

The Oklahoma Eagle

“We Make America Better When We Aid Our People.”
- E. L. Goodwin (1902-1978, Publisher 1936-1978)

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ON GREENWOOD: OUR EDUCATION



Three generations of North Tulsa school graduates who have become teachers in the Tulsa Public School system sitting at the memorial bench to honor Booker T. Washington High School students who became educators. The bench sits at the former site of the Booker T. high school building on Greenwood Avenue, now on the property of the Oklahoma State University-Tulsa campus. Dr. LaVerne Ford Wimberly (left), who in 1975 became TPS's first African American female assistant high school principal; TPS "Teacher of the Year" Donna Ross; and Tiffany Bennett, a guidance counselor at East Central High and co-founder of the Facebook page, "Tulsa Black Educators." **BASIL CHILDERS / FOR THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE**

Greenwood: A community devoted to education

By Gary Lee
The Oklahoma Eagle

It did not take more than a few minutes into a conversation for Donna Ross to break into song. She was sharing stories about her years as a student at Walt Whitman Elementary School on North Lansing Avenue.

That was in the late 1970s, an era of rising Black Pride across Tulsa, and the teachers were committed to giving kids at the mostly Black school the best lessons for success in life.

"I couldn't wait to walk into that school every day," Ross recalled. "Everything about the experience - the teaching, the respect for learning, brought me joy."

Her euphoric memories of those years inspired Ross to do her rendition of her alma mater's song. "Whitman Hornets," she sang, "you will see all the best that there can be."

More than four decades later, Ross, now 51 and a veteran Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) teacher, devotes her professional life to bringing the same superlative level of schooling that she received at Whitman to a new generation of young Tulsans. During nearly a quarter-century leading classrooms across Tulsa - at Alcott and Hawthorne elementary schools, and other institutions - she has found her sweet spot as a fourth-grade teacher at McKinley Elementary School.

After 24 years in Tulsa classrooms, Ross has honed to a fine point the skills she feels to give her students to prepare them for the challenges of higher education - and life. Her secret sauce starts with building relationships with each kid in her class.

"From there, you can help guide them each in their way," she said. "I'm not the teacher who's going to tell kids to turn to page 220 and start reading. I think to teach kids, you have to reach them on a personal,

emotional level. And you have to make some serious noise."

Ross says she gets all the thanks she needs for her work every time she runs into one of her students around Tulsa and who has gone on to take solid jobs and lead strong families. But last Spring, TPS presented Ross with the ultimate validation for her commitment and contributions by naming her 2021 Teacher of the Year. She was chosen from a talent pool of a dozen of other teachers to become one of only a handful of Northside teachers who have received the top honor.

Education roots older than statehood

In her job as a molder of young minds, Ross is part of a storied tradition of Black **EDUCATION** continued on A2

ABOUT THIS SERIES

"Of Greenwood," is a monthly series of The Oklahoma Eagle that examines key legacies that helped to shape our community as the "Black Wall Street of America." Our series receives support from Liberty Mutual Insurance. The Oklahoma Eagle is solely responsible for this content.

- >> May: Tulsa's Green Legacy
 - >> July: The power of Greenwood's circular dollar
 - >> August: The rich legacy of Tulsa's Black entrepreneurship
 - >> September: Goin' to worship: Sunday is a lifeline of Greenwood's legacy and future
 - >> October: Health care: Carrying on 'legacy of (Black) physicians'
 - >> November: Greenwood: A community devoted to education
- To read the series and watch videos, visit TheOklahomaEagle.net.



The original Booker T. Washington H.S. building.

NORTH TULSA LEADERS

A new generation of Black Wall Street businesses honored

Owners, entrepreneurs recognized for making Tulsa awesome.



Graphic designer and entrepreneur Tony Williams (center), known as "Mister Black Wall Street," received the Boomtown Individual Award. Tania Garza (second from left) accepted the Boomtown Organization Award for Urban Coder's Guild. **RIPSTELL / TYPROS**

By Gary Lee
The Oklahoma Eagle

An all-star list of Black Wall Street businesses and entrepreneurs took top honors in the Tulsa Young Professionals (TYPROS) Boomtown awards last weekend.

The coveted annual citations are open to hundreds of companies and young entrepreneurs across Tulsa. But this year, TYPROS intentionally bestowed the prizes on Black Wall Street enterprises and personalities. The organization presented the awards at a gala ceremony at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino on Nov. 5. The event, a TYPROS

official said, "is the organization's premier celebration to recognize and honor those in the city, which furthers our mission of making Tulsa awesome."

Black Wall Street Liquid Lounge won the top prize in the Boomtown Business Award category. Graphic designer and clothing brand owner Tony Williams took home the Boomtown Individual Award. The Boomtown Organization Award went to Urban Coders Guild, which provides computer science education access and opportunities to youth from historically underserved, underrepresented, and otherwise under-resourced communities. And Tyrance Billingsly won

TYPROS' Legacy Award. Billingsley is the founder and Executive Director of Black Tech Street, an initiative to rebirth Black Wall Street.

"We wanted this year to be a springboard that launches continued focus and growth on Historic Greenwood and Black Wall Street," said Andrea Pemberton, executive director of TYPROS. "With these awards TYPROS is commemorating the 100th anniversary of Tulsa's darkest hour. We didn't want this year to be a moment that was acknowledged and then moved on from without further thought."

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Ronnie Wilson homegoing



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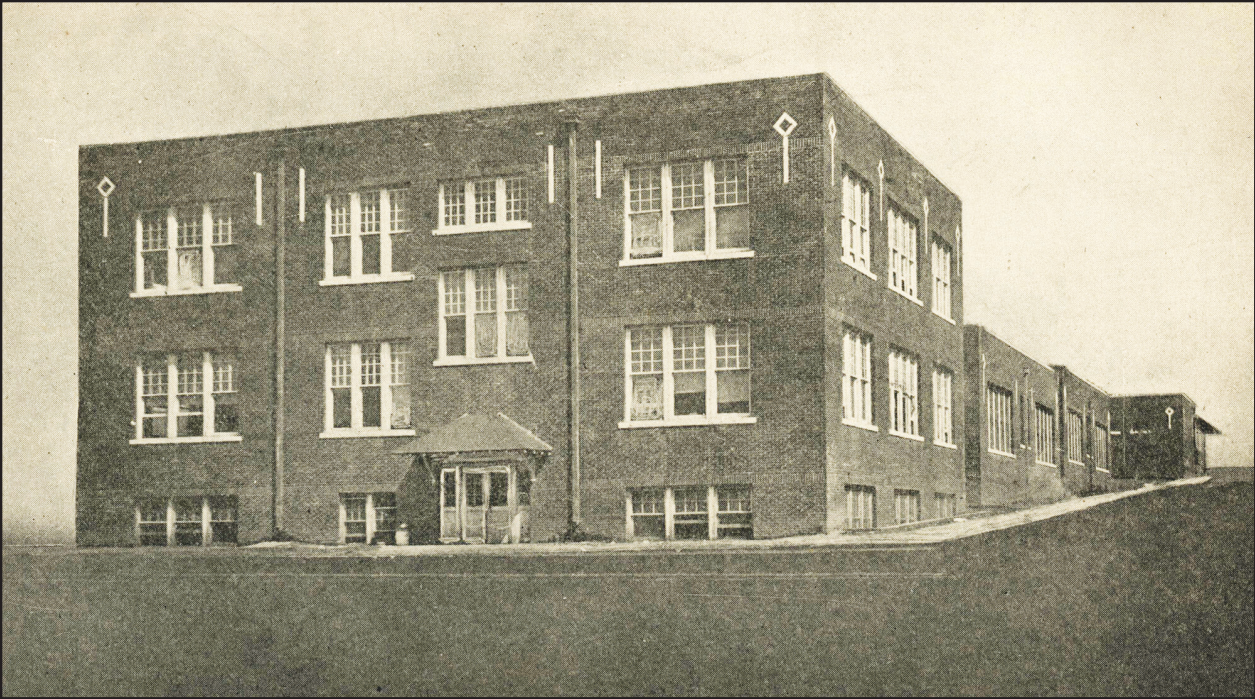
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ON GREENWOOD

