

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS  
GRADES 3-6 • EXTENSIONS FOR GRADES 7-8

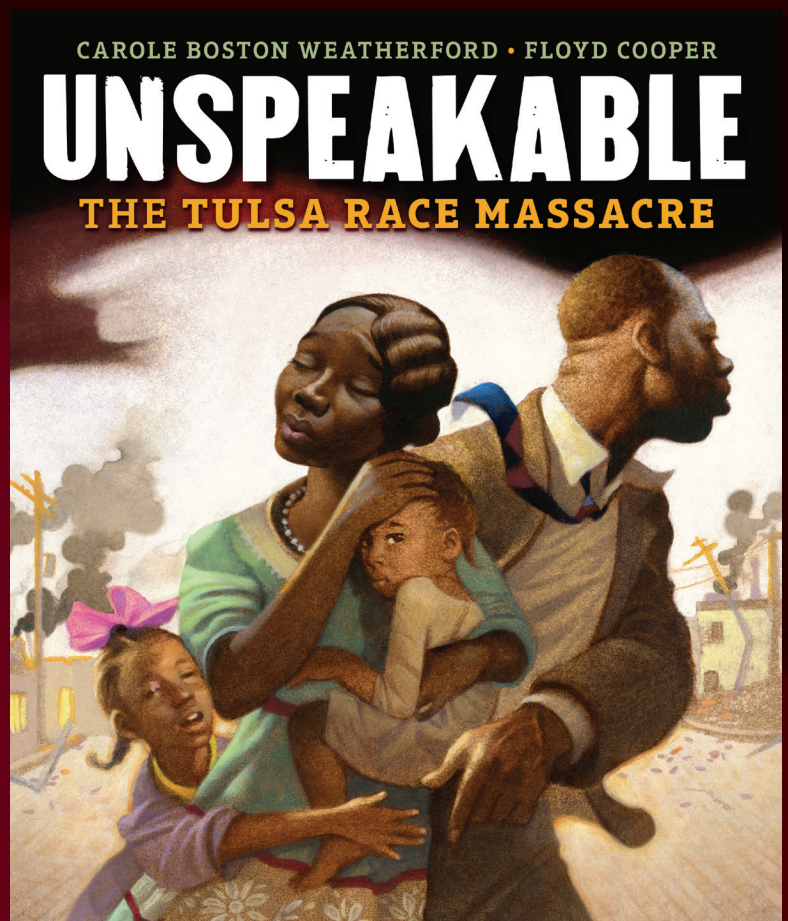
# UNSPEAKABLE

## THE TULSA RACE MASSACRE

**IN UNSPEAKABLE**, author Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrator Floyd Cooper provide young readers with the unsettling truths about the history of the United States and the impact of white supremacy and racism. Too often educators and caregivers believe that children are too young for these truths about race and racism, when in reality, they have hardly been a secret. As truth seekers, children are always looking to make sense of the world around them.

**RESEARCH SHOWS** that by the time children first enter school, they have already made keen observations about race. Shielding them from the truth about the entrenched racist society of our past and present is to deny them opportunities to develop necessary skills to understand how racism works, as well as the tools to dismantle systems of oppression. It perpetuates racism, rather than interrupts it. Instead of protecting children from the truth, our silence contributes to misconceptions and hinders their ability to challenge and change inequities in society.

**THE TRUTH IS**, learning about the **HISTORY OF RACE** in the United States and how to **TALK ABOUT RACISM** are among the **MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS** children can learn.



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This guide was created by **Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul**, educator, author, co-founder of the Institute for Racial Equity in Literacy, and director of diversity and equity at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University.

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# PREPARATION\*

## NOTES TO EDUCATORS

There are several ways to prepare for reading and teaching *Unspeakable* in the classroom that affirm racial and cultural identities, raise awareness about inequities, and help students have productive conversations about race and racism.



### AFFIRMING STUDENTS' IDENTITIES

Conversations about identities are powerful. They help educators to truly know their students and encourage classroom communities to develop strong bonds. Solidifying these relationships will create ideal conditions for having challenging and courageous conversations. Prior to reading *Unspeakable*, reflect on whether your classroom has been an identity-inspiring or identity-silencing space. Consider: *Are students able to bring their full selves to the classroom? How are identities such as race, ethnicity, and gender discussed? In what ways are the dynamic lives of students centered and affirmed?*

To create an entry point to discussions about race and to help make conversations about identities commonplace, invite students to create identity maps or webs.

