

## This Week in History

### AUGUST 12

**1891** - Lillian Evans is born in Washington, D.C. As Damme Lillian Evanti (a contraction of her maiden name and that of her husband, Roy W. Tibbs), she will become a world-famous opera star who debuts in France with the Paris Opera and performs in the US and 11 countries on three continents. She will also become one of the founders of the National Negro Opera Company.

**1922** - Frederick Douglass' home in Washington, D.C. is dedicated as a memorial. The effort is led by Nannie Burroughs, Hallie Q. Brown, and other members of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

**1923** - Ophelia DeVore-Mitchell is born in Edgefield, S.C. She will be a pioneering force in opening the modeling field to African-Americans through her founding of the Grace Del Marco Model Agency and the Ophelia DeVore School of Self-Development and Modeling.

**1933** - Camille Billops is born in Los Angeles, Calif. She will become a painter, archivist, sculptor, ceramist, and filmmaker and have solo exhibitions in the US, Russia, Europe, Africa, and the Far East.

### AUGUST 13

**1881** - The first African-American nursing school opens at Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga.

**1892** - The first issue of the *Baltimore Afro-American* is published.

**1911** - James B. Parsons is born on Kansas City, Mo. After an early career in music, he will become an attorney, superior court judge in Cook County, Ill., and assistant US attorney, and in 1961, the first African-American appointed to a lifetime federal judgeship in the continental US.

**1917** - Claudia McNeil is born in Baltimore, Md. She will start her career as a singer and tour with Katherine Dunham before finding fame as an actress. Among her most notable roles will be as Lena Younger in both the play and movie versions of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

**1948** - Kathleen Battle is born in Portsmouth, Ohio. She will become an operatic soprano, winner of Grammy awards in 1987 and 1988, and could be considered by many one of the finest modern opera singers.

**1963** - Noted civil rights and labor leader, A. Philip Randolph strongly protests the AFL-CIO Executive Council's failure to endorse the August 28 March on Washington.

**1983** - Daley Thompson of Britain wins the decathlon championship at the World Track and Field Championship in Helsinki, Finland.

### AUGUST 14

**1883** - Ernest Everett Just is born in Charleston, S.C. He will become a noted marine biologist, head of the physiology department at Howard University, and recipient of the NAACP's first Spingarn Medal (1915).

**1938** - Niara Sudarkasa is born in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. She will be an anthropologist and groundbreaking educator, becoming the first professor to receive tenure at the University of Michigan, and the first woman president of Lincoln University, a traditionally male African-American college.

**1959** - Earvin Johnson is born in Lansing, Mich. He will become one of the best point guards in NBA History, with skills that earn him the nickname "Magic."

### AUGUST 15

**1900** - Riots erupt in New York City as a white plainclothes policeman is killed in a fight with an African-American man. It is the fourth racial riot in the city's history.

**1906** - At the second meeting of the Niagara Movement at Harpers Ferry, W.E.B. DuBois demands equal citizenship rights for African-Americans, saying, "We will not be satisfied to take one dot or little less than our full manhood rights..."

**1925** - Oscar Peterson is born in Montreal (Quebec), Canada. Classically trained in the piano he will work with top Canadian jazz bands until 1949, when he will first appear in New York City's Carnegie Hall. He will be recognized as a jazz innovator who forges a synthesis of bop and swing into his own unique style.

**1938** - Maxine Waters is born in St. Louis, Mo. A longtime California state legislator, in 1990 she will be the second African-American woman from California elected to the US Congress.

### AUGUST 16

**1938** - Revolutionary blues singer Robert L. Johnson dies  
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## Commission probing 78-year-old race riot

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — The search for mass graves of victims of the 1921 Tulsa race riot led to two locations in a cemetery and tests indicated "something there," an archaeologist testified Monday.

