

## ***The Invisibility of Racism – May 26, 2021***

### *Lorna Campbell Clarke's Opening Remarks*

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Monday, May 31st, marks 100 years since the Tulsa Race Massacre — one of the worst episodes of racial violence in U.S. history. An armed white mob attacked Greenwood, a prosperous Black community in Tulsa, Oklahoma - killing as many as 300 people. What was known as Black Wall Street was burned to the ground. Eyewitnesses recall the throngs of men carrying flaming torches through the streets, setting fire to homes and businesses.

Yesterday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, marked one year since a police officer knelt on George Floyd's neck, for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, suffocating him to death, whilst other police officers watched. Police repelled protesters responding to the death of George Floyd by using rubber bullets, tear gas and military assets like helicopters.<sup>1</sup> Floyd's murder prompted an uprising for racial justice nearly unparalleled in American history.

Nearly 5 months ago, an angry, mainly white mob broke into the U.S. Capitol, forcing a lock down while lawmakers and staff were evacuated and rushed to safety. Rioters occupied and vandalized the Capitol for several hours, attacking police with pipes, chemicals, and planting bombs. They were met largely with restraint by law enforcement. Many Americans have called out the "two systems of justice," one for the rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol and another for the peaceful protesters like those at the BLM movement months before who marched for social justice.<sup>2</sup>

We entered 2020 with a raging pandemic disproportionately affecting communities of color. The Center for American Progress states – “The United States is home to stark and persistent racial disparities in health coverage, chronic health conditions, mental health, and mortality. These disparities are not a result of individual or group behavior but decades of systematic inequality in American economic, housing, and health care systems.”

Today – the question is - What can be done to dismantle centuries of discrimination in the U.S.? What makes racism such a complicated problem to solve?

Consider this statement from the American Psychological Association – “In our society, Whiteness is a default standard; one from which all other groups of color are compared, contrasted, and made visible. From this color standard, racial and ethnic {peoples} are evaluated, judged, and often found to be lacking, inferior, deviant, or abnormal. Whiteness would not be problematic if it were not (a) predicated on White supremacy, (b) imposed overtly and covertly on People of Color, and (c) made invisible to those who benefit from its existence. Seen from this vantage point, Whiteness is an invisible veil that cloaks its harmful racist effects through individuals, organizations, and society. Thus, Whiteness, White supremacy, and White privilege are three interlocking forces that disguise racism so it may allow White people to oppress and harm persons of color while maintaining their individual and collective advantage and innocence. If we are to overcome, or at least minimize the forces of racism, we must make Whiteness visible.”

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1 – apnews.com 1/14/2021

2 – USA Today on Twitter 1/9/2021