

Resolution 2021R-011

By Director Miller

WHEREAS, The Black Lives Matter movement has raised the consciousness of many Americans and, while the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery have led to massive demonstrations, it is over 400 years of oppression that has brought the United States to this moment; and

WHEREAS, The killing of Black people in this country has deep roots in the dehumanizing system of white supremacy that once defined Black bodies as property and persisted in the form of lynchings during the years of Jim Crow and continues today with both racist policing and killings and white nationalist mob mentality; and

WHEREAS, The systems of white supremacy persist with laws, policies and government actions including mass incarceration, the war on drugs, unjust policing, voter suppression, and structural policies that maintain racial segregation (redlining, urban renewal, employment discrimination, and more)— with disastrous consequences on Black communities; and

WHEREAS, Despite these injustices, Black communities have always fought back and sought to rebound, with communities across the country, like Milwaukee’s historic Bronzeville neighborhood serving as a testament to this persistence; and

WHEREAS, One prominent example of this history took place in the Greenwood community of Tulsa, Oklahoma, proudly known as Black Wall Street; and

WHEREAS, Greenwood, OK, forced to segregate under Oklahoma’s Jim Crow laws, grew to prominence in the years leading into World War 1 alongside Oklahoma’s over 40 Black townships with thousands of people migrating to Greenwood during and after the war, creating a vibrant Black economic and cultural center in a state that only joined the Union in 1907; and

WHEREAS, Across the country, Black communities faced virulent attacks in 1919, known as “Red Summer,” with Greenwood facing the same lynch-mob attacks on May 31, 1921,

where, by noon on June 1, a white mob had burned the entire 35-block area of Greenwood to the ground and lynched over 300 of its citizens while holding thousands more in internment camps; and

WHEREAS, No criminal charges were made; no reparations followed this destruction of lives and property; no insurance claims were honored; no law suits were won and the city council passed ordinances that made it very difficult for Black property owners to rebuild; and

WHEREAS, Yet in the face of all this, Greenwood did rebuild, only to be set back by urban renewal that used this prime location, near downtown Tulsa, for a major freeway, a baseball stadium and a college campus; and

WHEREAS, This story is familiar to Milwaukee and Black communities across the country; and

WHEREAS, The Centennial of the destruction of Greenwood is May 31, 2021 – a day when Black communities in Tulsa and throughout Oklahoma will be commemorating the legacy of Black Wall Street and the resilience of those standing up to the mob attacks; and

WHEREAS, This is an opportunity for Milwaukee to show solidarity while connecting Milwaukee's experience to Tulsa's experience, shining light on structural racism and the kinds of solutions needed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED That Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), in partnership with America's Black Holocaust Museum, Marquette University's Center for Urban Research, Teaching & Outreach (CURTO) and the Community Schools Partnership supports the project "Black Renaissance and Resilience, From Tulsa to Milwaukee" to present Milwaukee's students and communities with the history of Greenwood alongside the history of Milwaukee's Black communities; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That exchanges with organizations and individuals in Tulsa will be part of this work, that MPS will participate in the creation and presentation of panels,

videos, slide shows, workshops, and that curriculum will be offered for the coming year leading to the Centennial on May 31, 2021 and; be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That professional development related to the implementation of this project shall be offered to MPS staff.

Introduced July 30, 2020