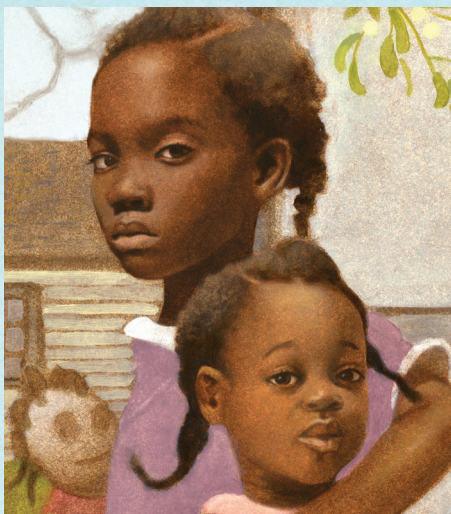
In *Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension*, educator and author Sara K. Ahmed describes identity webs as “personal graphic tools that help us consider the many factors that shape who we are.”

Modeling this is key. Sharing your own identity map can be an invitation for students to include both their personal identifiers (such as favorite music, food, sports, etc.) as well as social identities (race, ethnicity, religion, etc.).

For example, you might show your identity map and say, “Some of my identities are that I am . . .” and intentionally name race, gender, occupation, familial relationships, and more. Then explain, “We bring each of our identities to every text we read, and our identities influence our understandings of a text. They can help us to perceive more in a text,

particularly when we share identities and experiences with the characters and people being written about. And our identities can help us to recognize our limited understandings about the lived experiences of others. We’ll want to remain alert to this as we read *Unspeakable* and all texts.”

It is important to note that inviting students to share and discuss their identities is truly an invitation, not a requirement. When students feel safe and comfortable to do so, they will. Also, this work is fluid. Returning to identity maps regularly can inspire students to make additions and revisions as they see fit, and students can be guided to think about which of their identities they are more alert to as they read a text and to consider why that is.



### ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Work with students to create conditions for brave and safe discussions about race and racism. Since historically it has not been commonplace to have conversations about race in K-8 schools, establishing community agreements can help nurture classroom environments where powerful and productive discussions can thrive. Several free resources can support educators in this work.

- **Teaching Tolerance** (<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk>) offers support for facilitating critical conversations with students.
- **Facing History and Ourselves** (<https://www.facinghistory.org/back-to-school/teaching-toolkit/classroom-contracts/>) provides guidance for creating a classroom contract.
- **Mindful Schools** (<https://www.mindfulschools.org/inspiration/creating-a-safe-container-student-community-agreements/>) provides prompts and guidance for co-constructing community agreements with students.

Establishing community agreements can contribute to all students feeling supported in conversations about race.

\* While the terms Black and African American are often used interchangeably, Black people exist all over the world and therefore Black does not always mean African American. For the purposes of this guide, however, both Black and African American are used to refer to people born in the United States who are most likely descendants from enslaved Africans. It is important to note that racial identity is personal and nuanced. For a variety of complex reasons, some people prefer one term over another or identify as both.



## RAISING AWARENESS

Reading and teaching *Unspeakable* is a powerful opportunity to support students in developing their sociopolitical consciousness. Help students to identify larger sociocultural factors—such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, and their complex intersections—that are operating not only in the books they read but also in their lives. As students read *Unspeakable* and read the world, classroom discussions and teaching can help them recognize systems of oppression, such as racism and white supremacy, and become well positioned to confront and disrupt inequities.

An important way to begin is through reflecting carefully on your own instructional practices. Consider: *What knowledge and tools do I need in order to further my own racial consciousness? What opportunities have I created for conversations around inequalities? How have I helped students to develop skills for analyzing and interrogating systems of oppression?* As an educator, it is essential to interrogate your own biases and to continually develop your own racial consciousness. And it is critical that this parallel, intentional work occurs while providing students with language and lenses to develop racial literacy and discuss race and racism.

Racial literacy is a collection of skills that, as Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz explains in an essay in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, “probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race and institutionalized systems on their experiences and representation in US society.” As such, this is work that is multilayered and can result in more questions raised than educators and students can answer.

**This guide provides pathways for teaching *Unspeakable* in ways that help students to:**

- **Recognize racism as a contemporary rather than historical problem.** While *Unspeakable* is about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, when teaching this text, educators can help students make connections about the ways racism exists today and branches back to racism of the past.
- **Recognize the ways that race and racism are influenced by factors such as class and gender.** *Unspeakable* offers powerful opportunities to help students understand the social, political, and economic conditions that both contribute to and are consequences of racism.
- **Recognize whiteness and white supremacy.** Reading and guiding students in discussions about *Unspeakable* can support students in recognizing whiteness as the standard to which all other groups are compared and white supremacy as an ideology in which white people are believed to be superior to all racial groups as well as highlighting the importance of disrupting this.

