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We Never Learned About Black Wall Street. So, What Else Is Missing From Our Curriculum?



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by Shawnta S. Barnes    

Did you ever learn about Black Wall Street and the Tulsa, Oklahoma Massacre? I know I did not. It was not until I was an adult. Did you learn about the Rosewood, Florida Massacre in school? I didn't, but I know about it because of my dad. He told me what happened to Black people in Rosewood, and we watched a [movie](#) based on what happened.

Both of these incidents include Black trauma. Despite this, my father wanted me to know about Rosewood and other events. Not so much about the trauma, but more so about the achievements. He wanted me to know that Black excellence has existed throughout time. He wanted me to know that even though evil and racism interrupted progress, that these achievements are possible. If it was possible back then, I can experience this today.

Guess what? All children deserve to know their history and what is possible.

This is not a push to ban white people from the curriculum or shame white people. Recently, the assertion of including more diversity has led to some people, white and non-white, claiming inclusion of culturally responsive curriculum and demanding equity in diverse groups being covered is really a ploy to make white people feel guilty or shamed.

Telling the truth can hurt, and it can make students feel sad but [pullquote]avoiding topics because someone may feel sad or believe they are being shamed also takes away the triumphs.[/pullquote] We need to know about Black Wall Street before the massacre, and students need to know about the massacre. Students should learn about these events at school and not only at home.

People should not now be becoming aware of the massacre because 2021 is the 100th year anniversary or because Viola Fletcher, a 107 year old survivor of the massacre [testified](#) before Congress this month.

Before any changes can occur, teachers need to get informed. Change doesn't happen overnight. It can be slow work. Being intentional about making one or two additions to a curriculum each year after thoroughly learning about a topic and then creating meaningful activities where students can learn academic standards and skills is worth it. Students will be more invested. More investment should lead to more learning.

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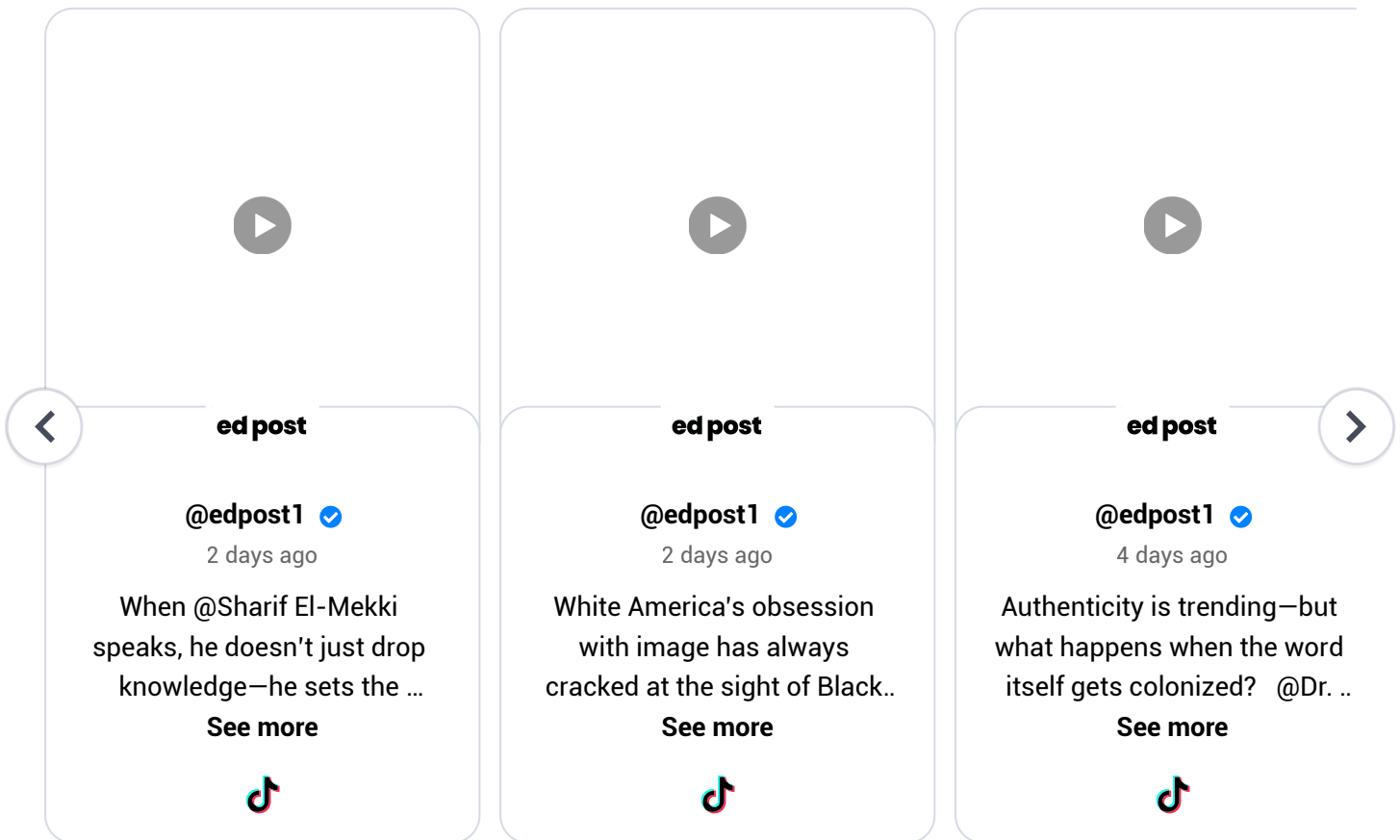
- [Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre](#)
- [Rosewood massacre a harrowing tale of racism and the road toward reparations](#)

An original version of this piece [ran on IndyK12](#).

Shawnta S. Barnes

Shawnta (Shawn-tay) S. Barnes, also known as Educator Barnes, is a married mother of identical twin boys. She navigates education from not only the educator's perspective but also the parent's perspective. She has been an educator for nearly two decades. Shawnta works with K-12 schools, universities, & education adjacent organizations through her education consulting business Blazing Brilliance. She is an adjunct college professor, supervises student teachers, Indy Kids Winning Editor-in-Chief, Brave Brothers Books Co-founder, & CEO, and Brazen Education Podcast host. She holds five education licenses: English/language arts 5-12, English to speakers of other languages P-12, library/media P-12, reading P-12, and school administration P-12, and she has held a job in every licensed area. Previously, she has served as a school administrator, English teacher, English learners teacher, literacy coach, and librarian. She won the 2019 Indiana Black Expo Excellence in Education Journalism Award. In 2023, she completed her doctorate in Literacy, Culture, and Language Education with a minor in Learning Sciences. She is an urban gardener in her spare time

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