



Biden Uses Tulsa Speech to Promote His Progressive Agenda

President Joe Biden spoke in Tulsa on Tuesday at the Greenwood Cultural Center to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the destruction of the historically black district of the city, in what has been variously called the Tulsa Race Riot, the Tulsa Race War, or the Tulsa Race Massacre. In a highly partisan speech, Biden used his platform to push for his political agenda and blame Republicans for opposing his proposals that he claimed would help the black community in America.

Biden told the attendees at the event that he is often asked why he doesn't get more of the legislation that he is touting to help African-Americans, and he said that he responds that he only has a five-seat Democratic Party majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate is actually tied, 50-50. He added that two of the members — presumably Senators Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Krysten Sinema of Arizona — vote with the Republicans more so than they do with the Democrats.

Biden did not specify any particular bills that Manchin or Sinema are “more Republican” on, but Manchin has angered many Democrats by his refusal to support packing the Supreme Court or scuttling the Senate filibuster rule.

The president opened his speech in acknowledgement of three known survivors of the 1921 racial violence, all of whom are now over 100 years old. Biden said that one of the women, Viola Fletcher, told him that the January 6th riot at the Capitol reminded her of the 1921 violence that she personally witnessed. He then said that he was the first president to come to Tulsa in the past century, which is an odd statement, since President Donald Trump campaigned in the city just last year. Perhaps Biden meant that he was the first to speak in the Greenwood district, but that is not what he said. One can only speculate as to what Biden meant.

Biden continued to perpetuate the myth that the 1921 destruction of Greenwood was erased from history, saying, “History was silent and cloaked in darkness” about the event. He even said, “For too long [this event] was forgotten by our history. Schools didn't teach it.”

As I wrote in an article just last week, I know this is not true. I taught ninth-grade Oklahoma History in



President Biden (AP Images)



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1978, using a textbook that was published in 1972. My college Oklahoma History professor also covered it, and I have several old textbooks that cover it, including one published in 1954.

Some of Biden's speech was historically accurate, of course. He lamented that Greenwood had many lawyers, doctors, small businesses, churches, and hotels in its 35-block district, all instilling black pride in its day. It is true, as Biden said, that about 75 armed black men heroically tried to stop the lynching of a young black man, Dick Rowland. (Rowland had been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a young white woman, Sarah Page, in an elevator that she was operating, but he was going to be released when Page told law enforcement that Rowland had not assaulted her.)

Unfortunately, the two mobs assembled outside the jailhouse — a white armed mob trying to lynch Rowland, and an armed black mob trying to prevent it — got into a violent confrontation, thus beginning what was originally called the Tulsa Race Riot. In the last few years, it has usually been called the Tulsa Race Massacre, referring to the events that occurred after the outnumbered blacks were forced back into Greenwood, leading to the almost total destruction of the 35-block district.

But a huge proportion of Biden's speech was devoted to advocacy for a political agenda, which involved more government regulation and more government spending. Dr. Ben Carson, who is black, the former secretary of Housing and Urban Development under Trump, told Fox News that the problems that Biden was citing could not be solved just by throwing money at the problem. Citing a Brookings Institution study, Carson told Neil Cavuto of Fox News that four factors mostly determine whether someone stays out of poverty: finishing high school, having a job, getting married, and waiting until marriage to have children. Only two percent of those who do those four things are in poverty. Needless to say, Biden said nothing like that in his proposals, all of which involved government programs.

Biden said he would propose new regulations "to root out discrimination in the appraisal and homebuying process," in an effort to increase black home ownership. He also told the crowd at the Greenwood Cultural Center that he was going to address disparities that result in black-owned homes being appraised several thousands of dollars less than comparable homes owned by whites.

He also promised to use the power of awarding of federal contracts to invest \$100 billion over five years into minority-owned businesses. And, he proposed that his American Jobs Plan, which Congress has not yet passed, would give \$10 billion in grants to under-served communities along with an additional \$20 billion in grants for infrastructure and affordable housing.

Biden then pivoted to other progressive causes, which include giving three- and four-year-olds access to school — "not day care" — and more access to health care, along with clean air, clean water, and grocery stores with vegetables. Biden did not cite which part of the U.S. Constitution authorizes the federal government to make sure that grocery stores stock lettuce and tomatoes.

Finally, Biden moved onto what all of this is really about: increasing support for the Democratic Party. He called the right to vote a "sacred right," which he said was "under assault" in "increasing intensity and aggressiveness." (Here one can presume that Biden is critical of efforts in several states to reduce the opportunities for vote fraud. It seems that Democrats believe they benefit more from vote fraud than do Republicans).

While Biden promised in his inaugural address to work for unity in the country, it is clear that is not what he is doing now. He charged that hate "is never defeated, but only hides," adding that the greatest terrorist threat in America today comes from "white supremacy."

Biden even conjured up memories of the second Ku Klux Klan, formed in 1915, without bothering to



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mention that most KKK members were Democrats. Apparently, Biden did not feel it necessary to note that undeniable fact.

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