

# DESCENDED FROM THE PROMISED LAND

THE LEGACY OF *Black Wall Street*



GREENWOOD

## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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COMBATING RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE



# Dear Screening Host,

Thank you so much for hosting a screening of *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street*. By hosting a screening, you are now a key part in the Odyssey Impact national social impact campaign to uplift the generational impact of the Tulsa Race Massacre and the ongoing harm perpetrated against survivors and descendants, as illuminated in the film.

The Odyssey Impact impact campaign for *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street* is designed to educate, engage and activate the public around the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, acknowledging that this is a major historical event that is not widely taught in schools. The campaign will launch in alignment with the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre, with the overarching goal of honoring the legacies of survivors and descendants.

The impact campaign will also aim to spotlight the need for a national examination of America's historical oppression of its African American population. The film and resources will encourage community conversation on a variety of topics including the importance of community healing, restoration, and transformation after mass violence.

As part of this campaign, we encourage you to use *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street* as a tool for training and/or teaching, guided by the campaign goals below:

1. Educate audiences on the Tulsa Race Massacre, the historical context in which it took place and the need for a national examination of America's history of oppression towards its African American population, past and present.
2. Uplift the voices of survivors and descendants of the Tulsa Race Massacre.
3. Encourage the tradition of oral storytelling and the importance of preserving the rich history of the African American community.
4. Inspire audiences to honor the legacy of the victims of the Tulsa Race Massacre, those killed and the survivors, by supporting commemorations.
5. Empower audiences to use the film and resources to spark community conversation on topics including racial violence, community healing, restoration, and transformation after mass violence.
6. Spotlight the urgent need to support local and national calls for truth and reconciliation initiatives as well as reparations for the African American community.

Screening *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street* is only the first step. The story within the film is a springboard to larger discussions you can have within your family and community about racial violence, community healing, and the need for restoration, and transformation after mass violence.

Thank you for bringing *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street* to your community. Now, let's get to work!

sincerely, The Odyssey Impact Team

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# ABOUT THE FILM

## DESCENDED FROM THE PROMISED LAND

THE LEGACY OF *Black Wall Street*

(22MIN)



In 1921, North Tulsa's Greenwood District, the most prosperous Black community in America, was set ablaze, bombed, and looted during a racially motivated violent attack against the thriving Black community. Businesses, homes, and lives were lost, and Black Wall Street, as it was known, has never reclaimed its former glory. The Tulsa Race Massacre was only the first in a line of repeated targeted attacks on the progress of the Greenwood District and its residents.

Through the lens of Black Wall Street descendants Byron Crenshaw, Jacqueline Blocker and Michelle Blocker, we draw a century-long thread from the Tulsa Race Massacre to the present, exploring the lingering economic, psychological and emotional impacts that have undermined the rebuilding of the once thriving community.

Through intimate interviews and lyrical verite, Byron, Jacqueline, Michelle and their family members reach back to uplift the stories of their forebears, the success they created, the pride they possess, while also reckoning with the unfulfilled potential of what could have been a Black Promised Land.

# MEET THE FILMMAKER



## Nailah Jefferson

Nailah Jefferson is a New Orleans-based filmmaker, best known for her 2014 documentary *Vanishing Pearls*, about the aftermath of the 2010 BP Oil Spill. The film was distributed by Ava DuVernay's distribution company ARRAY. In 2017, Nailah was nominated for a National Magazine Ellie award for directing *Essence Magazine's Black Girl Magic Episode 4*. Nailah's first narrative film, *Plaquemines*, was awarded the inaugural Create Louisiana \$50k Short Film grant. It was chosen as an American Black Film Festival HBO Shorts finalist and is currently available on HBO platforms. Nailah's current work includes the documentary *Commuted*, about a 51 year old woman whose triple life sentence was commuted by the Obama Administration in 2016.

## Director's Statement

This film was created to honor the countless African American communities and people who have been disappeared throughout history. America has a long tradition of erasing the contributions, experiences, joy, excellence and accomplishments of Black people. It's designed to limit our humanity and brilliance. The suppression of the existence of one of America's most affluent African American communities, Black Wall Street, is an enduring example of that design.

