

1898 Wilmington, North Carolina Massacre & Coup d'état



Overview: On November 10, 1898, a violent mob of white supremacists massacred the Black community and overthrew the legitimately elected government of Wilmington, North Carolina

Background: After the Civil War, Wilmington was a center of Black political and economic power, with significant Black representation in local government through an alliance called the Fusion movement (a multiracial coalition of Black Republicans

and white Populists). In 1898, the North Carolina Democratic Party led a campaign to restore white supremacy by suppressing Black political participation. This included violent rhetoric and racist propaganda in local newspapers. The Democrats sought to unseat the elected Fusionist government by force if necessary.

The Massacre and Coup d'état: A white mob of approximately 2,000 terrorists known as the Red Shirts attacked the city's Black community. They set fire to the offices of the Daily Record, a Black-owned newspaper, and murdered Black residents in the streets. Between 60 to 300 Black citizens were killed, with hundreds more displaced and forced to flee Wilmington. Properties were looted or destroyed, and Black-owned businesses were burned down. After the massacre, the mob forced the resignation of the mayor and other elected officials, replacing them with white supremacist leaders. This marked a violent and unlawful transfer of power. The new government quickly enacted policies to disenfranchise Black citizens, stripping them of voting rights and effectively ending Black political participation in Wilmington and across North Carolina.

Legacy: The Wilmington Massacre is a stark example of how racial violence was used to undermine democracy and maintain white supremacy in the post-Reconstruction South. The massacre contributed to the disenfranchisement of Black Americans for decades, affecting generations through lost economic and political power. For many years, the events of 1898 were minimized or inaccurately reported as a "race riot." In recent decades, historians and activists have pushed for recognition of the massacre and coup, including public acknowledgment of the violence and injustices committed. In 2006, a state-sponsored commission published a detailed [report on the massacre](#), offering recommendations for reparative actions.

Source: New Hanover County Government Center. "Wilmington Massacre and Coup d'état of 1898 - Timeline of Events."

<https://nhcgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=5a4f5757e4904fb8bef6db842c1ff7c3>