Reading and teaching *Unspeakable* can help students understand the role race plays in all aspects of society in the United States. Students can understand how systemic oppression operates and also how strategic political and economic choices made by African Americans have been rooted in their aspirations to achieve their collective liberation.

## ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND TRAUMA

Consider how conversations about race and racism affect BIPOC students and work to mitigate harm. For example, when using additional resources alongside *Unspeakable*, avoid images and videos that are trauma inducing. Additionally, learn the signs of trauma, its impact on students, and teaching practices to implement that support students.

**The National Child Traumatic Stress Network** ([https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/addressing\\_race\\_and\\_trauma\\_in\\_the\\_classroom\\_educators.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/addressing_race_and_trauma_in_the_classroom_educators.pdf)) helps educators address the intersection of race and trauma in the classroom.

## PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Research shows that discussions about race aren't only silenced at school; they can be silenced at home as well. This is particularly true of white parents and caregivers. Parents of color are much more likely to talk to their children about race, preparing them for the ways they will inevitably face racism in their lives. Silences around race can result in children using stereotypes gleaned from media and other aspects of society to make sense of the world around them.

### SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE of a culture that tends to SILENCE RACE AND RACISM.

You might begin by discussing what race is. Explain that race has no scientific or genetic basis; it is constructed or made up. And while race isn't real, racism is. The racial categories that people are assigned to based on their appearance or how they identify themselves impact every aspect of their lives.

While reading *Unspeakable*, continue to discuss how racism has real ramifications for how groups of people fare in society. Specifically, discuss antiBlackness, racism, and the experiences of African Americans historically and presently in the United States. It is also critical that whiteness is named so children understand that racism does not happen due to some invisible force. Explain that racism is based on the concept of whiteness, the belief that the customs, standards, and culture of white people are superior to all other racial groups. Point out the ways people have worked to dismantle whiteness and discuss the ways you and your child can too.

It is important to let children know that racial justice is possible. It begins by learning the truth about racism, having honest and courageous conversations about race, and making choices that help to transform society.

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

The following prompts and questions can be used to engage readers in conversations before, during, and after reading *Unspeakable*.

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## VISUAL READ

Conduct a visual read of *Unspeakable*. Show the cover and all of the illustrations of the book and invite readers to share their insights. The following questions are open ended and allow for various interpretations of the art and craft of the illustrator.

- What is communicated about Greenwood through Floyd Cooper's illustrations?
- What is communicated about the African Americans living in Greenwood through Floyd Cooper's illustrations?
- Look at the inside front cover and the inside back cover. What do these images reveal? Why do you think the end sheets use two different mediums (illustration and photography)?

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## THEMES

Engage readers in discussions during and after reading *Unspeakable* around three powerful, distinct, and interconnected themes that emerge from this text: Resistance, Resilience, Reconciliation.

### RESISTANCE

*Resistance* is the refusal to accept harmful forces or to be defeated. Invite readers to remain alert to the ways that African Americans in Greenwood worked to protect themselves from racism, both physically and emotionally. Guide them to note how Black people responded to injustices they faced and took action against unfairness. Review key passages across pages 1-8 to explore the theme of resistance.

Segregation includes the policies and practices that, as Carole Boston Weatherford writes, separated neighborhoods, dividing Black and white communities.

#### For younger readers:

Rather than giving up and giving in, how did Black people resist racism and discrimination? Support young readers in noticing the actions of many Black people in response to racism such as:

- Leaving the segregated South
- Resisting segregation in the West by starting their own businesses
- Creating conditions in their segregated town that helped their community thrive

#### For older readers:

In what ways was Greenwood itself an act of resistance by African Americans in response to segregation and racism? Support older readers in noticing how even though segregation was forced upon them, African Americans asserted their humanity and right to live. Discuss all that encompasses this:

- Building homes
- Creating economic opportunities
- Establishing fair laws and policies
- Supporting their community

### **For older readers continued:**

How is Greenwood's moniker "Black Wall Street" a symbol of the resolve of African Americans to thrive, even while navigating a racist society? Support older readers in noticing what Wall Street represents beyond a physical location and what a Black Wall Street meant for Black people of the Greenwood community:

- Employment
- Wealth
- Success
- Power

## **RESILIENCE**

*Resilience* is the ability to persevere despite hardships and challenges. Invite students to remain alert to the ways that African Americans in Greenwood demonstrated determination and refused to allow the burden of racism to further disadvantage them. Review key passages across pages 9-16 to explore the theme of resilience.

