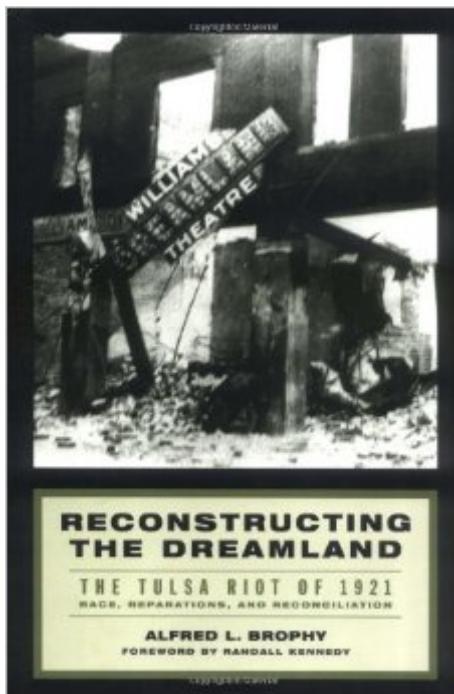


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Reconstructing The Dreamland: The Tulsa Race Riot Of 1921, Race Reparations, And Reconciliation



Synopsis

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot was the country's bloodiest civil disturbance of the century. Leaving perhaps 150 dead, 30 city blocks burned to the ground, and more than a thousand families homeless, the riot represented an unprecedented breakdown of the rule of law. It reduced the prosperous black community of Greenwood, Oklahoma, to rubble. In *Reconstructing the Dreamland*, Alfred Brophy draws on his own extensive research into contemporary accounts and court documents to chronicle this devastating riot, showing how and why the rule of law quickly eroded. Brophy offers a gut-wrenching portrait of mob violence and racism run amok, both on the night of the riot and the morning after, when a coordinated sunrise attack, accompanied by airplanes, stormed through Greenwood, torching and looting the community. Equally important, he shows how the city government and police not only permitted the looting, shootings, and burning of Greenwood, but actively participated in it. The police department, fearing that Greenwood was erupting into a "negro uprising" (which Brophy shows was not the case), deputized white citizens haphazardly, gave out guns and badges with little background check, or sent men to hardware stores to arm themselves. Likewise, the Tulsa-based units of the National Guard acted unconstitutionally, arresting every black resident they could find, leaving Greenwood property vulnerable to the white mob, special deputies, and police that followed behind and burned it. Brophy's revelations and stark narrative of the events of 1921 bring to life an incidence of racial violence that until recently lay mostly forgotten. *Reconstructing the Dreamland* concludes with a discussion of reparations for victims of the riot. That case has implications for other reparations movements, including reparations for slavery.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Professor Brophy has performed a great public service by writing a powerful, yet concise book about one of the most deadly race riots in United States history. On May 31, 1921, whites attacked black residents of the Greenwood addition of Tulsa, Oklahoma, burning, looting, and murdering. This book is absorbing, upsetting and fair. Professor Brophy's work is meticulously researched and heavily footnoted. In addition to investigation of the riot by in-depth research of the available legal materials that were generated by the riot, Professor Brophy has relied heavily upon the news accounts and editorials of the two largest black newspapers in Oklahoma at that time, the Black Dispatch in Oklahoma City, and the Tulsa Star in Tulsa. These two newspapers displayed stunning activism and fearlessness in criticizing the actions of whites who committed criminal acts against blacks during the riot, and at other times during that time period. It is interesting that blacks, who had been aroused by recent lynchings of blacks in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, had vowed to forcibly resist further lynching. The Tulsa Riot itself was set in motion by black concern over the arrest of a black who had been arrested for allegedly attempting to rape a white female elevator operator, and was accelerated by white violence in response. If this murderous event had occurred today, the City of Tulsa would have been liable under civil rights laws. The city issued special deputy badges to virtually anyone who asked for it, regardless of background or qualifications. Some of these "special deputies" were undoubtedly the main criminal actors in the riot, and city law enforcement officials did little, if anything, to stop their crimes.

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