

Those of us who were around in the 80's remember dancing to the funky, driving beat of the Gap Band and their best-known hit, "You Dropped A Bomb On Me." What we mostly didn't know was the origins of their name: **G**reenwood, **A**rcher, and **P**ine, three streets in the former "Black Wall Street" district of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The Gap Band members later said they chose the name, knowing they would travel the world over and wanting to speak out about the Greenwood district and the Tulsa Massacre that left hundreds of Black residents dead and the neighborhood in ruins. Charlie Wilson, one of the three brothers who comprised the band, said he told the story of the Tulsa Massacre in their concerts though many people questioned him, saying they'd never heard it.

There's a reason they'd never heard it. Tulsa's newspapers actively suppressed the story and most Black residents from those days were afraid to bring it up in fear of retaliation from the white mobs who had basically gotten away with murder.. Charlie Wilson knew of it only because a woman who'd survived the massacre was "like a grandmother" to him and told him the stories, asking him to keep them secret until after she died.

Many people have since connected the song, "You Dropped a Bomb on Me " to the horrific event. Reportedly at one point, whites flew WW1 planes over the Greenwood District, dropping gasoline and homemade bombs. Charlie Wilson, who wrote the song, is pleased that it brings up details so that people remember the violence inflicted on Black Tulsans. He thinks it's important we never forget that history. But, he says, that was not his intention. The only bomb he was referring to, he says, was "a bomb of love."

We can use more of those! Hear The Gap Band sing about it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17lkdqoLt44>