

## WHO WRITES HISTORY...AND WHY?

By

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In the Western world, there is a "science" that studies almost everything. So...historiography is the study of the writing of history. When I was in school, I actually hated history. It was taught in such a boring manner. That is not a reflection on my teachers because, that is how they were taught. Memorizing names, dates and highlights was a chore in itself so rarely did any of my classmates or I ask the questions, "Is this true?", "Is this accurate?", "Why was this considered important?", "Was there something else about this that was left out?". We didn't ask because we were so glad when the class period ended that we dedicated no more thought to history. I have often felt that history was made boring intentionally. As time has passed and my interest in history has increased, I have looked for the answers to those questions and, in some cases, have discovered a few answers.

One example that I will start with is the myth that Columbus discovered America. Before continuing, it should be noted that Columbus never set foot on the North American continent so that statement is patently false. But then, also, how can someone discover a place where there are already people living there? It's like me walking into somebody's house and "discovering" the den and claiming the televisions and books and computers and furniture and everything else in that room. The deeper consideration is how the people who lived there were stripped of their humanity. They were put into a place where they didn't even count. So, the re-telling of the story always glorifies Columbus and the other European explorers. What is not told is the story of how the native people were slaughtered, enslaved, raped, kidnapped and dehumanized.

There is an Afrikan proverb that states, "*Until the history of the hunt is told by the lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.*" This is actually quite profound because as people of African origin (I use the term

AUSA or Afrikans from the United States of America), our history has been taught to us by the same people who kidnapped and enslaved our ancestors. Of course, they will tell a story that is favorable to them.

Another falsehood that has been repeated so much that people accept it as being true is that fact that the ancient Egyptians looked like the actors Charlton Heston and Elizabeth Taylor. Truthfully, the ancient Egyptians looked more like Denzel Washington and Viola Davis than Heston and Taylor. Remember, Egypt is in Afrika and not some made-up place called the Middle East (middle of what and east of where?). That civilization was at least 3000 years old before the Arabs invaded there in 640 A.D. Why is this important? The answer leads to another falsehood. We are taught that everything good started with the Greeks when the truth is that many of the Greek names that we revere actually studied in Egypt (Pythagoras, Aristotle, Solon, Plato, Eudoxas, etc). Even though these Greeks are honored now, when they returned to the Greek city-states and tried to teach their people at home in Greece what they learned in Afrika, many were persecuted and even killed for “corrupting the young” (as the case of Socrates). So, the philosophical and mathematical discoveries that are attributed to these Greeks were actually Afrikan in origin.

The topic that I'd like to concentrate on here, however, is the topic of race riots. When many, if not most of us hear that term, we think of the way that it has been described to us. We think of the urban rebellions of the 1960's or maybe even some of the recent demonstrations following the too-many executions of innocent black people by police or vigilantes. However, the term originally referred to mobs of white people killing black people. Indeed, a more accurate term would be race massacre.

May, 2021 marked the hundredth anniversary of the massacre of black men, women and children at Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921, destroying what was called Black Wall Street. There has been much discussion about this and so many people are “shocked” to find out the details.

Another massacre took place in Rosewood, FL in 1923 in which an entire all-black town was wiped out basically because of the jealousy of

whites to the prosperity of the hard-working AUSA inhabitants of that town. A movie was made about this but was excessively fictionalized.

However, many, many more race riots occurred all over America. We may never know the true numbers, unfortunately. Many of these race riots occurred at two important periods of history: firstly, many occurred just after Reconstruction attempting to intimidate the formerly enslaved Afrikans to either not vote or to vote for the racist Democratic party of that era or they occurred during or around the “Red Summer” of 1919 which saw many lynchings and massacres. Here in South Carolina, there were at least three race riots: The Hamburg Massacre in Hamburg, SC in 1876 in which more than six AUSA were murdered (interestingly, a future SC governor played an important role in that massacre), the massacre in Ellenton, SC in 1876 which saw more than 100 AUSA killed, and the Charleston, SC massacre in 1919 which saw more than six AUSA killed. Unfortunately, we will probably never know the accurate number of fatalities because we have to depend on the records of newspapers and law enforcement, which were usually recorded by racist journalists and law officers who were sympathetic to the murderers (and some may have participated).

Race riots that have been documented occurred in Clinton, MS, Thibodaux, LA, Atlanta, GA, Springfield, IL, Slocum, TX, East St. Louis, IL, Longview, TX, Chicago, IL, Washington, DC, Elaine, AR, Ocoee, FL. and many other places

One of the most remarkable race riots, however took place in Wilmington, NC in 1898. It is remarkable, not only because more than 300 AUSA were murdered but because this is the only time in recorded American history in which a legally and democratically elected government was successfully overthrown by a violent coup.

Whenever these stories are told, very little attention is given to the fact that we fought back! We were not docile and were not just cowering in a corner, hiding. We fought back, often against tremendous odds. This fact is frequently left out when these massacres are discussed by the “mainstream” historians and journalists. We should remember that right

after Reconstruction, many AUSA had formed gun clubs or militia and had access to weapons. Many former Civil War veterans led the defense of their communities. Also, the “Red Summer” of 1919 occurred at the end of the so-called World War One (which some consider to be the result of an inflated sibling rivalry that was named in a grandiose manner). Many AUSA veterans who had been well treated and respected in Europe came home to hateful, vile racist treatment and were unwilling to tolerate it.

These race massacres have continued. We certainly cannot forget the Orangeburg massacre at South Carolina State College in 1968 in which four unarmed students were murdered and scores more were injured when out of control law enforcement opened fire on innocent student demonstrators. We also have to remember Philadelphia, PA in 1985 when eleven AUSA men, women and children were killed by the police by a bomb dropped on their home. When the smoke cleared, sixty-one homes were destroyed. Ironically, when the bomb was deployed, Philadelphia had an AUSA mayor. Finally, the heinous, cold-blooded murder of nine people at Christian Bible Study in a church in Charleston, SC in 2015 should never be forgotten.

Although historiography is a big word and may be intimidating, the meaning should always be remembered. It is our sacred duty to uncover the truth of what our ancestors contributed, experienced and created in the service of mankind. We should also make sure that our children and our grandchildren’s grandchildren benefit from this knowledge.

Food for thought.