

Call for Chapter Proposals

The 1898 Wilmington Massacre: Critical Explorations of Insurrection, Black Resilience, and Black Futures

Editors

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Proposal Submission Deadline: May 1, 2021

Proposal Decisions: June 12, 2021

Overview

The January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol in Washington, DC, shocked many for its violent righteousness and brazen display of white supremacy masked as patriotism. For the insurrectionists, storming the Capitol represented a last-ditch effort to nullify the results of the 2020 presidential election that ended the Trump era.

The insurrection of January 6 was not the first time in American history that racist forces sought to overturn the will of democracy. Forty years after the Civil War, Wilmington, North Carolina was a uniquely integrated civic town with a Black majority population. Members of the Black community, unlike almost anywhere else, held positions of social, economic, and political power, from having seats on the city council to owning many of the city's thriving businesses. However, on November 10, 1898, a coalition of former confederate soldiers, members of the Secret Nine, and white supremacist sympathizers united to depose Wilmington's biracial Fusionist government. Red Shirts and other militia forces torched destroyed Black neighborhoods and businesses, killing untold numbers in the process. Wilmington, once a thriving hub for Black social, economic, and political life, changed in a bloody instant.

Reconstructing the historical memory of this event has been a contested endeavor. Those who orchestrated the return of a white supremacist regime set about crafting an alternative "history" of events that transpired. They characterized the massacre as a race riot and insisted that it was instigated by the Black community. Black Wilmingtonians countered the slanted interpretation through such works as Charles Waddell Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901); sadly, their voices and views were largely drowned out. For more than a century, Wilmington itself has been shaped by these opposing narratives.

In 1998, one hundred years after the event, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy* was published. Edited by David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, it represented the first significant effort to collect scholarly perspectives in one volume. Aimed at general readers, it likely introduced the massacre and its racist and antidemocratic motivations to many Americans—Black and White—whose social studies education either omitted or obscured the facts surrounding the genesis of the campaign to seize power from lawfully elected officials. More recently, David Zucchino's *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy* (2020) recounts conspirators' calculated strategy to inflame fears over Black franchise and freedom.

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As we approach the massacre's 125th anniversary in 2023, we recognize that there is more to this horrific episode; its reverberations can still be felt in and beyond the Port City.

Interdisciplinary in design, *The 1898 Wilmington Massacre: Critical Explorations of Insurrection, Black Resilience, and Black Futures* connects the scholarly discussion of this campaign of political violence and moral betrayal to the contemporary moment. It seeks to amplify narratives of Black cultural resilience and reinvention. The essays collected here will meditate on America's willingness to self-immolate in the name of white supremacy, the creative tactics of Black survival, and the futures made possible in the massacre's aftermath. It will explore literary, artistic, pedagogical, and technological expressions and responses to this defining local and national tragedy.

Chapters

We seek chapters that address the 1898 Wilmington insurrection and massacre from various disciplinary lenses and theoretical paradigms. Inasmuch as Wilmington's geography and location between the Cape Fear River and Gullah Geechee corridor along the Atlantic coast contributed to its historical significance and economic vitality, we welcome a broad range of essays that engage the complex vibrancy of Black life in the Port City across the twentieth century and up to the January 6 Capitol insurrection. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Wilmington 1898 in music/music history
- Post-1898 Wilmington as laboratory for Black creativity
- Black Wilmington post-1898 through Civil Rights movement
- Depictions of 1898 in Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) and other literary works
- Survivors of 1898, including but not limited to Alex Manly, editor of the Daily Record, and family; Caterina Jarboro (Yarborough), opera singer; Thomas Eugene McKeller, artist model for John Singer Sargent
- The *Daily Record* in journalism history/Black newspaper history
- 1898 and the visual arts
- Monuments and commemoration
- 1898 vis race, gender, and place studies
- Teaching 1898 in secondary ed/social studies classrooms
- 1898 in the era of Black Lives Matter
- Insurrection, white supremacy, and masculinity (from Red Shirts to Proud Boys)

Submission Procedures

We invite authors to submit a blinded chapter proposal (500-1000 words) and a separate cover page that indicates authors full names, email addresses, and affiliations. Inquiries can be directed to Tiffany Gilbert (gilbertt@uncw.edu) and Lynn Mollenauer (mollenauerl@uncw.edu). Email proposal and cover page as separate Word documents to gilbertt@uncw.edu by May 1, 2021. Please write "1898 Proposal Submission" in the subject line. Authors of accepted proposals for chapters will be notified by June 21, 2021. The proposed book will then be marketed to the publisher with a clear outline based upon the accepted chapters. Final chapters should be 7,000-8,000 words.