On Black Wall Street, Carole Boston Weatherford writes, there were nearly two hundred Black-owned businesses.

### **For younger readers:**

In what ways did African American residents of Greenwood care for and support each other, making sure their community had what it needed to survive? Support young readers in noticing the ways Black people provided for one another, such creating their own:

- Restaurants
- Libraries
- Hospitals
- Lodging
- Shops and salons

### **For older readers:**

How did the residents and the Black-owned businesses they created help Greenwood become self-sustaining? Support older readers in noticing not only the economic importance of Greenwood but also what was cultivated there such as:

- Unity
- Pride
- Community

Which systems did African Americans in Greenwood create for themselves that demonstrated their resilience and enabled their community to thrive? Why were these systems necessary? Support older readers in noticing and discussing the importance of systems such as:

- Education
- Transportation
- Legal
- Health care



# RECONCILIATION

*Reconciliation* is the process of making amends and repairing a relationship that has been damaged. Invite students to remain alert to what the nation has done to acknowledge and apologize for the harm that racism has and continues to cause African Americans, as well as what has been done to prevent continued racism. Review key passages across pages 17-30 to explore the theme of reconciliation.

Carole Boston Weatherford explains that Tulsa's Reconciliation Park is a place not only to remember the past, particularly the victims of the massacre, but also to consider the responsibility of each of us to forge a better future.

## For younger readers:

What can be done to help heal the scars of racism and to interrupt racism today? Support younger readers in noticing ways they can take actions such as:

- Learning about the Tulsa Race Massacre and the history of race and racism in the United States
- Committing to be antiracist by taking action against unequal treatment of anyone based on their racial identity and viewing everyone as equals

## For older readers:

What will it mean for the United States to truly reconcile with its past? Support older readers in noticing and naming important steps involved in racial reconciliation and what each means such as:

- Acknowledgment—admitting and confronting America's racist past and present
- Apology—expressing regret and remorse for racism, rather than defensiveness
- Action—ongoing individual and collective learning that spotlights rather than silences racism and creating and upholding laws and policies to disrupt racism

## For older readers continued:

How can knowing about Greenwood and the Tulsa Race Massacre, as well as having honest conversations about race and racism, help the country forge a better future? Support older readers in noticing the importance of talking about race and racism and the steps they can take such as:

- Learning—learn about the history of race and racism in the United States
- Listening—listen especially to BIPOC and their lived experiences
- Taking action—action includes self-reflection, dialogue, and continued work to interrupt racism and to achieve racial justice

## GLOSSARY

**deputized:** a citizen who has received powers by law officials to act, temporarily, as a police officer

**enslaved:** forced to be slaves

**Exodusters:** African Americans who migrated from the South to Kansas, Oklahoma, and Colorado in the late 19th century

**lynched:** killed by a mob, typically by hanging, with or without a legal trial

**massacre:** deliberate and brutal killing of a number of usually helpless or unresisting people

**prominent:** important and widely known

**prospectors:** those exploring an area in search of resources such as oil, silver, or gold

**reconciliation:** acknowledgement and repair of harm and damage

**segregation:** forced separation of racial groups in schools, neighborhoods, restaurants, etc.

**skirmishes:** small, minor disagreements and fights that lead to larger, major ones

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# AUTHOR'S NOTE AND ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

Read Carole Boston Weatherford's and Floyd Cooper's notes at the end of the book to help students develop additional layers of meaning about the Tulsa Race Massacre.

## **"UNSPEAKABLE"**

Discuss the multiple meanings of the title *Unspeakable*. What are the obvious and nuanced reasons that have led to the Tulsa Race Massacre being silenced in history books, curriculums, and classrooms? Support readers in noticing that silence is a misguided approach to deal with trauma and pain. And when it comes to racism, silence has also been used in an attempt to:

- Dismiss—to act as if racism and, for example, the Tulsa Race Massacre, aren't important to know about or a part of American history
- Deny—to act as if racism isn't real and, for example, to try to erase the Tulsa Race Massacre from American history

## **RIOT VS. MASSACRE**

In his illustrator's note, Floyd Cooper writes, "For a long time, we knew it as the Tulsa Race Riot, but some people have said the word *riot* was just a way to further injure the Black community." Why is it important to distinguish between using the word *massacre* rather than *riot* to describe what happened in Tulsa in 1921? Support readers in noticing the ways words matter and how the use of *riot* instead of *massacre* can be an attempt to:

- Downplay the severity of what happened
- Place the loss of property above the loss of people

How does this connect to the ways that Black Lives Matter protests have been characterized today as looting and rioting rather than protests and uprisings? Support readers in noticing the ways looting and rioting instead of protest and uprisings:

- Focus on property rather than the lives of Black people and the conditions they face
- Distract from addressing the conditions that create racism and the loss of Black lives

Why do words matter? Support readers in noticing the ways words are powerful. They can:

- Help us understand the truth
- Galvanize us to take action against injustices
- Shield the truth
- Cause us to believe untruths
- Lull us into passivity and complacency

# LEARNING EXPLORATIONS FOR 7TH AND 8TH GRADE STUDENTS

After reading *Unspeakable*, as a class community view *Greenwood and the Tulsa Race Riots* on the PBS website (<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/boss/video/greenwood-and-tulsa-race-riots-tbkhcr/>) to further students' learning. Then, working in small research and discussion groups, invite students to select one or more of the Learning Explorations to engage and make connections across history and into the present.

## WHITENESS & WHITE SUPREMACY:

Whiteness and white supremacy are entrenched in society, operating in all institutions of the United States, including education.

### RESOURCES:

- Talking about Race: Whiteness | National Museum of African American History & Culture (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>)
- Culture/History | Muscogee (Creek) Nation (<https://www.mcn-nsn.gov/culturehistory/>)
- What Happened 99 Years Ago in the Tulsa Race Massacre | PBS News Hour (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/what-happened-99-years-ago-in-the-tulsa-race-massacre>)

### DISCUSSION & REFLECTION:

- What does whiteness and white supremacy encompass?
- In what ways were Muscogee (Creek) Indians impacted by whiteness and white supremacy?
- How was Greenwood a symbol of resistance against whiteness?
- How was the Tulsa Race Massacre a result of white supremacy?

### TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

*A common misconception is that white supremacy is just about hate groups. Help students recognize that white supremacy is about the ways white people overwhelmingly control power and material resources in society and can hold conscious as well as unconscious ideas of superiority. White supremacy has existed in the United States since its beginning and has been used to justify the genocide of Native Americans and hundreds of years of chattel slavery.*



# WEALTH IN THE UNITED STATES

The Greenwood District that was known as Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is one example of efforts by Black people to build wealth. Yet in the United States, there has been and continues to be significant gaps in wealth between Black and white households.

## RESOURCES:

- Examining the Black-White Wealth Gap | Brookings  
(<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/>)
- What Do We Do About America's Racial Wealth Gap? | NPR  
(<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/04/30/179907029/what-do-we-do-about-americas-racial-wealth-gap>)

## DISCUSSION & REFLECTION:

- What are the contributing factors that create the wealth gap?
- How wide is the wealth gap?
- Why does the wealth gap matter?

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

*Help students move beyond an understanding of wealth as simply having an exorbitant amount of money and to connect income with access to housing, education, health care, less debt, and the security wealth affords individuals and families to make choices that benefit them. Also, to avoid students making overgeneralizations, inform them that while this data demonstrates an overall pattern of wealth disparities between groups of people, it does not necessarily represent wealth for each individual Black and white person in the United States.*

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# WHITE WOMANHOOD

Across history, white women have been complicit in systems of oppression that result in violence against Black men. The spark igniting the Tulsa Race Massacre is one example of this.

## RESOURCES:

- Honoring Emmett Till | Southern Poverty Law Center  
([https://www.splcenter.org/news/2020/08/28/honoring-emmett-till-65-years-after-brutal-murder-galvanized-civil-rights-movement-family?gclid=CjwKCAiAxKv\\_BRBdEiwAyd40N7cu3P1qoz4kuAPwWvRIWao9gt2Utysgxzx-0XMkGWvHtXG81RV79xoCZzsQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.splcenter.org/news/2020/08/28/honoring-emmett-till-65-years-after-brutal-murder-galvanized-civil-rights-movement-family?gclid=CjwKCAiAxKv_BRBdEiwAyd40N7cu3P1qoz4kuAPwWvRIWao9gt2Utysgxzx-0XMkGWvHtXG81RV79xoCZzsQAvD_BwE))
- Woman Who Called Police on Black Bird-Watcher in Central Park to Be Charged | NPR  
(<https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/07/06/887809759/woman-who-called-police-on-black-bird-watcher-in-central-park-to-be-charged>)

## DISCUSSION/REFLECTION:

- Define the terms *patriarchy*, *privilege*, and *oppression*
- How does patriarchy work to create a system of privilege and oppression?
- How has white womanhood been used as a weapon by white women and white men to perpetuate violence against Black men?