The Oklahoma Eagle



Booker T. Washington High School in the Greenwood District, 1920. OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Booker T. Washington High School in the present day. BASIL CHILDERS / FOR THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

EDUCATION

From Page 1

community devotion to public education in that dates back 120 years.

Since Blacks first created the Historic Greenwood District in the early 1900s, community leaders put a heavy accent on schooling. One early patron was Jake Dillard, a Black businessman credited with starting Tulsa’s first school for Blacks in 1905 in a small church at Archer Street and Kenosha Court. He named it after the poet and author Paul Lawrence Dunbar, the famous Black bard of the era.

A few years later, Ellis Walker Woods came onto the scene. The 27-year-old Mississippi native was destined to become a transformational educator in North Tulsa.

In 1911, Woods reportedly saw a flyer advertising teaching jobs in Tulsa. The city’s Black community, centered around the Greenwood, was growing fast and badly needed educators. According to legend, Woods made the 412-mile walk from Memphis, where he was living, to Sapulpa.

By 1913, the school board hired him as principal of Dunbar. Soon after, the board constructed a small four-room high school on Easton Street and Elgin Avenue and named Woods principal.

Booker T.’s roots

Located on North Hartford Avenue, it had a newly-built 18-room brick main schoolhouse designed for 241 lower grade students and a two-room frame building for seven high school students. The board’s name for the new school – the Separate School for Coloreds – did not fly with North Tulsans. The community renamed it after Black leader Booker Taliaferro Washington Jr., who had visited Oklahoma in 1905 as part of the National Negro Business League.

Woods’s ascendance turned out to be one of the most significant moves in the history of North Tulsa schools. He remained at the helm at Booker T – as the school was nicknamed – for 35 years. He guided the education of thousands of Black Tulsan students and hundreds of teachers.

As president of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers, Wood’s influence reached far beyond Booker T’s walls. One of the most critical missions he took on was advocating for Black graduates of Tulsa schools to return to Northside classrooms as teachers, educators, and mentors.

And how Black Tulsans heeded the call!

From 1915 to 1951, 56 gradu-

ates of Booker T returned to the system as teachers or administrators, by the account of Julius Pegues, Northside schools advocate, and 1953 Booker T. graduate and who became the first African American basketball player at the University of Pittsburg.

Last year, inspired by the Toni Morrison Society’s Bench by the Road Project, Pegues engaged the John Hope Franklin Center in erecting a plaque and bench erected to the memory of the early contingency of Northside students turned educators. The memorial is located on Greenwood, at the original Booker T. Washington High School – currently the campus of Oklahoma State University, Tulsa.

As the Black population rose and new schools opened (including an elementary school next door to Booker T named after Woods.), Northsiders continued to heed the call to educate Tulsa’s Black kids and youth. To a man or woman, whether they went to Booker T., Central, McClain high schools, or elsewhere, they referred to inspiring teachers or transformative events during their schooling as reasons they opted for careers as Tulsa teachers or administrators.

‘Failure was not an option’

Laverne Wimberly’s inspiration to become an educator started when she was a kid in the 1940s and 1950s. She attended Dunbar Elementary, Carver Middle, and graduated from Booker T. in 1956. Wimberly, 81, gushes when she recalls her experiences in those all-Black schools.

“The education I had was second to none,” she said in an interview. “Teachers were committed to every child. Failure was not an option.”

The push for young Black Tulsans to read and write well went beyond school walls. Wimberly explained that North Tulsans took to heart the importance of engaging the whole village in educating and raising children.

In her childhood years, the principals of Dunbar Elementary, Carver and Anderson Junior High schools, and Booker T, all lived on the same street as her family’s home on East Marshall Place.

“It made a big difference that you would see your teachers at the store, the doctor’s office, and at church,” she said. “They were our neighbors, our close-up role models.”

With that remarkable concentration of role models, how could Wimberly resist becoming an educator?

She would go on to a 35-year career as a TPS teacher and



HENRY WHITLOW

administrator, including stints as a principal at Carver, acting principal at Central, and a deputy superintendent for TPS.

“I did everything in Tulsa schools except drive the bus,” she said.

Inspiring students to teach

Donna Ross’s attraction to schooling came 30 years later. In 1977, her father, Don Ross – the former reporter, columnist and vice president for The Oklahoma Eagle who would become a North Tulsa civic and political leader – moved his family from Gary, Indiana, to Tulsa, his hometown.

At seven, Ross enrolled at Whitman, where she quickly fell under the spell of Yolanda Mitchell. A writing teacher, Mitchell was an ‘old school’ teacher who felt a duty to educate the whole child. “I learned everything, from her,” Ross said, “from how to manage life to Edgar Allan Poe. Her influence has stayed with me all my life.”

The two have remained close friends and talk regularly.

It was a generation later, in the late 1990s, that Tiffany Bennett discovered her love of education as an elementary school kid at Emerson Elementary School. Like Ross, she was captivated by the nurturing approach of her teachers. They were so impactful that their guidance still keeps in touch with many of them.

Her mother, Dianne, also worked at Emerson, further sealing her bond to the school.

After college, Bennett later became a preschool teacher at Hawthorne Elementary and a guidance counselor at East Central High. An unsatisfactory counseling experience at Booker T., where she graduated in 2010, led



Photograph of Ellis Walker Woods. TULSA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

Bennett to become a counselor. “I feel as if I did not get the guidance I needed,” she said. “So, I want to give it to others.”

