

FIRM NEWS

City of Tulsa Sued for Withholding Race Massacre Documents

April 2021

Tulsa-based civil and human rights attorney Damario Solomon-Simmons of SolomonSimmonsLaw, Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP and a team of civil and human rights lawyers have filed a lawsuit against the City of Tulsa, The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, and the Tulsa Development Authority for denying access to specific public records related to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre in violation of the Oklahoma Open Records Act. The filing is the latest legal action to help provide healing and justice to the survivors and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

In early January, Mr. Solomon-Simmons filed 11 separate open records requests with the City of Tulsa City Clerk and one request with the Tulsa Development Authority under the Oklahoma Open Records Act, seeking records related to the 1921 Massacre and its ongoing impact on the Greenwood District. In each case, his requests to receive the records within the customary 15 business days were ignored, and subsequent efforts to reach out to the defendants were either ignored or subject to stall tactics. Ultimately, The City of Tulsa's legal department specifically interfered with the City Clerk's legal obligation to comply with Mr. Solomon-Simmons' requests in retaliation for Solomon-Simmons' civil rights work against the City, writing, "[G]iven the fact that your firm currently represents parties adverse to the City in on-going litigation you are respectfully advised to immediately discontinue contact with our client [the City Clerk]."

The Schulte team is led by partner, litigation co-chair and pro bono chair Michael Swartz, special counsel for pro bono initiatives Sara Solfanelli and

litigation associate and Task Force for Racial Justice Initiatives co-chair McKenzie Haynes. The team also includes litigation special counsel Randall Adams and associates Angela Garcia, Ekenedilichukwu (Keni) Ukabiala and Alex Wharton and law clerk Melanie Collins; individual client services partner Susan Frunzi, special counsel Annie Mehlman and associates Caitlin Fitzsimons, Victoria Harris and Hannah Zale; intellectual property, sourcing & technology special counsel Scott Kareff; environmental special counsel Theodore Keyes; investment management special counsel Jill Guzzetti; real estate law clerk James Koenderman; and former Schulte lawyers Amanda Barkin, AnnaLise Bender-Brown, Abigail Coster, Brandon Faske and John Garces.

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Practices

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