

## Is the whole world on fire?

The exhibition is on display from

**Tuesday 21st October to Friday 21 November 2014**

We are open Tuesday to Saturday

**10am to 6pm**



Eric Humphries at Greenwood and Archer.

Eric Humphries was raised in rural Norman, Oklahoma. From an early age Humphries was interested in drawing and painting and spent much of his free time doing so. With few artistic influences to call upon, Humphries practiced copying comic books and cartoons. In later years, he found himself drawn to politically motivated artists such as Diego Rivera and Keith Haring, and inevitably, decided that he would take his art in a socially conscious direction as well. Works by Humphries reflect an individuality forged by years of experimentation and an emphasis on simplifying down the key elements. The paintings Humphries makes are allegorical, depicting true life historical events as seen through the eyes of an artist.

Tulsa Race Riot Travelling Exhibition -



The Tulsa Race Riot was one of the worst riots in American history. During sixteen hours of fighting, over 800 people were injured and 10,000 people were left homeless. There were more than 1,000 homes destroyed by fire and millions of dollars in damage occurred. The number of black citizens killed by whites, as a result of the riot, is estimated at around 300. Greenwood, the black side of Tulsa, was destroyed.

Tulsa 1921: Quest for justice, reparations continues

## **Workers World.**

By Dolores Cox

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The matter of reparations for African Americans is one that the U.S. government has forever refused to address. Yet the condition of second-class status of persons of color, particularly Black people, is a matter of record in this country, ruled and dominated by white supremacy.

May 31 marked the anniversary of the 1921 Tulsa, Okla., race "riot." The so-called riot was actually an 18-hour massacre of approximately 300 Black people, perpetrated by white residents in the segregated section of Greenwood. It was accompanied by the displacement and ethnic cleansing of 10,000 Black residents who were driven out of town.

The Black section was known as "Black Wall Street" because it was a prosperous, self-sufficient example of active self-determination. The community owned its own homes, property, banks, library, art house, stores, movie theatres, schools, hospital and transportation. They built these institutions during the 57 years after emancipation from slavery. Oklahoma was then an oil-rich state, which helped make possible the harnessing of Black entrepreneurial spirit.

Ironically, African Americans migrated from the Deep South to Oklahoma and other states to escape white racist terrorism, to seek safe haven and a better life.

The May 31 pogrom-like attack, considered the worse race "riot" in U.S. history, involved white deputized mobs, the Ku Klux Klan and government officials. It was triggered by the commonplace "justification" and accusation that a white woman's "virtue" had been violated.

The incident involved a Black teenage "shoeshine boy" in an elevator in a busy building who stumbled and lost his balance. In the attempt to regain his footing he inadvertently touched the white female elevator operator. This occurred at a time when even looking at a white woman could cost a Black male his life.

The boy was accused of sexual assault and taken to the courthouse jail, where a white mob later gathered to lynch him. In the Jim Crow South, the lynching of Black people was a form of "justice" practiced frequently. Both white adults and children attended lynchings, and the victim's body parts were mutilated and then distributed as souvenirs. When the Greenwood Black men, including World War I vets, went to town to rescue the "shoeshine boy" they were shot at and killed, some while wearing their army uniforms.

The violence didn't end there. In the middle of the night while Blacks slept, their homes and stores were broken into and looted. The homes were also bombed by airplane and burned to the ground by lit torches. Black people were killed by machine guns in their homes and while fleeing in the streets, outnumbered 10-to -1 by the white population and unable to defend themselves or their property.

Black survivors were rounded up by the National Guard, detained for several days in the Convention Hall, and treated like criminals. When released, they were forced out of town and left destitute. Their land and property that had not been destroyed were stolen by white residents.

What Black Greenwood residents lost was not only their homes, land, businesses and personal possessions. Future generations of their descendents were denied, by deliberate acts of predatory

bigotry and violence, the inheritance of what their families had built. Losses by Blacks in Tulsa reflect losses by all descendents of enslaved Africans, whose unpaid labor amounts today to trillions of dollars. This amassed fortune has accounted for the majority-white capitalists' wealth, from which Black descendants still have not benefited or received reparations. This situation has existed for centuries, since the founding of the U.S., based also on the theft of Indigenous lands and later of two-thirds of Mexico, in addition to slavery.

The legacy of white supremacy has helped create the disproportionate racial gaps in wealth, health, education and employment; incalculable intergenerational losses and damages; and continuing discrimination and marginalization of Blacks. Following emancipation, African Americans were at the bottom of the social, political and economic ladder, and have been intentionally kept there by institutional and systemic racism.