The sentiment to fill a void also inspired Bennett, now 29, to team up with fellow TPS administrator Courtni McGilbra to create the Facebook page, “Tulsa Black Educators.”

“We get a lot of strength from sharing our experiences with other Black Teachers and educators,” said McGilbra, an early childhood program coordinator at TPS.

‘Each-one-teach-one’

These and a legion of other Northside teachers were intent that their students know the classic books, gain math skills and get a grounding in all the other basics. The “each-one-teach-one” mantra – that became a rallying cry in Black schools across the U.S., particularly during Jim Crow and segregation – seemed to resonate with greater urgency in Tulsa.

Teachers often went much further than delivering lessons in math, English, and science. They were about teaching a love for learning.

In Wimberly’s view, there were two reasons Tulsa’s teachers were so adamant about pushing Black students towards educational achievement. For one, the legacy of Greenwood’s Black Wall Street extended to schooling.

“The success of that era told us that we could succeed in any circumstances as long as we had the education,” said Wimberly, who in 1975 became Tulsa Public Schools first African American female assistant high school principal.

The other reason was the lingering shadow of the horrific 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

“That gave us the drive that we needed to do as much as we could to protect ourselves,” she added.

Almost any Black who was educated in pre-integration Northside schools can recall a

teacher who recognized talent and cultivated it, often inspiring them into careers.

For Lamar Burks, that inspiration came from Ruth Price, a junior high school speech and English teacher at Marian Anderson Junior High. She pulled 13-year-old Burk aside and told him he had a gift for public speaking.

He objected, citing shyness and stage fright.

“No,” she told him, “You will be a speaker. You have that calling.”

Whenever she saw a chance, Price would invite Burks to the podium. Reluctant at first, he eventually cottoned on to the role of impresario. It would lead him to a career as a teacher, coach, public speaker and sports enthusiast.

Burks, 65, is now retired. Rebecca Marks Jimerson’s mentor was Elizabeth Enochs, a speech and debate teacher at Booker T.

Enochs “nurtured, encouraged and coached me,” Jimerson recalled. “She lifted me and turned me towards Shakespeare,” she added.

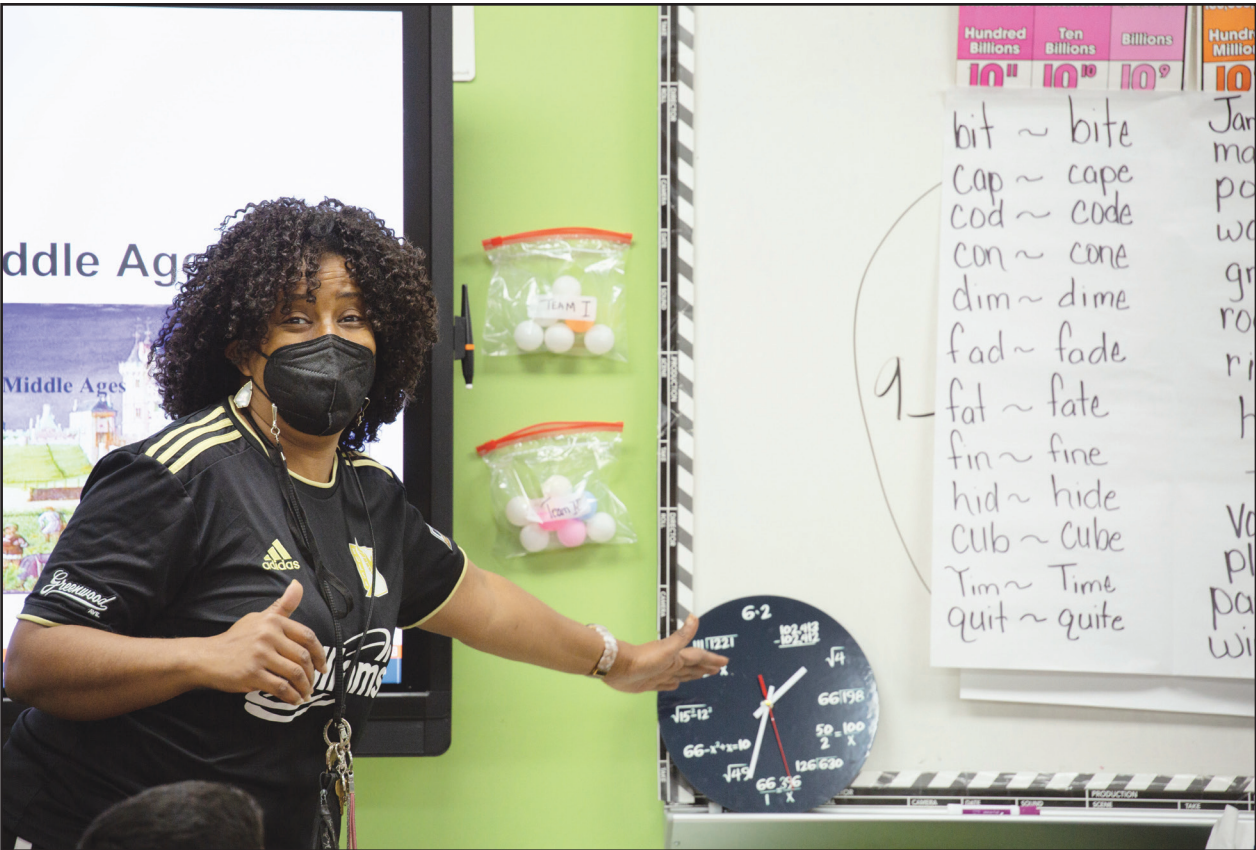
Enochs nurtured Jimerson after the passing of her mother. She encouraged Jimerson to enter a national public speaking competition in Seattle, Washington. With her performance, Jimerson took eleventh place nationally. The event pirouetted the 1978 BTW graduate into a career in writing and public relations.

As a 12-year-old in Juanita Lewis’s journalism class at Marion Anderson, I remember learning the importance of answering the five “Ws” – what, when, where, why and who – early in a news story.

The lesson has stayed with me during a career that has included eight years as a staff writer at Time Magazine and over two decades as a correspondent for the Washington Post.

The Booker T. effect

EDUCATION continued on A3



Donna Ross teaching 4th graders. TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ON GREENWOOD

The Oklahoma Eagle

EDUCATION

From Page 2

Between the 1940s and mid-1970s, the Black population of Tulsa County doubled from around 18,500 to nearly 40,000. The number and footprint of Black schools also began to sprawl.

Clustered initially around the heart of North Tulsa, the circle of primarily Black Schools widened to include Gilcrease Elementary School near Turley and Roosevelt Junior High in Maplewood neighborhood.

Tulsa school officials – unmoved by the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka case ordering public school desegregation, or the dramatic integration events that followed in Little Rock, Arkansas, and throughout the South – kept Tulsa Schools mainly segregated through the 1960s.