Founded less than 50 years removed from the cruelty of slavery, free Black women and men fulfilled their truest potential, emerging empowered, entrepreneurial and imaginative. Tulsa's North Greenwood district, or Black Wall Street as it was widely known, manifested our greatest selves, becoming the most prosperous African American community during its time.

Since college I heard bits and pieces of the story of Black Wall Street, but no true account until I began making *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street*. As I researched and listened and learned, it became clear just why the story has been suppressed for nearly 100 years. The existence of the prosperous North Greenwood district could not be shared without also acknowledging what caused its destruction.

Disappearing the brilliance of Black folks makes it easier to deny the ills perpetrated by White folks. By erasing our accomplishments, so gone is the racism, cruelty and hatred African Americans endured that resulted in the destruction of Black Wall Street during the Tulsa Race Massacre, as well as the many other named and unnamed thriving Black communities that previously existed. But, it is my belief that what's not confronted cannot be overcome or healed. So, as I journeyed through this film with families of the forebears of Black Wall Street, I encouraged them to reclaim the narrative, reflecting on and recalling the stories of those from whom they are descended. By doing so, they are able to give visibility to their ancestors, illuminating their lives, while also bringing awareness to machinations that continue to destroy Black communities. Presented not as a massacre today, but rather gentrification or rezoning and other measures that target our communities and result in their disappearance.

As we share *Descended from The Promised Land: The Legacy of Black Wall Street*, my prayer is that we excavate stories of Tulsa and other buried accounts of Black communities and people who lived brilliantly, never to be disappeared again.

Nailah Jefferson

# PLANNING YOUR SCREENING



## USING THE FILM AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

- What goals do you have for the outcome of your screening event?
- What type of support is needed in your community in regards to racial violence, community healing, and the need for restoration, and transformation after mass violence?
- Are there other organizations, congregations, and/or community leaders that would benefit from attending this screening and who could collaborate on a Call to Action?
- Are there models of action other communities have used that you could adopt in your own community?

## STEPS TO HOSTING A SCREENING EVENT

- Decide when and how your audience will watch the film. You can either give your audience a time frame to watch the film, or set a specific time when everyone watches together.
- If you choose to do so, invite a moderator and/or panelists for a post-screening discussion.
- Create an RSVP system through Eventbrite, or similar platform, to gather the email addresses of your audience members.
- Send your audience the link to the film or set a time to watch together, and send invitations to post-screening discussion. Some suggested ideas for post-screening discussion include a panel discussion, community Q&A, or an audience talkback. Suggested virtual platform options include Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facebook Live, Instagram Live, YouTube, Twitch, Webex, or CrowdCast.
- Publicize your event on social media. Use the promotional materials provided by the impact campaign and encourage your network and/or community to help spread the word!
- Take pictures/screenshots of the screening and the post-screening discussion.
- Engage in a post-screening activity and/or announce your call to action.
- Send pictures to Odyssey Impact ([screenings@odyssey-impact.org](mailto:screenings@odyssey-impact.org)) and use the hashtags #TulsaRaceMassacre and #DescendedFrom when posting on social media.



# DESCENDED FROM THE PROMISED LAND

THE LEGACY OF *Black Wall Street*

## CO-BRANDED GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING PURPOSEFUL CONVERSATIONS



### I. Guidelines:

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The topics you will engage with in this conversation may be emotionally charged for all those involved. For many people, engaging in a courageous conversation can be challenging and uncomfortable. Creating and maintaining a purposefully brave space throughout the conversation allows each person to express themselves while respecting others.

Your job as a facilitator is not to help the group come to an agreement, but rather to create and maintain an environment where everyone can participate in a discussion [around this film] in an ethical and honest capacity, even if in disagreement with someone's perspective.

