Joe Biden: ([07:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=452.55))
The events we speak of today took place 100 years ago, and yet I’m the first President in 100 years ever to come to Tulsa. I say that not as a compliment about me, but to think [inaudible 00:08:01] in this ground to acknowledge the truth, what took place here. For much too long the history of what took place here was told in silence, cloaked in darkness. But just because history is silent, it doesn’t mean that it did not take place. And while darkness can hide much, it erases nothing, it erases nothing. Some injustices are so heinous, so horrific, so grievous they can’t be buried no matter how hard people try. And so it is here, and so it is here only, only with truth can come healing, and justice, and repair, only with truth, facing it. But that isn’t enough.

Joe Biden: ([08:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=532.68))
First we have to see, hear, and give respect to Mother Randall, Mother Fletcher, and Mr. Van Ellis And to all those lost so many years ago, to all the descendants of those who suffered, to this community. That’s why we’re here, to shine a light, to make sure America knows the story in full. May 1921, formerly enslaved black people and their descendants are here in Tulsa, a boom town of oil and opportunity in a new frontier. On the North side across the rail tracks that divided the city, already segregated by law, they built something of their own worthy, worthy of their talent and their ambition.

Joe Biden: ([10:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=607.35))
Greenwood, a community, a way of life. Black doctors and lawyers, pastors, teachers, running hospitals, law practices, libraries, churches, schools, black veterans, like the man I had the privilege of giving the command coin to. Who fought, volunteered, and fought and came home, and still face such prejudice. Veterans have been back a few years helping after winning the first World War, building a new life back home with pride and confidence. Who were mom and, there were at the time mom and pop black diners, grocery stores, barbershops, tailors, the things that make up a community.

Joe Biden: ([11:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=663.541))
Tours, barbershops, tailors, the things that make up a community. At the Dreamland Theater, a young Black couple holding hands, falling in love. Friends gathered at music clubs and pool halls, at the Monroe Family Roller Skating Rink. Visitors staying in hotels like the Stratford. All around Black pride shared by the professional class and the working class who lived together side-by-side for blocks on end. Mother Randle was just six-years-old, six-years-old living with her grandma. She said she was lucky to have a home and toys and fortunate to live without fear. Mother Fletcher was seven-years-old, second of seven children, the youngest being Mr. Van Ellis was just a few months old, the children of former sharecroppers. When they went to bed at night in Greenwood, Mother Fletcher says they fell asleep rich in terms of the wealth, not real wealth, but a different wealth, a wealth in culture, and community, and heritage. One night changed everything. Everything changed. While Green was a community to itself, it was not separated from the outside. It wasn’t everyone, but there was enough hate, resentment, and vengeance in the community. Enough people who believe that America does not belong to everyone, and not everyone is created equal, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Black Americans, a belief in forced by law, by badge, by hood, and by noose. It speaks to that lit the fuse. It lit it by the spark that it provided, a fuse, a fury. It was an innocent interaction that turned into a terrible, terrible headline allegation of a Black male teenager attacking a white female teenager. A white mob of 1,000 gathered around the courthouse where the Black teenager was being held, ready to do a [inaudible 00:13:34], lynch that young man that night. But 75 Black men, including Black veterans arrived to stand guard. Words were exchanged. Then a scuffle. Then a shots fired. Hell was unleashed. Literal hell was unleashed through the night. In the morning, the mob terrorized Green with torches and guns shooting at will. A mob tied a Black man, by the waist, to the back of their truck, with his head banging along the pavement as they drove off.