Only in the early 1970s, after intensive legal wrangling, did school authorities begin introducing widescale integration programs.

“The resistance was passive,” said James O. Goodwin Sr., a longtime attorney and civic leader, publisher of the *Oklahoma Eagle* and whose family has three-generations of ownership of businesses in the Historic Greenwood District. It was a lawsuit that Goodwin filed, in conjunction with the Tulsa chapter of the NAACP, that pushed integration forward to desegregate Tulsa Public Schools nearly 20 years after the landmark federal decision.

Enforcement of the new rules resulted in drama. The Tulsa Public School board first sought to close Northside schools, including the wildly popular Carver Junior High. Following protests by Black parents and students, the schools remained open. Still, the norm was for Black kids to be bussed from North Tulsa to schools as far as 15 miles away.

And yet, for more than a century, through the demolition of such iconic schools as Dunbar and the transformation or closing of others, the epicenter of learning in North Tulsa has held steadfast in one institution: Booker T.

Since its original opening on Greenwood in 1913, the high school has moved and undergone various physical and sociological transformations. It moved from the Greenwood in 1950 to its current location on East Zion Street in 1950. Until recently, its vital role in the academic life of North Tulsa has never faltered.

The Hive’s legacy

Buoyed first by the leadership of Woods – and later that of Henry C. Whitlow Jr. and other principals and teachers – Booker T. has played a monumental role in the academic life of North Tulsa. As a segregated institution, its leadership motivated Black students to gain the highest possible distinctions in scholastics and sports for its first six decades. The bar for achieving excellence was set exceptionally high in English, math and sciences.

And did the students deliver!



Donna Ross, a teacher at McKinley Elementary School, reads one of the memorial plaques for former Booker T. Washington H.S. students who entered the Tulsa Public School system as administrators and teachers(1916-1951). It reads: “Education is the passport to the future.” **BASIL CHILDERS / FOR THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE**

In its heyday, Booker T consistently produced more national merit scholars than any other Tulsa high school. In the class of 1962, there were 12.



BTW’s achievement in sports is almost the stuff of myths. Its football and basketball teams have won 53 state championships. Many former Booker T. athletes – such as basketball star and Olympian Wayman Tisdale; NBA players Etan Thomas and Ryan Humphrey; three-time Olympic wrestler Kenny Monday; and pro football players Aaron Kevin, J.W. and, Tyler Lockett; R.W. McQuarters, Robert Meachem and Felix Jones.

But BTW, athletes were never allowed to rest on the laurels of their prowess on the playing fields. Art Williams, the head football and basketball coach during the 1950s and 1960s insisted that his players maintain a higher than passing grade point average.

BTW graduates include a long list of nationally known Black luminaries. Historian John Hope Franklin, musicians Ronnie and Charlie Wilson (founders of the GAP band), and sports consultant Guy Troupe, a former NFL executive and NCAA administrator.

As impressive as the BTW’s star graduates are the hundreds of professionals, community leaders, and other stalwarts in the North Tulsa community it has produced.

The school did not come by legendary status quickly. While a bachelor’s degree was standard for most Tulsa school teachers, at Booker T., a higher level of education was often expected.

During the 1960s, a third of the teachers had master’s degrees. “More important than the degrees they had was the fact that they



The new media center and library dedicated to Dr. LaVerne Ford Wimberly in the newest incarnation of Booker T. high school which opened in 2003-2004. **BASIL CHILDERS / FOR THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE**

were particularly skilled at inspiring and educating young Blacks,” Pegues said.

The push to desegregate schools was particularly tough on Booker T.

By 1971, while the student body was still all Black, nearly half the faculty was white. Many of the white teachers were openly resentful at being required to teach there. By the early 1980s, the school had 45 percent Black and 45 percent white students. The rest were from other backgrounds.

Just when the racial tensions seemed most dire, a team of Black and white teachers and administrators came together to rescue it. They included Principal Whitlow, counselors Nancy MacDonald, H.D. Greene, Barbara Coleman, and music teacher Elmer Davis Jr.

One teacher who played a key behind-the-scenes role was Janice Bayou. Invited to join the faculty

as a music and band teacher in 1974, she was initially daunted. Of Middle East descent, Bayou was unsure how to navigate in a school steeped in Black culture.

But she said she quickly pulled up her sleeves and went to work.

“My mission was to build an acclaimed music program that was different from other schools,” she said. “And so, I taught my students jazz, Broadway, classical, swing dance and tap. As I taught, I was also guided by my students. We reached towards each other and met in the middle.”

In more recent years, Booker T. has gained increasing popularity among white Tulsans. In 2004, *Newsweek* magazine cited it as one of the top 100 high schools in the U.S. But the commitment to educate Black Tulsans has faltered. This year, its enrollment was over 60 percent white and only 28 percent.

BTW graduates have protested that the school has abandoned its legacy. “This record is a disaster,” said Pegues.

“Someone has to rescue our school,” said Rebecca Marks Jimerson.

Challenges and solutions

Tulsa’s past and current Black educators cite a long list of issues with the education of Black children in Tulsa. Wimberly points to restrictions in teaching rules that make it challenging for teachers to educate the whole child.

For Courtni McGilbra, the Tulsa Black Educators Facebook page co-administrator, the lack of engagement among Black parents in their kids’ schooling is one of the biggest problems. Bennett thinks that the scant training that many teachers and administrators have about Black culture and history, particularly in the city’s majority white and Hispanic schools, inhibits progress. They all agree that the lingering effects of a poorly executed integration continue to cause issues.

And yet, the allegiance of each of them to imparting knowledge to Tulsa’s youth is unwavering.

“My school kids are my life,” Donna Ross said. “I can’t think of anywhere I’d rather be than in the classroom.”



Photograph of Booker T. Washington High School's Victory Council in Tulsa, OK, 1940. **THE GATEWAY TO OKLAHOMA HISTORY COLLECTION / OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



This AP Wirephoto with wax pencil crop marks was used on Sept. 13th, 1971, by a newspaper for Oklahoma Publishing Company is captioned “First day of school at Tulsa’s new Carver Freedom School, opened in protest to desegregation plan that closed all-black Carver Junior High, brought almost 300 youngsters to classes Monday.” **THE GATEWAY TO OKLAHOMA HISTORY COLLECTION / OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

AROUND TOWN

The Oklahoma Eagle

TALK OF GREENWOOD



Lessie Benningfield Randle celebrated her 107th birthday this week at the Greenwood Cultural Center. Justice For Greenwood gave the Tulsa Race Massacre survivor a celebration fit for a queen. **WORLD WON DEVELOPMENT**

LIFE REMEMBERED

Ronnie Wilson homegoing

Hundreds of friends, family and other well-wishers packed the historic Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church on Greenwood on Wednesday for services for Ronnie Wilson, Tulsa native, renowned musician and co-founder of the GAP band.

