



Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, The University of Tulsa via AP

Two armed men walk away from burning buildings as others walk in the opposite direction during the June 1, 1921, Tulsa Race Massacre.

Tulsa

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Many involved Black Americans, of which the Tulsa Race Massacre is considered among the most egregious in its absolute destruction, but other racial and ethnic communities have been impacted as well.

Americans not knowing about these events or not recognizing the full scope of the country's conflict-ridden history has impacts that continue to reverberate, Guild said.

"If we don't understand the nature of the harm ... we can't really have a full reckoning with the possibility of any kind of redress," he said.

Manisha Sinha, a professor of American history at the University of Connecticut, agreed.

"It's really important for Americans to learn from the past, because you really cannot even understand some of our current-day political divisions and ideas unless you realize that this conversation over both the nature and the parameters of American democracy is an ongoing and a really long one," she said.

Atrocities in the West and elsewhere

Terrible events that many Americans don't know about include long-ago history, such as the 1864 Sand Creek massacre of around 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho people by U.S. soldiers in Colorado, or the Snake River attack in Oregon in 1887, where as many as 34 Chinese gold miners were killed.

The "massacre at Hells Canyon" on the Oregon side of the Snake River happened after the gold rush era, when Chinese laborers came to this country by the tens of thousands. It has been called the worst massacre of Chinese by whites in American history, according to a 2016 Oregon Public Broadcasting project about the massacre. The killers were known, but no one was ever convicted. A memorial marks the spot where the gold miners died.

Other atrocities are within



People watch the documentary "Rebuilding Black Wall Street" during a drive-in screening of documentaries Wednesday during centennial commemorations of the Tulsa Race Massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

John Locher/AP

the lifetimes of many Americans living today, like the 1985 bombing by Philadelphia police of the house that headquartered the Black organization MOVE, killing 11 people.

As odd as it may sound, the mere fact that something happened isn't enough for it to be remembered, said Robin Wagner-Pacifi, a professor teaching sociology at the New School for Social Research, who has written about the MOVE bombing.

"You can never assume, no matter how huge an event may be in terms of its literal impact on numbers of people, that it's going to be framed and recognized and move forward in time, in memory, by future publics or state apparatuses or political forces," she said.

In Oklahoma, the massacre largely wasn't discussed until a commission was formed in 1997 to investigate the violence. For decades, the state's public schools called it the Tulsa race riot, when it was discussed at all. Students now are urged to consider the differences between calling it a "massacre" or a "riot."

How an event is presented can make a difference, Wagner-Pacifi said. That could include whether it's connected to other historical moments and what parts are emphasized or downplayed.

"All sorts of political forces and actors will kind of move in, to try to name it and claim it, in order either to tamp it down in its impact or to elaborate it in its impact," she said.

She pointed to a current event: the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection by a predominantly white mob at the U.S. Capitol. Some Republicans have attempted to minimize or even deny the violence, and on Friday GOP senators blocked the creation of a bipartisan panel to investigate the attack.

'Race clash' in 1921

In Tulsa, word of unrest that started on May 31, 1921, and ran through the night and the next day made it to news outlets.

Front-page stories and accounts from The Associated Press spoke of a "race clash" and "armed conflict." But the aftermath — of a community shattered — was relegated to inside pages at best before being swept under the rug.

In one example, a story weeks later well inside the pages of The New York Times reported in passing that a grand jury in Oklahoma had determined the catastrophe was due to the actions of armed Black people and the white people who got involved were not at fault.

It just shows that remember-

ing is never just actually about remembering, Wagner-Pacifi said.

"It's always motivated," she said. "Who remembers what about the past, who allows a past to be remembered, to be brought back to life and in what ways ... it's absolutely fundamental to who you decide you want to be in the present."

TODAY

It's Sunday, May 30, the 150th day of 2021. There are 215 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

In 1431, Joan of Arc, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rouen, France.

In 1883, 12 people were trampled to death in a stampede sparked by a rumor that the recently opened Brooklyn Bridge was in danger of collapsing.

In 1922, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in a ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding, Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Robert Todd Lincoln.

In 1937, ten people were killed when police fired on steelworkers demonstrating near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago.

In 1943, during World War II, American troops secured the Aleutian island of Attu from Japanese forces.

In 1971, the American space probe Mariner 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a journey to Mars.

In 1972, three members of the Japanese Red Army opened fire at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, killing 26 people. Two attackers died; the third was captured.

In 1989, student protesters in Beijing erected a "Goddess of Democracy" statue in Tiananmen Square (the statue was destroyed in the Chinese government's crackdown).

In 1994, Mormon Church president Ezra Taft Benson died in Salt Lake City at 94.

In 1996, Britain's Prince Andrew and the former Sarah Ferguson were granted an uncontested decree ending their 10-year marriage.

In 2002, a solemn, wordless ceremony marked the end of the agonizing cleanup at ground zero in New York, 8.5 months after 9/11.

In 2006, the FBI said it had found no trace of Jimmy Hoffa after digging up a suburban Detroit horse farm.

In 2015, Vice President Joe Biden's son, former Delaware attorney general Beau Biden, died at 46 of brain cancer.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama selected Army Gen. Martin Dempsey to be the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman. Germany

announced plans to abandon nuclear power over the next 11 years, outlining an ambitious strategy in the wake of Japan's Fukushima disaster to replace atomic power with renewable energy sources.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama challenged Americans on Memorial Day to fill the silence from those who died serving their country with love and support for families of the fallen, "not just with words but with our actions."

One year ago: Tense protests over the death of George Floyd and other police killings of Black people grew across the country; racially diverse crowds held mostly peaceful demonstrations in dozens of cities, though many later descended into violence, with police cars set ablaze. The National Guard was deployed outside the White House, where crowds taunted law enforcement officers, who fired pepper spray. A fourth day of violence in Los Angeles prompted the mayor to impose a citywide curfew and call in the National Guard. Street protests in New York City over police killings spiraled into the city's worst day of unrest in decades, as fires burned, windows were smashed and confrontations between demonstrators and officers flared. A rocket ship built by Elon Musk's SpaceX took off from Florida's Cape Canaveral to carry two Americans to the International Space Station; it ushered in a new era of commercial space travel.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ruta Lee is 86. Actor Keir Dullea is 85. Rock musician Lenny Davidson (The Dave Clark Five) is 77. Actor Stephen Tobolowsky is 70. Actor Colm Meaney is 68. Actor Ted McGinley is 63. Actor Ralph Carter is 60. Actor Tonya Pinkins is 59. Country singer Wynonna Judd is 57. Rock musician Tom Morello (Audioslave; Rage Against The Machine) is 57. Actor Mark Sheppard is 57. Movie director Antoine Fuqua is 56. Actor John Ross Bowie is 50. Rock musician Patrick Doherty (Live) is 50. Actor Idina Menzel is 50. Rapper Cee Lo Green is 46. Rapper Remy Ma is 41. Actor Blake Bashoff is 40. Christian rock musician James Smith (Underoath) is 39. Actor Javicia Leslie is 34. Actor Jake Short is 24. Actor Sean Giambrone is 22. Actor Jared Gilmore is 21.

—Associated Press



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