

The Clerk's Black History Series



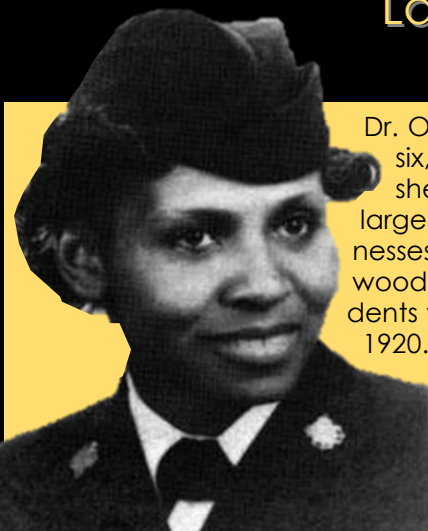
Debra DeBerry
Clerk of Superior Court
DeKalb County



Dr. Olivia J. Hooker

First African-America to enlist in the Coast Guard
Last Living Survivor of Black Wall Street

(b. February 12, 1915)

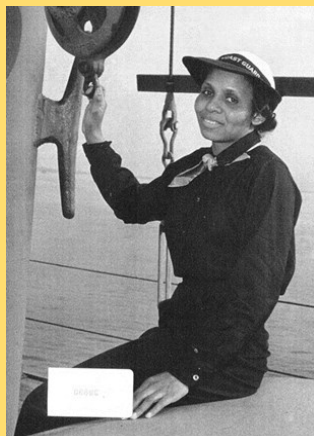


Dr. Olivia J. Hooker was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma on February 12, 1915. At the age of six, she along with more than 10,000 other African-Americans experienced what she called a "planned desecration" of her Greenwood Community. Greenwood was a large, prominent black neighborhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with thriving black-owned businesses. It was known as America's "Black Wall Street." It is said that the black dollar in Greenwood circulated 36-100 times before leaving the community. Due to Jim Crow laws, residents were dependent on each other and as a result, their community thrived, until June 1, 1920. Whether it was the fabricated story of a black man assaulting a white woman, or the

better possibility of economic jealousy, on June 1, 1921, white residents massacred hundreds of black residents and destroyed the entire neighborhood within hours. The riot was one of the most devastating massacres in the history of U.S. race relations. It is estimated that the massacre killed nearly 3,000 African-Americans and destroyed over 1,400 homes and businesses. Among the destruction were 21 churches, 21 restaurants, 30 grocery stores, two movie theaters, a hospital, a bank, a post office, libraries, schools, law offices, a half dozen private airplanes along with an entire bus system. Within five years after the massacre, surviving residents who chose to remain in Tulsa rebuilt much of the district, in spite of the opposition of many white Tulsa political and business leaders and punitive zoning laws enacted to prevent reconstruction. It resumed being a vital black community until segregation was overturned by the Federal Government during the 1950s and 1960s. Today, only a single block of the original buildings remain standing in the area.



After the riot, Dr. Hooker's family moved to Columbus, Ohio where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in 1937 from The Ohio State University. While at OSU, she joined the Delta Sigma Theta sorority where she advocated for African-American women to be admitted to the Navy. She applied to the *Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)* of the U.S. Navy, but was rejected due to her ethnicity. She disputed the rejection and although she was later accepted, she declined because she decided to join the Coast Guard. In February, 1945, Dr. Hooker became the first African-American woman to enter the U.S. Coast Guard, thus becoming a SPAR in the United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve, during World War II. She earned the Yeoman, Second Class rank during her service and the rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class until her unit disbanded in mid-1946. Dr. Hooker went on to earn her Masters degree in 1947 from the Teachers College of Columbia University and moved to upstate New York to work in mental health at the Albion Correctional Facility. She is credited with much of their success in rehabilitating incarcerated women who were saddled with a mental illness stigma. In 1961, she received her PhD in psychology from the University of Rochester. In 1963, she joined Fordham University as a senior clinical lecturer; eventually she became an associate professor until 1985. **Dr. Hooker recently celebrated her 102nd birthday.**



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