The Rev. Keith Mayes Sr., Vernon's new pastor, offered remarks, highlighted by condolences to Linda Bouleware-Wilson, Wilson's widow. The Rev. Robert Turner, Vernon's previous pastor, delivered the eulogy. Other speakers included Oklahoma State Rep. Regina Goodwin and Phil Armstrong, interim executive director of The Greenwood Rising Historical Center.

Wilson was buried Thursday at Hillcrest Memory Gardens in Spencer.

The full service can be found on the Facebook page of Bigelow Funeral Home, which organized the funeral, at <https://www.facebook.com/Biglow-Funerals-Inc-365029870361957/>.

- Gary Lee, The Oklahoma Eagle

CELEBRATIONS

‘Mother Randle’ turns 107

Lessie Benningfield Randle, better known to the Greenwood community as “Mother Randle,” celebrated her 107th birthday on Wednesday, Nov. 10.

Randle s one of the last three known survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The Justice for Greenwood Foundation – which is leading the legal efforts seeking reparations for the survivors and descendants – organized a community event for “Mother Randle.” They hosted a drive-by party, where people could drop off special notes for her to read.

In a statement to a congressional hearing last May, “Mother Randle”

said: “I survived the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, by the grace of God, I am still here. I have survived to tell this story. I believed I am still here to share it with you.”

- Gary Lee, The Oklahoma Eagle

JOB TRAINING

Free training for trade skills

Tulsa’s Training and Employment Electrical Contractors Association (TEECA) is offering free classes to help educate apprentices in the fields of electrician, HVAC technician, carpenter, and maintenance technician. Applicants for the program, called Hand-Up, must be at least 18. Those selected will be given transportation assistance to the classes.

Anyone interested should logon to teecainc.org to fill out an application. TEECA will contact applicants for interviews via Zoom. Those selected will drug tested, receive an orientation, and scheduled for the weeklong course.

TEECA wants to grow in North Tulsa and wants North Tulsa to grow,” TEECA said in a statement promoting the Hand-Up initiative. “This is why it is so important to us to recruit, develop and support local talent. We are committed to your success and to becoming the obvious choice for your construction pre-apprenticeship training.

We “will provide everything you need to succeed in the course and at being job ready,” TEECA said.

- Staff Report

IN OUR SCHOOLS

Academy raises funds for refugees

Tulsa’s College Bound Academy raised \$2,264.75 during a coin drive benefiting Catholic Charities’ Afghan Relief Fund.

The idea for the coin drive came from fourth grade teacher Sarah

Luna, who saw a need to help Afghan refugees coming into Tulsa who were fleeing from war-torn Afghanistan. Tulsa has welcomed 200 refugees so far and 800 are expected to arrive in the city.

College Bound Academy, located on S 101st E Ave, is a Title I school, with more than 80% of its population at or below the poverty line. The fundraiser, as well as letters from students, highlighted their empathy.

The refugees need basics to begin a new life, with goods and services from the community. Housing and material aid, including school supplies and other necessities, in addition to monetary assistance and transportation to appointments. The Student Leadership Committee worked to create the schoolwide coin drive to help the families arriving from Afghanistan.

Throughout the month of October, students brought coins to contribute to the drive. They competed to inspire more donations among their peers: the class with the most pennies would earn an extra recess.

Andrea Warren, executive director of College Bound Academy said, “The students gave generously, even beyond our expectations. Their motivation to be good neighbors inspired us all.”

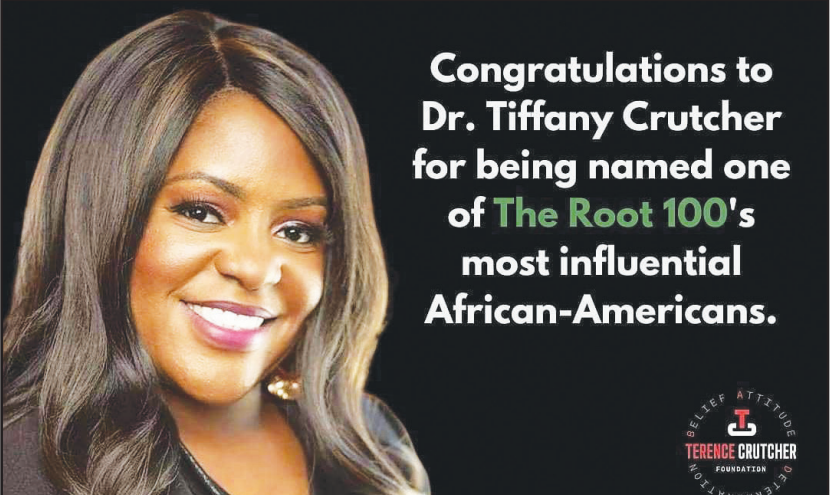
Laurie Gero, chief development officer for Catholic Charities, visited College Bound Academy on Oct. 29 to accept the donation to the Afghan Relief Fund.

“This generous effort from young Tulsans speaks to their character,” Gero said. “They are not just saying ‘welcome’ to these refugees but also showing our newest members of the Tulsa community that they are welcome through their actions.”

Some students, like Denicza, also wrote notes to help welcome the refugees to Tulsa.

“Welcome to Tulsa, I hope you will love this place,” Denicza wrote. “I’m honored that you’re here.”

- Gary Lee, The Oklahoma Eagle



Dr. Tiffany Crutcher **FACEBOOK**

COMMUNITY HONORS

Crutcher honored by The Root 100, and local nonprofit

Dr. Tiffany Crutcher was recognized by The Root.com – one of the largest websites covering Black news, politics, culture and opinion – in its 12th annual Root 100 List, featuring one hundred of the most influential African American innovators, public figures, community leaders, change agents, and activists of 2021.

She was also named the 2021 “Outstanding Philanthropy in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Awardee” by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Eastern Oklahoma Chapter.

twin brother, Terence Crutcher, on Sept. 16, 2016, by then-Tulsa police officer Betty Shelby, Tiffany Crutcher “has worked tirelessly to prevent other families from experiencing a similar loss,” The Root noted.

“She founded a nonprofit foundation that bears his name, which encourages communities to fight police violence while also pushing lawmakers at state and federal levels to legislate lasting and meaningful policing reform.”

A descendant of a 1921 Tulsa Massacre survivor, Crutcher has also carried a torch for other survivors and descendants to receive reparations as the country is only

just beginning to reckon with the racist actions that marked that ugly day 100 years ago. Crutcher sees the connections between her brother’s death and what her family endured, telling The Root, “As we started to encroach on the 100th anniversary of the massacre, I saw the parallels of the past and the present,” she said. “The racial terror violence that my great-grandmother had to endure and flee in fear of her life is the same racial terror and state-sanctioned violence that Terence had to endure.”

