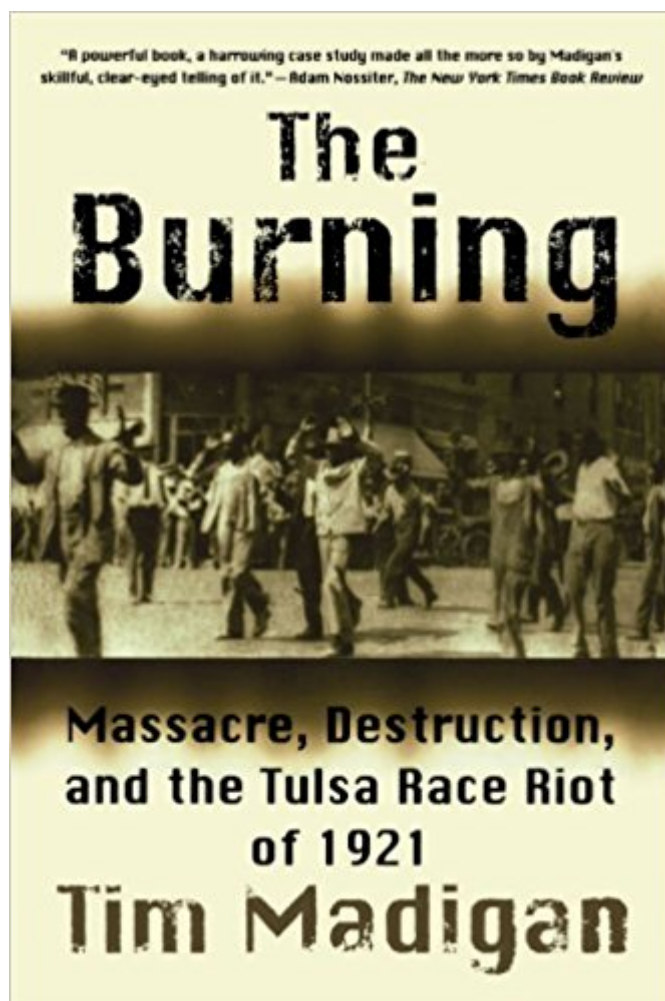


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# The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, And The Tulsa Race Riot Of 1921



## Synopsis

On the morning of June 1, 1921, a white mob numbering in the thousands marched across the railroad tracks dividing black from white in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and obliterated a black community then celebrated as one of America's most prosperous. 34 square blocks of Tulsa's Greenwood community, known then as the Negro Wall Street of America, were reduced to smoldering rubble. And now, 80 years later, the death toll of what is known as the Tulsa Race Riot is more difficult to pinpoint. Conservative estimates put the number of dead at about 100 (75% of the victims are believed to have been black), but the actual number of casualties could be triple that. The Tulsa Race Riot Commission, formed two years ago to determine exactly what happened, has recommended that restitution to the historic Greenwood Community would be good public policy and do much to repair the emotional as well as physical scars of this most terrible incident in our shared past. With chilling details, humanity, and the narrative thrust of compelling fiction, *The Burning* will recreate the town of Greenwood at the height of its prosperity, explore the currents of hatred, racism, and mistrust between its black residents and neighboring Tulsa's white population, narrate events leading up to and including Greenwood's annihilation, and document the subsequent silence that surrounded the tragedy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1921 in Tulsa, Okla., hundreds of black residents of the prosperous Greenwood community were massacred by a mob of white townspeople. Madigan, a reporter with the Fort Worth Star Telegram,

