Massacre. For many decades, the worst racial attack in American history was not spoken of by survivors, witnesses, or wrongdoers. Greenwood was a wealthy Black neighborhood and business community in the early 1900s. On June 1, 1921 an angry White mob burned and destroyed Greenwood. Although the survivors rebuilt Greenwood into a thriving community again, the effects of the massacre did not disappear.

One effect of the massacre was the silencing of victims and lack of acknowledgement of harm done to the community. The city and state governments and officials did not want people to know what happened because they did not want Tulsa to look poorly. The newspaper at the time did not fully report everything that happened. Around 70 years after the Tulsa Race Massacre, some government officials wanted to learn more about what happened. In 1997, the Oklahoma State Legislature decided to appoint people to research the destruction of the Tulsa Race Massacre. They created the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Race Riot of 1921.

One person who was part of the commission was Eddie Faye Gates, an educator in Tulsa. She was a history teacher at Edison High School for over twenty years. Gates was passionate about collecting stories for Tulsans and the world to understand and remember what happened during the Tulsa Race Massacre.

She interviewed 169 survivors who lived all over the world. The survivors she interviewed between 1997 - 2001 were 80 - 108 years old. Through her work, for the first time people around the world could hear what happened from the survivors own words. In this lesson, we will watch two of the interviews she conducted.