### CREATING GROUP NORMS:

- It is important that the creation of conversation norms for the group be established and agreed upon by the group. We recommend consensus-based decision-making for this process (fist-to-five and asking questions two ways are helpful consensus tools).
- You can start by offering transparency in this process and open with something like, *As a group I'd like us to take some time at the beginning to establish some group norms for this conversation. We want to make space for all the ways in which people would like to share about this topic/film. What are some needs you have that will make you feel brave enough to share your thoughts?*



- Give the group space to reflect and answer intentionally. You can use reframes to ask clarifying questions about anything that seems unclear (i.e., *What I hear you saying is \_\_\_\_\_, is that correct?*).
- Below are some norms to consider offering to the group if no one specifically raises them:

## IN PERSON/ GENERAL:

- We ask that you show up in whatever way feels right for you.
- Challenge by choice. We're aware that we are inviting you to be vulnerable with people who you have likely just met, and we hope that you will share bravely in this space. What sharing bravely looks like will differ from person to person. For some of us, it might even look mostly like listening. We trust you to make that decision for yourself.
- If things come up for you unexpectedly, please prioritize taking care of yourselves in those moments, however you need (you can exit the space, you can take a moment aside, you can close your eyes, you can take some deep breaths, etc.).
- Go slow and play with silence. We encourage you to lean into slowing down, to ask the group to pause, and to ask clarifying questions as needed. There is no need to feel rushed here! We should take the time we need to engage with these ideas and with each other.
- If the sharing is personal, please respect everyone and their privacy within this group. Take the lessons you learn with you but leave the details of people's stories – *what's shared here stays here, what's learned here leaves here*.
- During these sessions, be intentional with the language you use, avoid generalizations, and consider the impact it may have on people who hold identities different from your own. Words are very powerful.
- Unpack the perspective, not the person. When someone says something that we disagree with, we can hear each other better if we focus on why we disagree with the idea or statement rather than whether the person who raised it is good or bad.
- Make Space, Take Space: Be aware of the space you take up. This conversation is meant to be collaborative and inclusive. If you notice that you are talking a lot and taking up a lot of space in the conversation, consider making space for others by holding silence and listening. If you notice that you are not talking much or at all, keep in mind that we're holding this brave space together, and would encourage you to be courageous.

- We actively want to hear what you have to say! Privilege inevitably informs our relationships to conversation and space. If you find that there are many places and spaces in the world where your voice is prioritized and valued, then please make an active effort to focus on listening more than you speak.
- Owning intentions and impacts. We encourage you to acknowledge and discuss both the intentions and the impacts when this conversation is having an emotional effect on participants in the space.
- “One mic” - One person speaks at a time.

## **ONLINE (SPECIFICALLY):**

- We ask that you show up in whatever way feels right for you. Feel free to turn off your mic or camera at any point during the session. You can also use the chat box as much as you want; it’s a great way to engage with the material and the group.
- Hide Self View! Looking at your own face on Zoom for extended periods of time can be weird and exhausting and none of us signed up for that kind of self-scrutiny, so feel free to click the “hide self view” button so that the group can see you and you can see the group, but you don’t have to see yourself.
- If things come up for you unexpectedly, please prioritize taking care of yourselves in those moments, however you need (offer: you can private chat me, take a break, head back to the main session).
- Make content accessible for folks with different abilities (utilize closed captioning, chat, allow for video only, allow for audio only, etc.)
- After going through this framing, ask participants the following questions:
  - How do these norms sound for everyone?
  - Is anyone uncomfortable with any of these norms?
  - Does anyone have any other norms to add?

## II. Three Rules of Religious Understanding

Your conversations may directly or indirectly address religion, the religious beliefs of community members, or targeted religious identities. You may consider including these guidelines or keep these tools in mind as issues arise. These rules are also helpful for thinking through inter-group dialogues, regardless of whether religious identity is the most salient difference between these groups.

At a press conference in 1985, Dr. Krister Stendahl, a Bishop of Stockholm, responded to vocal opposition to the building of a temple there by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He laid down three rules, which have been used across the globe to guide dialogues involving religion and topics that address faith.

- When you are trying to understand another religion or community, you should ask the adherents of that religion or ideology (and not its enemies).
  - Note: No one can speak for an entire faith tradition, community or demographic (i.e. refugees, immigrants, etc.). It is important for each person to speak from their own perspective about the practices or beliefs of their tradition or community.
- Don't compare your best to their worst.
- Leave room for "holy envy."
  - By this, Stendahl meant that you should be willing to recognize elements in the other religious tradition or faith (or non-religious group) that you admire and that you wish could, in some way, be reflected in your own religious tradition, faith, or community. This also applies to groups not defined by their faith that are outside of your own identity (e.g., country of origin, socio-economic status, immigration status, political affiliation, etc.)



