

Tuesday, May 11, 2021



Dear Governor Stitt:

We are gravely disappointed that neither you nor your representative chose to join the special meeting of the 1921 Race Massacre Centennial Commission ("Centennial Commission") last night to discuss the signing of HB 1775 into law. Indeed, your office failed to even extend the courtesy of a reply to the Centennial Commission's invitation.

As a Centennial Commission member, surely you know that the vigorous exchange of ideas through education lies at the heart of our mission. Telling the story of 1921 requires confronting and sharing the facts about this horrific period in Oklahoma's and Tulsa's history. It also demands an exploration of the underlying causative factors.

HB 1775 chills the ability of educators to teach students, of any age, and will only serve to intimidate educators who seek to reveal and process our hidden history. You know that. We delivered this message to you before you signed the measure. We were joined by educators, school boards, universities, faith, and community leaders, all of whom vigorously objected to HB 1775. You seemingly disregarded and dismissed this chorus of voices aligned against HB 1775.

In your public address last week you stated, "We need policies that bring us together, not rip us apart," and described HB 1775 as a bill that "encourages honest and tough conversations" by codifying the concepts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

How does this law bring us together and codify the concepts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? How do you reconcile your membership on the Centennial Commission with your support of a law that is fundamentally contrary to the mission of reconciliation and restoration?

The Centennial Commission has shared nationally and internationally the unvarnished and difficult truth about 1921. Our community and state will be stronger for telling the story through the lens of those whose lives were lost or forever changed because of racism, hatred, and violence. It has been our collective mission to offer a path for repairing that which was destroyed.

The Centennial Commission feels that your signature on the bill at this critical time when Oklahoma should embrace its history is diametrically opposite to the mission of the Centennial Commission and reflects your desire to end your affiliation. If you would like to contact us to discuss this further, please do so immediately. If we do not hear back from you, we will consider your lack of response as a further disavowal of the stated goals of the Centennial Commission and an official resignation from its membership.

Sincerely,

1921 TULSA RACE MASSACRE CENTENNIAL COMMISSION



Phil Armstrong
Project Director