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

*As students read and learn about Emmett Till, avoid using trauma-inducing images. Help students recognize how historically, white womanhood has been placed on a pedestal and, as a symbol of white supremacy, how it is reinforced in books, movies, art, and fashion, driving standards and norms of society. This arcs back to slavery and continues today.*

# BIRMINGHAM SUNDAY, 1963

History shows that law enforcement has systemically enacted and been complicit in violence and oppression against Black people.

## RESOURCES:

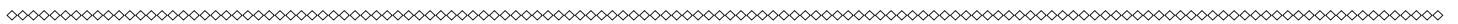
- 4 Little Girls Lost: 56th Anniversary of 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing in Birmingham | WVTV 13 News (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6bklUGA&feature=youtu.be>)
- Bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church | American Freedom Stories | Biography (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5KqCMsHlq0&feature=youtu.be>)

## DISCUSSION & REFLECTION:

- How has systemic racism operated within the justice systems of the United States?
- When learning about the Tulsa Race Massacre and Birmingham Sunday, what patterns do you notice around the imbalance of justice and the protection of civil and human rights for African Americans in the United States?

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

*Support students in recognizing the imbalance of justice for African Americans in the United States and identifying systemic racism in law and government. As students learn about the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, point out that the perpetrators of this crime were not prosecuted until forty years later. Encourage students to make connections to the refusal of law and government officials to protect African Americans and prevent the Tulsa Race Massacre.*



# BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

In a *CBS This Morning* interview, ([https://www.cbs.com/shows/cbs\\_this\\_morning/video/lkcZd7THRmeNiY3htUVB2vD33WJvLVhk/black-lives-matter-co-founders-daughter-of-martin-luther-king-jr-on-legacy-of-john-lewis/](https://www.cbs.com/shows/cbs_this_morning/video/lkcZd7THRmeNiY3htUVB2vD33WJvLVhk/black-lives-matter-co-founders-daughter-of-martin-luther-king-jr-on-legacy-of-john-lewis/)) Dr. Bernice King explained that her father, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., defined a revolution as changing people and systems. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a revolution that has been fighting against inequality and for systemic change that leads to racial justice.

## RESOURCES:

- BLM Founders | TIME100 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddZajib9Z6k&feature=youtu.be>)
- Why the Killing of George Floyd Sparked an American Uprising | TIME (<https://time.com/5847967/george-floyd-protests-trump/>)
- BLM Co-Founder Alicia Garza on the Movement's Progress | NowThis News (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITVmiEBdTqE&feature=youtu.be>)
- What Happened 99 Years Ago in the Tulsa Race Massacre | PBS News Hour (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/what-happened-99-years-ago-in-the-tulsa-race-massacre>)

## DISCUSSION & REFLECTION:

- In what ways has the BLM movement today emerged in response to the longevity and legacy of systemic racism and violence against Black people in the United States, as demonstrated by the Tulsa Race Massacre?
- What connections and patterns exist between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the Black Lives Matter Movement today?
- What does it take to change people and systems?

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

*As students learn about the BLM movement, make every effort to avoid texts that contain traumatic images of police brutality. Help students move beyond an understanding of racism as individual acts of hate to understanding how racism functions as a system of oppression and continues to function this way today. Proactively address the “all lives matter” statements that are given in response to the declaration “Black lives matter.” First, help students recognize that this response is a way to downplay and deny the lived realities of racism that Black people continue to navigate and are harmed by. Second, point out that the word “only” has never been part of the declaration that Black lives matter.*

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# INSURRECTION AT THE US CAPITOL

Until January 6, 2021, the idea of an insurrection at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, was unheard of. But on this day a mob of rioters attempted a coup to disrupt the peaceful transition of power that has been firmly established in our democracy.

