



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

"Profile of a Race Riot" (1971) by Ed Wheeler

Extracted on Mar-28-2024 02:48:23

The Smithsonian Institution thanks all digital volunteers that transcribed and reviewed this material. Your work enriches Smithsonian collections, making them available to anyone with an interest in using them.

The Smithsonian Institution (the "Smithsonian") provides the content on this website (transcription.si.edu), other Smithsonian websites, and third-party sites on which it maintains a presence ("SI Websites") in support of its mission for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian invites visitors to use its online content for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using this website, you accept and agree to abide by the [following terms](#).

- If sharing the material in personal and educational contexts, please cite the National Museum of African American History and Culture as source of the content and the project title as provided at the top of the document. Include the accession number or collection name; when possible, link to the National Museum of African American History and Culture website.
- If you wish to use this material in a for-profit publication, exhibition, or online project, please contact National Museum of African American History and Culture or transcribe@si.edu

For more information on this project and related material, contact the National Museum of African American History and Culture. [See this project](#) and other collections in the Smithsonian Transcription Center.

The battle raged throughout the early morning hours.

As the negroes defended and then retreated from buildings, pawn shops, stores and offices, whites would invade them, loot everything of value, pile combustible material in the middle of the floor and set it afire.

Greenwood Avenue was soon engulfed in flames. Burning negro residences and businesses illuminated a rampaging white mob that was killing, looting and burning.

Negroes began to flee. Reports began to arrive from Collinsville, Turley and Bartlesville that negro refugees were flooding the roads into those communities.

Eyewitnesses later testified that whites in cars would roar down negro residential areas and spray shotgun and

[[image - photograph]]
[[caption]] NOT BERLIN, BUT TULSA, JUNE 1, 1921 [[/caption]]

rifle fire indiscriminately into homes, businesses and men, women and children in their line of fire.

A red glow lit up the sky of north Tulsa. The entire business section of "Little Africa" had been put to the torch. 860 stores and homes were being consumed in the fire and the maddened white mob threatened to shoot any fireman who attempted to lay hose or put out the fires.

Dawn, June 1, 1921.

The fire raged throughout the morning. The white mob continued to loot and burn. Firing was by then almost entirely confined to "Little Africa" and casualties began to mount so fast that the national guardsmen and police had to divert their forces from attempting to stop the white mob to picking up bodies, loading them on trucks and evacuating them.

Negro resistance had been broken and the white rioters took full advantage of the situation. Many members of the mob related that the whole affair was "exciting."

9:00 A.M., June 1, 1921.

Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett published the Governor's decree of martial law. Immediately national guardsmen took control of policing the city.

Convention Hall, McNulty Ball Park and the Tulsa Fairgrounds were established as interment centers for persons detained for civil prosecution.

National guardsmen were then sent in force into "Little Africa" to arrest

any person, white or black, involved in the rioting. The white mob was ordered to disarm and return to their homes.

Eventually more than 6,000 negroes and white rioters were apprehended by national guardsmen and taken to one of the three internment centers.

Rumors continued to blanket the city despite the efforts of the national guard, that 25,000 white rioters were still running rampant and that national guard troops had mowed down negroes with machine guns, all of which were untrue.

While the national guard was fighting to obtain control of the burning city, the civic leaders attempted to explain the riot to the press.

Alva J. Niles, president of the Tulsa chamber of commerce and former veteran of the Spanish-American War, Mexican border and World War I issued a statement to the Associated Press and United Press representatives as well as other press representatives from around the nation who had come to Tulsa to cover the riot story. He said, "A minor arrest had been made and publicly announced, the defendant being a negro boy. Under bad advice and led by

"Profile of a Race Riot" (1971) by Ed Wheeler
Transcribed and Reviewed by Digital Volunteers
Extracted Mar-28-2024 02:48:23



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

Join us!

The Transcription Center: <https://transcription.si.edu>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianTranscriptionCenter>

On Twitter: [@TranscribeSI](https://twitter.com/TranscribeSI)

Connect with the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institution: www.si.edu

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Smithsonian>

On Twitter: [@smithsonian](https://twitter.com/smithsonian)