Displacement of the Tulsa survivors was the country's largest such diaspora until Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when an estimated 1 million mostly Black citizens lost their homes and property due to broken levees, and were forced to resettle throughout the country. Similar to Tulsa, New Orleans residents were "contained" in the New Orleans Superdome in deplorable conditions, largely ignored by the government and criminalized by the media. And having lost their homes, property, jobs and small businesses, they are still fighting for the right to return home.

Blacks also continue to be slaughtered in their own homes, exemplified by the May 16 terrorism by the Detroit police shooting, fire bombing and killing of 7-year-old Aiyana Jones while she slept. May 13 was also the 25th anniversary of the racist police helicopter bombing of the MOVE family house in Philadelphia and the shootings by government authorities that resulted in the deaths of 11 inhabitants, including children, and the destruction by fire of 61 adjacent homes.

To date, there are only 45 Tulsa "riot" survivors remaining, ranging in age from their 90s to 107 years old. For years, they have been seeking recognition of their humanity, justice and remuneration for damages owed them. But their efforts have been thwarted or ignored with no apologies given by the U.S. authorities.

For decades what happened in Greenwood was denied, whited out and covered up. It was deliberately kept out of U.S. history and remained Tulsa's best kept secret. Federal, state and local officials, and townspeople refused to acknowledge the atrocious event, and no individuals or agencies were ever held accountable.

After uncovering concealed evidence in 2001 on the "riot," a lawsuit was filed by professor/attorney Charles Ogletree for justice and reparations. A legal campaign called "One Day in May" was established to right the long overdue wrongs done to the remaining survivors while they are still alive. The urgency is obvious.



This exhibition, entitled "Is the whole world on fire?", is comprised of a series of eight canvases depicting the events occurring May 31 through June 1, 1921, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, commonly known as the Tulsa Race Riot. The paintings are arranged in chronological order. Each one

tells a part of the story so that the viewer is led through the entire event one canvas at a time. Each canvas is also accompanied by several small signs which tell their own part of the story and a print of the actual photograph that inspired the painting.

When asked about the full scale replica of his exhibition "Is the Whole World on Fire?" being shown in Liverpool, England, Humphries stated, "I think that it is fantastic. The point of making this exhibition was not only to teach people the story of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot, but to show them the immense devastation that hatred left unchecked can cause. To think of this story traveling all of the way to England to touch the consciousness of those people as well, makes me very happy. I feel like I've done something worth while with my art. "

## A Race Riot.

During 2011 the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the 'Toxteth Uprisings', I felt the need to look outside and decided to highlight the little known and horrific race riots which occurred back in 1921 in Tulsa Oklahoma. Greenwood, an area within Tulsa, was home to the most powerful and affluent African-American community in the USA. In one of the largest racial conflicts and cover-ups in America's history "Black Wall Street" as it is known, was burned to the ground. Eric Humphries exhibition "**is the whole world on fire?**" visually guides the viewer through a series of 8 paintings -photographs and text explaining about the evolution & destruction of one of America's greatest cultural epicenters in one of the least understood atrocities of the Jim Crow era.

The 1921 Riot was essentially a land-grabbing, racially motivated clearout, with Tulsa's oil-elite and the Ku Klux Klan ridden local government and press working to take advantage of the racially tense climate that pervaded, Jim Crow era, Oklahoma.

It is now estimated (after a state enquiry) about 300 members of the African American community died, many after being attacked from the air with, home made, incendiary bombs dropped from WW1 bi-planes, some of which were flown by members of the Ku Klux Klan.

A small part of the Greenwood neighbourhood was finally rebuilt after it's destruction and once again became a cultural centrepiece of the Midwest through the 30's & 40's..

The district was destroyed yet again by the city in the early 1980's in the name of "urban renewal" and Interstate 244 now cuts through the heart of the once legendary Black Wall Street, The new Drillers Ballpark presides over the ashes of the Greenwood neighbourhood of years gone by.

The exhibition of "**is the while world on fire**" is a replica of the one presently on display in Tulsa where the city remembers the horrific events of 1921 It is on public display at the Black-E from Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October until the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014.



This exhibition is appropriate for all ages.

The exhibition is curated for 'Shap' by

Mr Joe Farrag.

**Joe |Farrag [at] shap.org.uk**

**<http://www.paintedatrocities.com/>**

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