deftly locates the carnage in its proper political and cultural setting. Unlike previous accounts, this one shows how the riot touched individual lives by creating full-scale portraits of black and white citizens of oil-rich Tulsa. He fashions absorbing narratives from his interviews with survivors and from information uncovered by the 1997 Tulsa Race Riot Commission. Individual voices combine to relate the tragic chain of events, the madness and atmosphere of hate that compelled the white mob to torch almost every building in Greenwood. The earnest Sheriff McCullough worried about vigilantes running amok; the racist publisher Richard Lloyd Jones sought to sell newspapers by appealing to white bias; the defiant ex-slave Townsend Jackson refused to comply with Jim Crow laws; and the hapless Dick Rowland's arrest for accidentally bumping into a white girl triggers the slaughter. Madigan's skill at description, dialogue and pacing keeps the reader's interest at peak levels, and he does not gloss over brutal scenes of murder, arson and torture. Many other accounts have ignored the strong resistance of many Greenwood blacks against white marauders. Madigan draws implicit connections between one of the bloodiest racial atrocities in U.S. history and today's racial climate by concluding his timely history lesson with an update of the Tulsa commission findings and the city's move toward healing and reconciliation. 16 pages b&w photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Journalist Madigan (*See No Evil: Blind Devotion and Bloodshed in David Koresh's Holy War*) here tackles one of America's worst race riots, chronicling the shocking events of May 31 and June 1, 1921 when a white mob numbering in the thousands obliterated the African American community of Greenwood, OK, near Tulsa. Race riots and tensions were very common after World War I, but what makes the Greenwood incident unique was the unheard-of organization of the mob and the completeness of the destruction (35 city blocks systematically burned and destroyed along with hundreds of casualties). Though it is arguably America's worst race riot, surprisingly little has been written about it in the mainstream press. For this work, Madigan relied on taped interviews of survivors and witnesses, newspaper accounts, scholarly papers and theses, and interviews with the descendants of survivors. What results is a highly readable account of the circumstances and history surrounding the event and its aftermath. Truly an eye-opening book, this is essential reading for anyone struggling to understand race relations in America. Highly recommended for public and academic libraries. Robert Flatley, Frostburg State Univ., MD Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Racism and jealousy of "black" wealth - and a lying "white" woman in an elevator - sparked a terrorist act committed against American citizens known as the "Tulsa Race Riot of 1921." Before it could be controlled, a "white" police officer with credible facts and confession, was key to maintaining law and order. However, destruction, murder and mayhem claimed yet ANOTHER viable and self sustaining "black" community in America.-----Now-a-days, within disenfranchised "black" communities gentrification is everywhere, while owned almost exclusively by non-blacks. Consider the cosmetic industry; black-women purchase and spend billions annually. "Black" cosmetics are now largely in the hands of Korean and Chinese manufacturers -- unhealthy and toxic merchandise targeting "black" culture. Asians have no interest in vetting "blacks", let alone showing much along mutual tenets of respect... and simultaneously, the Chinese are becoming the "neo-landlords" of Africa. Clearly, Asians are not purchasing from "blacks"...If "blacks" are to succeed again, today, a lesson or two from A.G. Gaston's effective principles are necessary; which were used to combat segregated public water fountains - "White People Only" segregated signs - on the drinking fountains in front of institutions good enough to take "black" money; as in the case of the First National Bank of Birmingham, Alabama. Gaston threatened to pull his account. Indeed, he possessed the financial assets to make things happen. Many do not know, or have forgotten the extent to which "blacks" used to exert economic pressure to bring integration during the decade before the Civil Rights Act of 1964: "Black Titan: A.G. Gaston and the Making of a Black American Millionaire".It is entirely one thing to reminisce about our former "Black Wall Street" and successful segregated communities, or about the wealthiest person to ever exist, "Mansa Musa and the Empire of Mali", but it is another matter to currently and perpetually continue to "finance our own oppression". For example;1). In the mid-1990s, there were 54 "black" owned banks, today there are only 21 - with assets totaling only 4.7 billion - while "blacks" possess a combined 1.1 trillion dollars potential in buying power!!2). The truth remains, even "blacks" refuse to invest within the (so-called) "black" community, but are always seeking to escape oppression.3). And, we already know that the wealthiest of "blacks" today surly do not build or invest in "black" American communities, neither does some of the world's most racist - but powerful and dominant - corporations. Actually, these corporations would prefer not to employ us.... So, what has become of "blacks" taking care of our own... seeking and employing the services of "black" professionals as other ethnic groups?? Practically nil. That's right.As "black" consumers, we certainly have the resources.It is time "blacks" stopped financing our own oppression.Legislation and political party loyalty is a farce, and constantly proves - without money - "a vote is not a voice."

This book was an astonishing eye opener for me. I was born and grew up in Tulsa, graduated from Tulsa Central High School in 1959, and attended an Ivy League college. My parents graduated from Tulsa Central High School. At no time during my growing up in Tulsa or in college did I hear a single word about the race riot of 1921. The first time I became aware of the riot was several years ago when my brother sent me a copy of a little notebook that was the church secretary's diary for the First Methodist Church on 11th Street @ Boulder Avenue in Tulsa. In this diary was an entry describing treatment and boarding of victims of a riot in 1921. Soon thereafter I had the occasion to meet a former chairman of the chamber of commerce in Tulsa who filled me in on events leading up to the creation of the commission that was created by the state to report the facts of the riot as told in THE BURNING. For me it was a deafening silence! This is a must read for anyone who seeks to understand how hatred, mis information, rumor, and racism can fuel senseless violence on a massive scale and how a collective silence bred by fear and embarrassment can endure for decades.

I used to think of myself as being knowledgable about the Black experience in America. However, a few months ago I was asked about "Black Wall Street" and realized that while I'd heard the term I wasn't really sure what it was. "The Burning" solved that problem -- it's the term used to describe a race riot that took place in Tulsa in 1921, but "race riot" is putting it mildly. It was a massacre in which the part of the city populated by Blacks -- many of whom had achieved high levels of prosperity and even wealth -- was destroyed, looted, and burned to the ground, and where those who didn't flee were massacred. The death toll is still unknown but is likely to be in the hundreds if not more. The events resulted from a bogus claim by a white woman that a black male had assaulted her in an elevator. The truth appears to be that he tripped and fell on her, but no one -- least of all the yellow journalist who ran one of the city's newspapers -- was interested in the truth. Even an allegation of improper touching of a white woman by a black male became sufficient grounds for a lynching, and when the Black community pushed back the white community attacked. It is an awful story, made worse in light of recent events in Charlottesville and a president who seems bound and determined to support racism. Mr. Madigan does a decent job telling the story, and I find it appropriate that his horror at what happened in Tulsa comes through his journalistic prose. What caused four-star rating (i.e., not five) is that his writing is occasionally sloppy -- bad grammar, awkward phrasing -- and he jumps back and forth in time in a way that is I found objectionable, because he's inconsistent, and because it's unclear when he's doing it, so you find

yourself confused as to what you're reading. I suspect this is far from the best book on the subject, but if you haven't read about Black Wall Street, you should, and this is probably a decent place to start.

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