Joe Biden: ([14:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=854.74))
A murdered Black family draped over the fence of their home outside. An elderly couple knelt by their bed, praying to God with their heart and their soul, when they were shot in the back of their heads. Private planes dropping explosives, the first and only domestic air assault of its kind on an American city here in Tulsa. Eight of Greenwood’s nearly two dozen churches burn like Mount Zion, across the street at Vernon AME. Mother Randle said it was like a war. Mother Fletcher says all these years later, she still sees Black bodies around. The Greenwood newspaper publisher, A.J. Smitherman penned a poem of what he heard and felt that night. And here’s the poem. He said, “Kill them, burn them, set the pace. Teach them how to keep their place. Rain of murder, theft, and plunder was the order of the night.” That’s what he remembers in the poem that he wrote.

Joe Biden: ([15:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=932.95))
100 years ago, at this hour, on this first day of June, smoke dark in the Tulsa sky, rising from 35 blocks of Greenwood, that were left in ash and ember, raised in rubble. Less than 24 hours, in Less than 24 hours, 1,100 Black homes and business were lost. They had insurance, many of them, rejected claims of damage. 10,000 people were left destitute and homeless, placed in interment camps. As I was told today, they were told, “Don’t you mention you were ever in a camp or we’ll come and get you.” That’s a survivor story. Yet no arrest of the mob were made, none. No proper accounting of the dead. The death toll records by local officials said there were 36 people. That’s all, 36 people. Based on studies records and accounts, the likely number is much more than the multiple of hundreds. Untold bodies dumped into mass graves, families who at a time waited for hours and days to know the fate of their loved ones, are now descendants, who’ve gone 100 years without closure.

Joe Biden: ([17:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=1034.23))
But as we speak, the process of exhuming the unmarked graves has started. And at this moment, I’d like to pause for a moment of silence for the fathers, the mothers, the sisters, sons, and daughters, friends of God and Greenwood. They deserve the dignity and they deserve our respect. May their souls rest in peace. My fellow Americans, this was not a riot. This was a massacre, among the worst in our history, but not the only one. And for too long, forgotten by our history. As soon as it happened, there was a clear effort to erase it from our memory, our collective memories, from the news and everyday conversations. For a long time schools in Tulsa didn’t even teach it, let alone schools elsewhere. And most people didn’t realize that a century ago, the second Klu Klux Klan had been founded. The second Klu Klux Klan had been founded.

Joe Biden: ([19:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=1152.93))
Friend of mine, Jon Meacham, I had written, when I said I was running to restore the soul of America. He wrote a book called The Soul of America, not because of what I said. And there’s a picture about page 160 in his book, showing over 30,000 Klu Klux Klan members in full regalia, Reverend. Pointed hats, the robes marching down Pennsylvania avenue in Washington, DC. Jesse, you know all about this. Washington DC. If my memory is correct, there were 37 members of the House of Representatives who were open members of the Klan. There were five, if I’m not mistaken, could have been seven, I think it was five members of the United States Senate, open members of the Klan. Multiple governors who were open members of the Klan. Most people didn’t realize that a century ago, the Klan was founded just six years before the horrific destruction here in Tulsa.

Joe Biden: ([20:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CWcjQ2eOMHdu_Wk40Fy4-acXMcRuM5ikT2Zig0iuaqvqMyNux-Cj6vUm4SlWbZagLei5ZUtvC0RAa_b0bNV8NT4squM?loadFrom=PastedDeeplink&ts=1218.09))
And one of the reasons why it was founded was because of guys like me who are Catholic. It wasn’t about African-Americans then. It was about making sure that all those Polish, and Irish, and Italian, and Eastern European Catholics, who came to the United States after World War I would not pollute Christianity. The flames from those burning crosses torched every region of the country. Millions of white Americans belonged to the Klan, and they weren’t even embarrassed by it. They were proud of it. And that hate became embedded systematically and systemically in our laws and our culture. We do ourselves no favors by pretending none of this ever happened or doesn’t impact us today, because it does still impact us today. We can’t just choose to learn what we want to know and not what we should know. We should know the good, the bad, everything. That’s what great nations do. They come to terms with their dark sides. And we’re a great nation. The only way to build a common ground is to truly repair and to rebuild.