Tiffany Crutcher was also honored by the AFP Eastern Oklahoma

Chapter for efforts on behalf of her foundation work. They noted that her brother’s killing greatly serves Tulsa as the Founder and Executive Director of the Terrance Crutcher Foundation and the Demanding a JUSTulsa coalition.

“The murder of her twin brother, Terrance Crutcher activated Tiffany’s activism as she spoke out against police brutality, especially the killing of unarmed black men,” AFP Eastern Oklahoma said. “The focus of her work is criminal justice and policing reform, providing scholarships to African-American students, community; youth development, and policy advocacy.

- Staff Report



Friends, Family and fans gathered at Historic Vernon Chapel AME on Wednesday to celebrate the life of musician and Tulsa native Ronnie Wilson. The GAP band founder died on Nov. 2. **WORLD WON DEVELOPMENT**

LOCAL & STATE

The Oklahoma Eagle

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: DEATH ROW

Religious leaders call for clemency for Julius Jones

By Gary Lee

The Oklahoma Eagle

North Tulsa religious leaders this week joined the rising chorus appealing to Gov. Kevin Stitt to spare Julius Jones from execution. Unless Stitt reduces his death sentence, Jones will be killed by lethal injection on Nov. 18.

“We’re gathered to show one voice in support of the recommendation to commute Jones’s sentence,” said Bishop Melvin Cooper, who heads North Tulsa-based World Won for Christ Family Life Ministries.

Cooper spoke at a press conference on Sunday at the Greenwood Cultural Center. During the gathering, the United Coalition of Clergy, including 70 pastors, bishops and other religious leaders, issued a statement calling on Stitt to reduce Jones’s death sentence life with the possibility of parole.

“We’re not here to advocate for or against the death penalty or to attest to Julius Jones’ innocence or guilt,” Cooper added. “We’re here to ask that the Governor save his life.”



Jones was convicted of murder in 1999. Prosecutors say Jones shot and killed Paul Howell outside of his parent’s home in Edmond. Jones was sentenced to death row, but he has maintained his innocence over the past two decades.

GOP lawmakers also back Jones

Following a hearing on Nov. 1, The Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board recommended that Jones be given clemency. In a three-to-one decision, the board recommended that Stitt commute Jones’ sentence.

Stitt has indicated that he is weighing the decision. He said he would discuss the case with several people from both sides before making a decision.

“I’ll be meeting with the defense

attorneys personally and privately. I’ll meet with the prosecutors personally and privately. I’ll meet with the Howell family that lost their father and their son, you know, senselessly murdered, and I’ll meet with them as well, and then I’ll make a decision,” Stitt said in a press conference.

The request to Stitt from the church leaders is part of widening support Jones has received across Oklahoma and nationally. This week Republican Oklahoma lawmakers also publicly encouraged Stitt to save Jones.

Rep. Garry Mize and Rep. Preston Stinson, both Republicans representing the Edmond area, where Howell lived, have also asked Stitt to grant clemency.

“We can’t move forward with an execution under these circumstances in good conscience,” Mize

said. They have said that the death penalty should never be used if an inmate’s guilt is in question.

Other GOP lawmakers who joined Mize and Stinson are Republican Reps. John Talley, Logan Phillips and Kevin McDugle. They join a growing chorus of faith leaders, athletes and celebrities who have urged Stitt to spare Jones’ life.

But prosecutors, including Oklahoma County District Attorney David Prater, say the evidence against Jones is overwhelming.

“The last thing the state should be doing is taking the life of someone who may be innocent,” Mize said. “There is too much doubt here. We can’t move forward with execution under these circumstances in good conscience. I hope and pray Gov. Stitt accepts the recommendation of his Parole Board.”

“How you treat Jones is how you treat Jesus”

A broad group of supporters, including nationally known celebrities, athletes, death penalty opponents, and others, have also

appealed to Stitt on Jones’ behalf. Pastor Jim Wallis, a well-known faith leader, based in Washington, D.C., held a prayer conference call with the Jones family last on Nov. 7. After the meeting, he said Jones is “an innocent Black man now sitting on Death Row.”

Wallis is director of the Center on Faith and Justice at Georgetown University. In a direct appeal to Stitt that was streamed on YouTube, Wallis asked the governor to take out his bible and read the scripture in Matthew 25.

“How you treat Julius Jones is how you treat Jesus,” Wallis said to Stitt. “How you protect Julius Jones is how you protect Jesus. That is what that scripture lesson will tell you.”

In a separate statement sent to Stitt, Wallis said: “Given the risk of false testimony, the evidence of racism, and the finality of a death sentence, I pray you will commute the sentence of Julius Jones. I do not believe justice has been served in this case, and it would be a tragedy for another innocent life to be lost due to a misapplication of justice.”

BUSINESS

From Page 1

Grants to Black Wall Street start-ups

Besides the top trophies, TYPROS also gave \$50,000 in grants to five new Black Wall Street businesses.

“We hope these projects being completed in 2022 will keep that spotlight on Greenwood and North Tulsa,” Pemberton said. “We wanted to challenge ourselves to put our money where our mouths were and give away the most we have ever given.

“The TYPROS Foundation wants to show our commitment to addressing systemic racism and promoting equity and visibility to underserved members of our community.”

In honoring Black Wall Street Liquid Lounge, TYPROS highlighted that the popular hangout “is a coffee shop that pays homage to the spirit and resilience of historic Black Wall Street in Tulsa’s Greenwood District. It’s a lounge that serves all of the coffee shop standards while serving as a co-working and meeting space for small business owners and local patrons.”

Co-owner Yvette Troupe was on hand at last Saturday’s gala event to receive the award.

In their selection of Williams, TYPROS noted that he is known as “Mr. Black Wall Street.”

“Tony spends most of his time volunteering with the community, working on his business and keep-



Leaders of Cooperation Tulsa pose at last week’s gala. They received a grant for their Church of Restoration Community Garden. **TYPROS**

ing the Greenwood spirit alive,” his citation said.

In raising up Urban Coders Guild, TYPROS noted that “all its students are exposed to coding technologies, as well as other roles within the tech sphere: IT project managers, business analysts, product designers, product developers, tech salespeople, and future tech entrepreneurs.”

The grants went to the following recipients:

Tracy Gibbs received \$20,000 for the “Greenwood Reflection Garden.” This garden will be created at the Gibbs Shopping Center on the east side of the building. This garden will remember and honor the survivors who triumphantly paved the way for awareness, education, hope, and peace through sharing their personal stories of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre. There will be a mural with faces of some of those survivors, with QR codes that can be scanned to hear the interviews of survivors. The garden will be a quiet space to unwind, reflect and spark intellectual dialogue. Tracy Gibbs is a descendant of a Tulsa Race Massacre survivor and a respected business owner in North Tulsa. To honor her family and those lost in Tulsa’s darkest hour, the TYPROS Foundation granted this project \$20,000 - the largest single amount in TYPROS Foundation history.