### III. Anticipate Issues to Consider Before Your Conversation

Discussions may be difficult for some participants to host or participate in for a number of reasons. We'd like to offer some strategies to help manage and maintain a brave space throughout this courageous conversation.

- Managing the range of emotions that might arise during your courageous conversations.
  - Reference the previously established Group Norms as needed and, if necessary, notice to individuals and the group when people aren't respecting those norms (i.e., I just wanted to notice that we have a couple people speaking over each other, how would we feel about returning to our One Mic norm we discussed earlier?)
  - Periodically, check-in about learning goals for the conversation. Ask everyone to offer ideas and suggestions towards achieving those goals/purpose.
  - Give space to emotions as needed. Heavy topics will bring up feelings and if we ignore them entirely, they will often still come out later and require even more space after having done damage. Some small ways to offer space for emotions include:
    - Asking questions to the person sharing like, “Why do you think this is coming up for you now?”
    - Asking a question to the group such as, “What did it feel like to hear that?” or “Do other people feel this way?”
    - Making space for people to exit the group as needed.
    - Holding silence after heavy shares and acknowledging/appreciating vulnerable shares (a “thank you for your share” will suffice).
    - Reflecting back the feeling(s) you heard (i.e., “It sounds like that was really scary...”)
- Make a plan, hold it loosely, and follow the group.
  - Planning is vital to feeling prepared when facilitating. Having a plan can help us think through timing, framing, and goals before we start the conversation. We recommend you keep in mind three things:
    - Keep it simple
    - Follow the group
    - Make space

- Allow the group agency over the conversation as often as possible, especially as it relates to learning goals and objectives.
- Difficult dynamics.
  - It is important to hold a purposeful space so there is room for everyone participating to share. If you notice the group is not following the agreed upon norms, here are some ways to notice this dynamic aloud:
    - Ask the members of the group how they would like to handle the situation.
    - Offer options that include the behavior that was disruptive (i.e., if there is a lot of side chatter, maybe offer some time for smaller group or pair-shares)
    - Notice to participants, *We established some group norms in the beginning of this conversation, does it feel like we are still following those norms? Would we like to revisit or reconsider those norms?*
    - When someone has an emotionally charged share, reflect back their comments or ideas to the group, making sure to check for accuracy with the original speaker, and ask the group what that share brings to mind for them?
    - Respectfully try to balance the voices in conversation, intentionally, making more space for those less dominant. For example, *I'm wondering if we could hear from some people who haven't shared yet? Do any of you have questions or thoughts?*
    - If someone says something that is problematic you can ask the group *What did it feel like to hear that?* It is likely that a participant will name the harm so that it can be addressed.
- Responding to hard questions.
  - These conversations likely will involve people discussing stereotypes, misconceptions, and interpretations about the event/film. Fact sheets can provide useful, vetted information that will provide data for responses. Additional strategies include:
    - Pose the question to the group. As a facilitator, you do not need to be, nor should you be, the arbitrator of knowledge. Allow the group and even the individual asking the question to answer it themselves.
    - If you'd like to respond, you can answer and speak from personal experience. For example, *I believe ...*

## IV. Prayer/ Invocation Acknowledgement of Traditions or Other Identity Based Groups

There are a number of ways for people to share their religious tradition or culture with each other to set the environment for the conversation. Consider:

- Opening the conversation with a land acknowledgement.
- Allowing volunteers to share words of greeting from culture, their house of worship, or belief system.
- Asking people to take a moment of silence together as a group.

## V. Debrief the Conversation

After courageous and difficult conversations, it is important to reflect on the intention and impacts of the event. Debriefs allow participants to synthesize learnings, offer feedback, and continue processing reflections from the space.

Some questions to consider including in your debrief evaluations might be:

### 1. Logistics and Accessibility

- Location
- Date
- Format
- Language
- Support
- Accessibility issues that arise



## 2. Resources referenced

- Fact sheets or questions used

## 3. Participant experience

- What is one take-away participants are leaving the conversation with?
- What is something participants want to know more about or wish more space had been given to in this conversation?
- Did participants share about how this conversation has affected their way of thinking about or engaging with this topic?
- Do participants plan to take any actions as a result of this event?
- Were there any difficult moments?
- What moments felt important and/or meaningful in this discussion?

Thank you for screening the film  
and being a part of the impact campaign!

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