



Attack on Lankford Illustrates Dishonest Tactics of Race Politics

Senator James Lankford (R-Okla.) is the latest politician to feel the blunt and dishonest tactics of race politics in modern America. Race politics is the tactic of accusing political opponents — usually conservative Republicans — of being outright racists, or at least saying they are “insensitive” in some action they have taken, for the purpose of carrying out a progressive political agenda.

This tactic is more about defeating political opponents than about advancing the well-being of American blacks. That is why a recruiter for the Ku Klux Klan, the late Senator Robert C. Byrd, can remain in the good graces of the Left, or why Governor Ralph Northam of Virginia can appear in blackface or in a Klan uniform in his medical-school yearbook and not be required to resign. Both men are Democrats. On the other hand, it is perfectly acceptable to smear conservative blacks such as Clarence Thomas, Herman Cain, or Ben Carson.

It is all about advancing the agenda of the Left.

Senator Lankford is a former administrator of Falls Creek Baptist Assembly in Oklahoma, the largest summer Christian youth camp in the world. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010 and to the Senate in 2014. While he generally votes conservative, he has hardly been a conservative firebrand. In fact, Lankford has tried really hard to come across as “politically correct” when it comes to issues affecting minorities.

As such, Lankford has been among those who have supported the push to remember the unfortunate episode that happened in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921, when an untold number of persons — mostly African-Americans — were slain in what has been variously called the Tulsa Race Riot, the Tulsa Race War, or more recently, the Tulsa Race Massacre. In 1921, a young black man, Dick Rowland, was accused of attempting to rape a young elevator operator, Sarah Page, in Tulsa.

Rowland was arrested, but when it became apparent that he was innocent, police were poised to release him. Unfortunately, the *Tulsa Tribune* newspaper inaccurately reported that Page had scratches and torn clothing, and a mob of white men descended upon the jailhouse, probably intending to lynch Rowland. A crowd of black men showed up to stop any such event. Armed conflict ensued, and eventually much of the Greenwood District, an economically vibrant black area of Tulsa, was largely



AP Images



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 13, 2021

destroyed. An unknown number of people were killed.

One would think that those wishing to promote greater knowledge about this event — considered the most destructive of its type in U.S. history — would welcome the participation of a United States senator.

But Lankford's decision to join with some other Republican senators, such as Ted Cruz of Texas and Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, in challenging the results of the recent 2020 presidential election, have led to calls for him to step down from his position on the Tulsa Race Massacre Commission. Specifically, the fact that the group cited the special presidential commission created to settle the contested 1876 presidential election as a precedent for their challenge gave some the opening they needed to tar Lankford as attempting to "disenfranchise millions of voters in historically black and brown communities."

In 1876, the Republican candidate for president, Rutherford B. Hayes, had 165 Electoral College votes, and Samuel Tilden, the Democratic candidate, had 184, with 20 votes in dispute. In other words, Hayes had to obtain all 20 disputed electoral votes to defeat Tilden. The one disputed elector in Oregon was easily settled in Hayes' favor, but the 19 votes found in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana remained in dispute.

To settle the dispute, Congress created a 15-member Electoral Commission, with eight Republicans and seven Democrats. Not surprisingly, they voted 8-7 to give all 19 votes to Hayes.

This led to the possibility of a second civil war, which was only averted by compromise. Hayes agreed to serve only one term, a southern Democrat would be named postmaster general, and most importantly, all remaining federal troops in the South would be withdrawn, leading to an end of the Reconstruction period.

The *Black Wall Street Times* is leading the charge against Lankford, concentrating on the compromise provision of the withdrawal of federal troops. Nehemiah Frank, the editor-in-chief of *Black Wall Street Times*, argued that the compromise resulted in the implementation of "Jim Crow" laws in the South. "The Jim Crow Era institutionalized White supremacy and led to compounding traumas that have reverberated throughout the lives of black Americans for generations. The senator's continued involvement with the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Commission would be acutely disrespectful to the victims and descendants of the massacre. We demand Senator James Lankford resign from the commission immediately. Restorative justice is not possible if we choose to placate white elected officials who only portray themselves as allies when they feel it is politically expedient."

One state representative in Oklahoma, Monroe Nichols, even said that Lankford had "aligned himself with Confederate flag waving traitors and a president so consumed with retaining power he incited an attack on the Congress of the United States."

Clearly, then, this is a political hit job on Lankford, illustrative of the deception used in these cases to falsely charge people with racism and white supremacy.

First of all, what Lankford and others cited as their precedent was not the *compromise* of 1877, but rather the creation of the Electoral Commission to settle the issues involved in the presidential election of 1876. When it quickly became apparent that the divisions were so great that the nation might endure massive civil unrest and possibly even another civil war, members of both political parties reached a compromise to avoid such a horrific prospect.



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It is obvious that the purpose of the compromise was not to impose Jim Crow, but rather to peacefully settle the outcome of the 1876 presidential election. Those of our day who challenged the results of the 2020 presidential election were simply citing a previous time in U.S. history when we had a disputed presidential election outcome. No person could honestly argue that Lankford or any of the others who cited this example were somehow arguing for a return to Jim Crow.

But that is how politics is done by the Left. They distort what actually was done or said to create a false narrative to be used to undermine their political opposition by falsely smearing them as racists — all the while keeping political allies such as Ralph Northam in office.

Naïve Republican politicians need to recognize how the game is played. Simply *accusing* a politician of racism is considered enough to destroy that politician's reputation. Whether this demagogic smear will be successful in the case of Lankford remains to be seen.



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