"At this point, I have to be very honest and say we can't say these two locations represent victims of the race riot," state archaeologist Bob Brooks told the Tulsa Race Riot Commission. Brooks said only excavation could determine that and "of course, since we're working in a cemetery, this is a very sensitive matter."

Nearly 80 years after white mobs torched Tulsa's black business district, witnesses and survivors are finally getting the chance to share their stories with a special panel.

The 11-member group, which includes a survivor, historians, lawmakers and community members, has already been investigating the riot for two years. The commission is trying to better determine what happened May 31, 1921, when white mobs torched Tulsa's black business district, and if reparations should be made.

Survivors were to appear before the panel later in the day to share their memories of that day. John Hope Franklin, the son of a riot survivor and head of President Clinton's national advisory board on race, was scheduled to speak.

The official death count of about three dozen has long been disputed. Historian

Scott Ellsworth, a commission aide who also has written a book on the riot, believes at least 200 to 300 people, mostly blacks, perished in the two days of fighting.

"We've had an intense study for over a year just looking at death figures," Ellsworth said. "I think we are now convinced this is the largest single incident of racial violence in American history."

The commission already has located 62 living black survivors, looked into reports of airplanes bombing blacks and of bodies tossed into the Arkansas River. The riot broke out when a white lynch mob clashed with blacks who came to help protect a black man accused of assaulting a white elevator operator. The woman later refused to bring charges against him.

Mobs set fire to homes, businesses and churches in the thriving black business district called Greenwood. When the smoke cleared, more than 35 blocks were in ruins and dozens lay dead.

Many blacks left and never returned. The National Guard rounded up thousands of others and held them at the fairgrounds, convention hall and a baseball stadium.

For decades, the city seemed to bury those memories with the ashes of Greenwood. It was only in 1996 that it recognized the anniversary of the riot.

The next year, the Legislature created the commission when Tulsa lawmakers raised the issue of

restitution.

State Rep. Don Ross, inspired by Florida's decision to pay the descendants of black victims of the 1923 massacre in Rosewood, originally sought payments for survivors.

Ross, who is black, now supports tax breaks for businesses that locate in low-income areas, ones he feels were robbed of their economic legacy by the riot.

"The only record of anybody getting payment as a result of the Tulsa disaster was a white man who owned a pawn shop where guns and ammunition were stolen for an assault on the black community," he said.

State Rep. Forrest Claunch, leader of the Republican caucus, isn't sure how controversial the issue will be when the commission submits its recommendation on reparations in January. But he sees no reason why this generation should pay for

what happened 78 years ago.

"It becomes tantamount to saying we are entirely a product of our past and I don't believe that's true," he said.

Veneice Dunn Sims, a 94-year-old black survivor who previously recorded her memories on videotape for the panel, isn't sure of the need to "stir up stuff" from the past.

"I think with the progress that has been made since then, they ought to let a dead dog lie dead," Mrs. Sims said in advance of today's hearing.

Sims can still recall the pale blue dress she had to leave behind as she and her family fled. Her home—and the dress neatly laid out for a high school banquet—burned during the violence.

While Mrs. Sims doesn't see the need to stir up the past, if someone decides she should be paid for her losses, she wouldn't mind having something to leave for family members.

## League

(Continued from Page 12)

in the twenty-first because we know we're not alone.

The vitality of the Urban League Movement, and the continued call for the code of conduct we stand for and the services and "brand name" we provide reflects the determination of people all over the country to improve the quality of life in their communities. This reality also stands in sharp contrast to those naysayers who continue to claim that the day of the Urban League and the NAACP has passed. Indeed, more than that, it proves that if our organizations didn't now exist, they'd have to be invented.

Senator Wellstone's eloquent—and wrenching—words are part of the reason you can expect to see the Urban League growing, not declining. It's because we go where we're needed.

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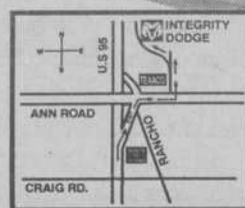
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