



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT COMMEMORATES THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF
1919 RED SUMMER RACE RIOTS**

Chicago remembers the 1919 Red Summer with Past Is Present event

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, and leaders from across the city, today formally commemorated the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Chicago Race Riots, known as Red Summer, during a program at Dunbar Park.

"The 1919 Red Summer Race Riots marked a touchstone in Chicago's difficult and painful history of racism and institutionalized inequality," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Today, we observe its legacy of conflict and sacrifice through reflections and commitments to memorialize its history, as well as chart a path forward towards breaking the enduring racism and segregation that shape our society, and create the needed and lasting opportunity, justice and dignity for our city and its residents."

Marked as the Red Summer of 1919, events in Chicago began when 17-year-old Eugene Williams was stoned and drowned when his raft crossed the unofficial barrier between Chicago's white and black beaches on July 27. From Little Italy to Englewood, the next seven days were stained by stop and go mob attacks and arson committed by young white gang members. Black residents banded together to fend off the white mobs firing at them from rooftops and out of windows.

The police were unable to quell the rioting, and the Illinois National Guard was called to intervene. By the end of August 3, 1919, 38 people were dead, 537 injured, and more than 1,000 homeless due to arson.

The City of Chicago is committed to commemorating the riots in a way that acknowledges the significance of this event in shaping Chicago's history. Last Wednesday, City Council passed a resolution commemorating the race riots of 1919. Also, Chicago Public Schools is developing a resource guide and partnering with schools to support instruction about the 1919 riots. Lastly, the City is working with Danielle Tillman of bKL Architecture and others to create a placemaking structure to memorialize the riots.



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Today's Past is Present event featured performances from Hakim Dough, music studio mentor at YOUmedia and Jimmi Gordon, emcee at Young Chicago Authors. An historical remembrance, reflection of descendants and several blessings followed the performances.

"Today is a part of an important moment for our city," said Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer. "While we are reflecting on a horrific time in our city's history, formal recognition of the 1919 Race Riots also makes clear our responsibility to work together to create a fair, just and united Chicago."

Mayor Lightfoot's racial equity policy agenda and Office of Equity and Racial Justice will be led by Moore and is the first of its kind for the City of Chicago. This office will ensure that city departments and sister agencies will conduct operations and create policies with a lens on equity moving forward.

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