Victor Lawrence Collins received \$10,000 to for “Trash Talk.” This project will make Tulsa awesome by helping clean up underserved communities and engaging neighbors to grow our sense of community. After each cleaning, a space

will be provided for local artists to perform and share their talents with those who come clean. The goal is to form a deeper connection between the artists in Tulsa and the communities they represent.

Cooperation Tulsa received \$5,000 for Church of the Restoration Community Garden. The community garden will make Tulsa awesome by bringing Tulsans together to grow and cultivate food. Tulsa’s community will manage the gardens, and decisions will be made democratically and intergenerationally. The CRCG will be an interactive means of learning food sovereignty, restorative land practices, and community building. Congratulations to the Church of the Restoration Community Garden.

Crystal Shaver with “Mindful Resilience Courses” received \$5,000. This course will focus on helping heal the trauma in the Black community. The idea is to give opportunities and safe spaces for Black people to explore, connect with and heal their traumas. The four-week course will examine how trauma impacts the body. The courses will be offered for free.

Black Queer Tulsa for Black Pride Week received \$10,000. This weekend of fun will be hosted by Black Queer Tulsa and will celebrate all the queer members of our community. They aim to bring the Black Queer community together with other races of the Queer community to form a bond and trust. They hope anyone from around the world who wants to participate can do that.



Leaders of Queer Black Tulsa take a bow before the Boomtown ceremony crowd. They received a grant from TYPROS to help produce Black Pride Week. **TYPROS**

GREENWOOD SOUND

Kode Ransom’s ‘Oklahoma Made’ receives a Hollywood Music In Media Awards’ nomination



Kode Ransom’s “Oklahoma Made” has been nominated by the Hollywood Music in Media Awards in the “Spoken Word” category. **PROVIDED**

By Fisher Jack

Eurweb.com

Tulsa native Kode Ransom has been nominated by the sponsors of the Hollywood Music in Media Awards (HMMA) in the “Spoken Word” category for the recording of his original piece, “Oklahoma Made.”

In the poem, the hip-hop poet is noted for cleverly weaving in 31 names of the sons and daughters of Oklahoma, while celebrating their individual and collective accomplishments. A true storyteller, his work as a hip-hop artist is geared towards telling the stories that are rarely, if ever, told.

“Oklahoma Made” was created for the forthcoming music compilation album 1921, The Black Wall Street Music Project. This is Ransom’s first nomination for the HMMA.

“It’s an honor to be nominated for such an award coming from where I’m from,” Ransom said. “It feels even more amazing because I got to mention some greats from my state. People get to see that the talent in Oklahoma has a long history and an even brighter future.”

Ransom is a community organizer, poet, youth basketball trainer, screenwriter and film director. He said he’s made it his personal mission to learn of multiple perspectives throughout his life.

While his father hails from Accra, Ghana, Ransom stays connected to the everyday people of Tulsa by giving free daily tours of the Historic Greenwood District telling the stories of the people who lived there.

Ransom, also a member of the Greenwood Art Project, was highlighted by Dallas NBC affiliate during the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial in June for his role as a “Black Wall Street Historian.”

“Greenwood is a soul. Green-

HOW TO LISTEN

“Oklahoma Made” can be currently streamed online at your favorite music streaming site. “1921...The Black Wall Street Music Project” (Isotopia Records) will be released for Black History Month.

“Oklahoma Made” is available for download or streaming here: <https://smarturl.it/lqtg9u>



“It’s an honor to be nominated for such an award coming from where I’m from,” Kode Ransom said. “It feels even more amazing because I got to mention some greats from my state. People get to see that the talent in Oklahoma has a long history and an even brighter future.” **PASTING IMPRESSIONS PHOTOGRAPHY**

wood is an action,” Ransom said. “Building is in my blood. It took a long time for me to really open myself up to the possibility of being a leader in the resurgence this third time. The legacy didn’t burn in the fire or get destroyed with Urban Renewal, it just needed to be awakened in us. We see now.”

The 12th annual Hollywood Music In Media Awards will be produced on Nov. 17, as a star-studded broadcast style, streamed event originating from Los Angeles.

The Oklahoma Eagle

Founded in 1921

Vol. C No. 45

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CLASSIFIEDS

The Oklahoma Eagle

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
November 5 and 12, 2021

**NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
TULSA METROPOLITAN UTILITY
AUTHORITY PROJECT NO. SP 18-03R**

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority, a Public Trust, sealed bids will be received in Room 260 of the Office of the City Clerk, City of Tulsa, 175 E. 2nd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103 until 8:30 a.m., the 3rd day of December 2021 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

**PROJECT NO. SP 18-03R ROOF REPLACEMENT AT
SOUTHSIDE SECONDARY PUMP STATION**

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 151004. ArchEngr.5451101-74003122-541101; 1 9 3 4 1 0 0 1 7 Z . Buildings.74003122-541101
A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for
Monday, November 15, 2021 9:00 a.m. and will be held through video conferencing with Microsoft Teams, invitation presented on the City of Tulsa's website at this link: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/government/departments/engineering-services/construction-bids/>
SP 18-03 ROOF REPLACEMENT AT SOUTHSIDE SECONDARY PUMP STATION

Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is MANDATORY. Bids will not be received from contractors who did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bids will be accepted by the City Clerk from the holder of valid pre-qualification certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A, B, or S

Drawings, specifications and contract documents for construction of said public improvements of the said project have been adopted by the Mayor of said City. Copies of same may be obtained at the Office of the Director of Engineering Services for the City of Tulsa, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non- refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority by check or money order.

Contract requirements shall include compliance as required by law pertaining to the practice of non-discrimination in employment.

Attention is called to Resolution No. 18145 of August 23, 1988, requiring bidders to commit to the goal of employing on the project at least fifty percent bona fide residents of the City of Tulsa and/or MSA in each employment classification.

Attention is called to Resolution 7404 of November 8, 2006, requiring bidders, their subcontractors and their lower-tier subcontractors to hire only citizens of the United States.

The Authority, acting on behalf of the City of Tulsa, is exempt from the payment of any sales or use taxes, and pursuant to Title 68 O.S. Section 1356(10), direct vendors to the Authority are also exempt from those taxes. A bidder may exclude from his bid appropriate sales taxes which he will not have to pay while acting for and on behalf of the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority. See Contract Article IIB.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidder's Surety Bond, in the sum of 5% of the amount of the bid will be required from each bidder to be retained as liquidated damages in the event the successful bidder fails, neglects or refuses to enter into said contract for the construction of said public improvements for said project and furnish the necessary bonds within thirty days from and after the date the award is made.