## RESOURCES:

- Mayhem Erupts in the U.S. Capitol as Congress Certified Electoral Votes | PBS News Hour (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/mayhem-erupts-in-the-u-s-capitol-as-congress-certifies-electoral-votes>)
- Talking About Race: Whiteness | National Museum of African American History & Culture (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness>)
- Black Lives Matter Protesters See Disparity in Handling of US Capitol Mob | NPR (<https://www.npr.org/2021/01/09/955221274/now-the-world-gets-to-see-the-difference-blm-protesters-on-the-capitol-attack>)

## DISCUSSION & REFLECTION:

- How does whiteness and white supremacy embolden white privilege? How did this fuel the insurrection at the US Capitol?
- Historian and author Carol Anderson explains that “white rage”—white Americans’ hostility toward advancements and achievements of African Americans—is evident across the history of the United States including today. What parallels can be drawn between the insurrection at the US Capitol and the Tulsa Race Massacre?
- What can be noticed about how law enforcement in the United States responds to Black Lives Matter uprisings led by Black protestors and the insurrection at the US Capitol led by a mob of white rioters?

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

*Preview and support students in understanding the meaning of the words **insurrection** and **sedition**. Teaching Tolerance, PBS, and Facing History and Ourselves are organizations that provide resources to support educators in the work of teaching about the insurrection at the US Capitol. These resources include additional texts as well as suggested prompts that can support this teaching:*

- Leading Conversations after Crisis | Teaching Tolerance (<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/leading-conversations-after-crisis>)
- Classroom Resource: Three Ways to Teach the Insurrection at the US Capitol | PBS News Hour (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily-videos/classroom-resource-insurrection-at-the-u-s-capitol/>)
- What Happened during the Insurrection at the US Capitol and Why? | Facing History and Ourselves (<https://www.facinghistory.org/educator-resources/current-events/what-happened-during-insurrection-us-capitol-why>)



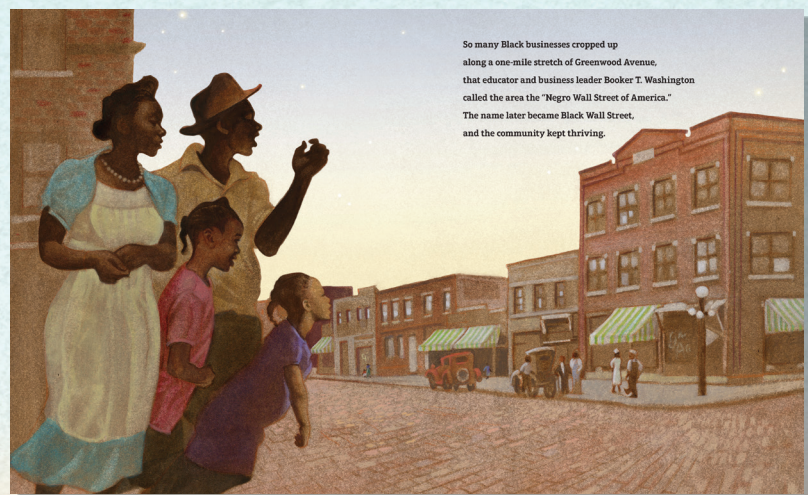
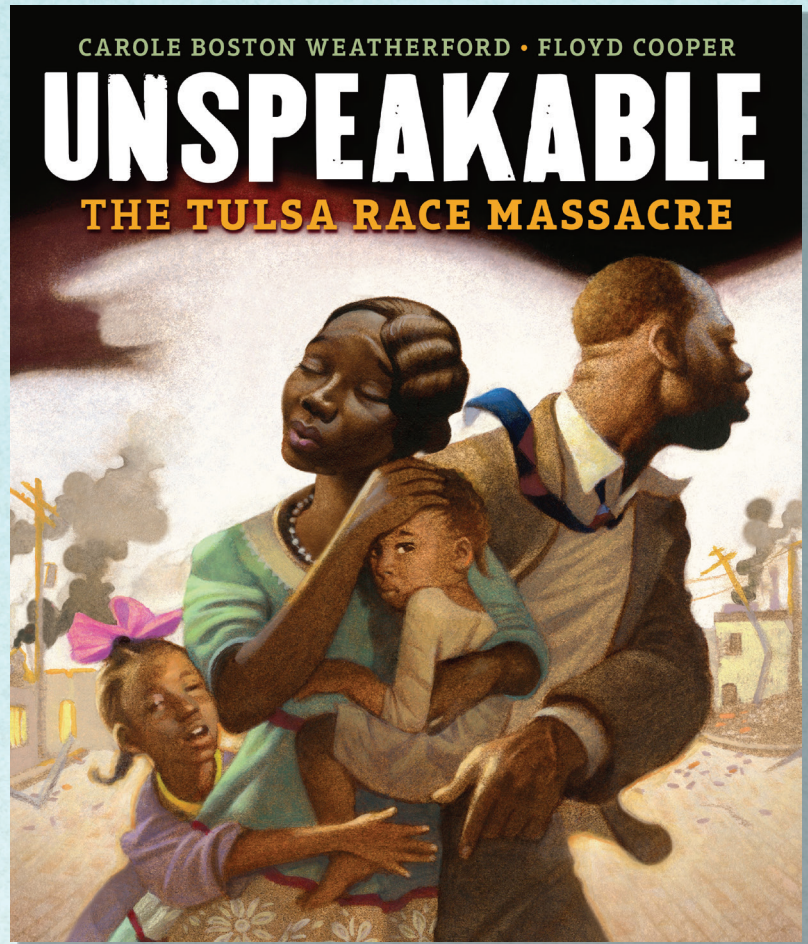
## ABOUT THIS BOOK

