CONEJO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ANNUAL RESOLUTION #25/26-43
IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE
TULSA RACE MASSACRE

WHEREAS, the Tulsa Race Massacre took place between May 31-June 1, 1921, in the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is considered one of the worst incidents of racial violence in American history; and

WHEREAS, Black Wall Street was a prosperous Black community located in the Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma. It thrived in the early 1900s and was home to many Black-owned businesses, including banks, pharmacies, grocery stores, and more; and

WHEREAS, on May 30, 1921, a young Black man, 19-year-old Dick Rowland, entered the Drexel Building in downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma, to use the only bathroom in the area available to Black people; and

WHEREAS, Sarah Page, a white 17-year-old elevator operator in the Drexel Building, accused Dick Rowland of assaulting her. On May 31, 1921, Dick Rowland was detained and held in the Tulsa Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, on May 31, 1921, the Tulsa Tribune released a story claiming that a young Black male attacked a white girl inciting ethnic tension that led to a large group of white individuals surrounding the courthouse to demand Dick Rowland be released to them so that he could be lynched; and

WHEREAS, a group of approximately 75 Black men arrived at the jail to protect young Rowland, and an elderly white man approached O. B. Mann, a Black man, and demanded his gun. A struggle ensued, and a gunshot went off, and then other shots rang out; in the end, 12 people were dead; and

WHEREAS, that night and the following day, heavily armed white mobs invaded the Greenwood District, killing men and burning and looting homes and businesses; and

WHEREAS, exact records of the people who died in the massacre are not available, historians estimate that 100-300 Black people were killed, including A. J. Smitherman, a newspaper editor and prominent leader in the black community, Dr. Andrew C. Jackson, a nationally regarded physician and surgeon, Dr. Berry Simms, physician and founder of the Simms Building, which housed many black-owned businesses, John and Loula Williams, owners of the Dreamland Theatre, one of the most popular entertainment venues in the district, Reverend Edward H. M. Johnson, a minister and influential community leader, and Mable Bledsoe, a young girl who was killed along with her mother when their home was burned down; and

WHEREAS, approximately 10,000 Black people were left homeless, amounting to 2.25 million dollars in damage (equivalent to $34.8 million in 2021) with no compensation to the residents, leaving many to rebuild on their own without adequate support or resources. Some Black-owned businesses were able to reopen, but the overall prosperity of Black Wall Street never fully returned; and

WHEREAS, In 1997, a state commission was established to investigate the massacre and provide a historical account. In 2001, a memorial was dedicated to the victims, and in 2021, the 100th anniversary of the massacre was widely commemorated with events and ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, Conejo Valley Unified School District expresses its deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones of those killed and injured in the Tulsa Race Massacre; and

WHEREAS, we condemn all acts of violence and terrorism that seek to harm innocent people and disrupt the functioning of our economy and society; and

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of Education of the Conejo Valley Unified School District stands in solidarity with the victims of the Tulsa Race Massacre and will contribute to the education of this horrific American tragedy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Education reaffirms its commitment to promoting a safe and secure environment for all who work in and visit our facilities and to fostering a culture of respect for the rule of law and human dignity in all our operations.

Bill Gorback

Bill Gorback, Clerk, Board of Education

Mark W. McLaughlin, Ed.D., Superintendent and Secretary to the Board of Education