In the early 1900s, **TULSA, OKLAHOMA**, was home to a **THRIVING AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY**. The Greenwood District had its own school system, libraries, churches, restaurants, post office, movie theaters, and more. But all that would change in the course of two terrible, **UNSPEAKABLE DAYS**.

On May 31 and June 1, 1921, **A MOB OF ARMED WHITE TULSANS ATTACKED GREENWOOD**. They looted homes and businesses and burned them to the ground as **BLACK FAMILIES FLED**. The police did nothing to protect Greenwood, and **AS MANY AS THREE HUNDRED AFRICAN AMERICANS WERE KILLED**. More than eight thousand were left homeless.

**NEWS OF THE TULSA RACE MASSACRE**—one of the worst incidents of racial violence in US history—**WAS LARGELY SUPPRESSED**, and no official investigation occurred for seventy-five years.

Celebrated author Carole Boston Weatherford and acclaimed illustrator Floyd Cooper provide a sensitive and powerful introduction to the Tulsa Race Massacre, helping young readers understand the events of the past so we can move toward a better future for all.





# PRAISE FOR *UNSPEAKABLE*

"Carole Boston Weatherford has been writing for children for years and years and years. Her books . . . tell stories of people that have never appeared on the pages of picture books before . . . It is impossible to overstate the influence she has had on the field of children's literature to date. Who better to discuss the impossible with children?"

—Elizabeth Bird,  
*A Fuse #8 Production*

"Don't miss this one. And let's work to get it into classroom libraries."

—Julie Danielson,  
*Seven Impossible Things Before Breakfast*

★ "Ideal for classroom libraries and a deeper study of American history, this title is a must-have for those seeking the painful and complete truth."

—starred, *Booklist*

★ "*Unspeakable* deserves to be read by every student of American history."

—starred, *BookPage*

★ "Far from romanticizing history, Weatherford is equally descriptive in explaining how a false accusation of assault brought simmering racial tensions to a violent end . . . Cooper's illustrations ('oil and erasure') are the perfect partner to this history, the sepia-toned images resembling historical photographs. The portraits of Black residents are particularly moving, seeming to break the fourth wall to implore the reader to remember their story."

—starred, *The Horn Book Magazine*

★ "A somber, well-executed addition to the history as the incident approaches its 100th anniversary."

—starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

★ "[S]ucceeds in teaching the tragedy of the Tulsa Race Massacre and the legacy of Black Wall Street."

—starred, *Publishers Weekly*

★ "This moving account sheds light on shameful events long suppressed or ignored. All collections should consider this title's value in providing historical context to current conversations about racism and America's ongoing legacy of white supremacy."

—starred, *School Library Journal*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### CAROLE BOSTON

**WEATHERFORD** is the author of numerous award-winning books. When she's not traveling or visiting museums, Carole is mining the past for family stories, fading traditions, and forgotten struggles. She lives in North Carolina.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

### FLOYD COOPER

is a Coretta Scott King Award winner and illustrator of numerous books for children including *Ruth*

and *the Green Book*, *A Spy Called James*, and *Unspeakable*. He received a degree in fine arts from the University of Oklahoma, and currently lives in Easton, Pennsylvania, with his wife and two sons.



## ABOUT THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPER

### DR. SONJA CHERRY-PAUL

is an educator, author, and the co-founder of the Institute for Racial

Equity in Literacy. She is the director of diversity and equity at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. Sonja writes curriculum that centers the work of racial literacy in K-12 schools. She leads presentations at educational conferences and works with educators around the world providing professional development on antiracist reading and writing instruction. Connect with her on Twitter @SonjaCherryPaul, Instagram @sonjarcp, and at SonjaCherryPaul.com.