The bidder to whom a contract is awarded will be required to furnish public liability and workmen's compensation insurance; Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds acceptable to the Authority, in conformity with the requirements of the proposed contract documents. The Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds shall be for one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

All bids will be opened and considered by the Bid Committee of said City at a meeting of said Committee to be held in the City Council Room of City Hall, 175 E. 2nd Street, in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 3rd day of December.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 5th day of November 2021.

(SEAL)
R. Louis Reynolds, Chairperson Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
November 5 and 12, 2021

**NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
TULSA METROPOLITAN UTILITY
AUTHORITY PROJECT NO. ES 2019-14**

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority, a Public Trust, sealed bids will be received in Room 260 of the Office of the City Clerk, City of Tulsa, 175 E. 2nd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103 until 8:30 a.m., 10th day of December 2021 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

**PROJECT NO. ES 2019-14 Haikey Creek Interceptor
Rehabilitation – Phase 1**

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No.: 213150011Z. SewerTreat.Sewer.7500.75003122-541101

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for
Monday November 15, 2021, at 9:30 am and will be held through video conferencing with Microsoft Teams, invitation presented on the City of Tulsa's website at this link: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/government/departments/engineering-services/construction-bids/>

Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is MANDATORY. Bids will not be received from contractors who did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bids will be accepted by the City Clerk from the holder of valid pre- qualification certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A or D

Drawings, specifications and contract documents for construction of said public improvements of the said project have been adopted by the Mayor of said City. Copies of same may be obtained at the Office of the Director of Engineering Services for the City of Tulsa, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non- refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority by check or money order. Contract requirements shall include compliance as required by law pertaining to the practice of non-discrimination in employment.

Attention is called to Resolution No. 18145 of August 23, 1988, requiring bidders to commit to the goal of employing on the project at least fifty percent bona fide residents of the City of Tulsa and/or MSA in each employment classification.

Attention is called to Resolution 7404 of November 8, 2006, requiring bidders, their subcontractors and their lower-tier subcontractors to hire only citizens of the United States.

The Authority, acting on behalf of the City of Tulsa, is exempt from the payment of any sales or use taxes, and pursuant to Title 68 O.S. Section 1356(10), direct vendors to the Authority are also exempt from those taxes. A bidder may exclude from his bid appropriate sales taxes which he will not have to pay while acting for and on behalf of the Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority. See Contract Article IIB.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidder's Surety Bond, in the sum of 5% of the amount of the bid will be required from each bidder to be retained as liquidated damages in the event the successful bidder fails, neglects or refuses to enter into said contract for the construction of said public improvements for said project and furnish the necessary bonds within thirty days from and after the date the award is made.

The bidder to whom a contract is awarded will be required to furnish public liability and workmen's compensation insurance; Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds acceptable to the Authority, in conformity with the requirements of the proposed contract documents. The Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds shall be for one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

All bids will be opened and considered by the Bid Committee of said City at a meeting of said Committee to be held in the City Council Room of City Hall, 175 E. 2nd Street, in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 10th day of December 2021. Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 5th day of November 2021.

(SEAL)
R. Louis Reynolds,
Chairperson Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority

NOTICE

IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR TULSA COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF: RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE,
Deceased
Case No. PB-2021-251

To the Creditors of
RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE,
Deceased:

All creditors having claims against RICHARD JOSEPH MCGRANE, Deceased, are required to present the same with a description of all security interests and other collateral (if any) held by each creditor with respect to such claim, to JOHN TOLENTINO and MARGARET COONFIELD, Personal Representatives, C/O James O. Goodwin, Goodwin & Goodwin, 624 East Archer Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74120, addressed to JAMES O. GOODWIN, attorney for the Personal Representative, on or before the following presentment dated: 01/10/22, or the same will be forever barred.

DATED this 9th day of November 2021.

James O. Goodwin, OBA #3458
Goodwin & Goodwin
P.O. Box 3267
Tulsa, OK 74101-3267
Telephone: (918) 625-7196
Fax: (918) 599-0250
Email: jgoodwin@theoklahomaeagle.net

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NOTICE

IN THE DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR TULSA COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF: CAROLYN FAYE HEERMAN,
Deceased
Case No. PB-2021-963

To the Creditors of
CAROLYN FAYE HEERMAN,
Deceased:

All creditors having claims against CAROLYN FAYE HEERMAN, Deceased, are required to present the same with a description of all security interests and other collateral (if any) held by each creditor with respect to such claim, to KATHY WILLIAMS, Personal Representative, at the law office of Goodwin & Goodwin 624 East Archer Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74120, addressed to JAMES O. GOODWIN, attorney for the Personal Representative, on or before the following presentment dated: 01/10/22, or the same will be forever barred.

DATED this 2nd day of November 2021.

Signature

James O. Goodwin, OBA #3458
Goodwin & Goodwin
P.O. Box 3267
Tulsa, OK 74101-3267
Telephone: (918) 625-7196
Fax: (918) 599-0250
Email: jgoodwin@theoklahomaeagle.net

NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
2022-2025 TRANSPORTATION
IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
ADOPTION

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
CONCERNING THE PROPOSED
ADOPTION OF THE FFY 2022 – 2025
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM FOR THE TULSA
TRANSPORTATION MANAGE MENT
AREA**

Notice is hereby given that the INCOG Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) under the direction of the INCOG Board of Directors, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Tulsa Transportation Management Area (TMA), is proposing the FFY 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program for adoption.

The FFY 2022-2025 TIP is a four-year program that describes federally aided transportation improvements to be funded with federal, state, and local funds within the Tulsa Transportation Management Area (TMA) between October 1, 2021 and September 30, 2025. The Tulsa TMA includes all of Tulsa County and portions of Creek, Osage, Rogers, Wagoner Counties. The TIP is developed by local governments, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority (MTTA), and other local agencies responsible for implementation of transportation facilities and services within Tulsa TMA.

The TIP is prepared in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. With regard to proposed public transportation improvements for MTTA included in the TIP, the public notice, public involvement activities, public review and comment deadlines for the FFY 2022 – FFY 2025 are intended to satisfy the Program of Projects (POP) public involvement requirements of the Federal Transit Administration. The POP is the equivalent of the Transit Element of the TIP.

Transportation improvements included in the FFY 2022-2025 TIP are consistent with the INCOG Long-Range Transportation Plan, Connected 2045, and the Oklahoma Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, and are within the financial constraints of anticipated funding for the region over the TIP time frame. The metropolitan area TIP will be submitted to ODOT for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), upon its approval by the INCOG Board of Directors. The Preliminary FFY 2022-2025 TIP is on the INCOG Web site at www.incog.org/transportation/documents/TIP2022.2025.pdf. A copy may be obtained by contacting INCOG transportation division at transportation@incog.org, or by calling (918)584-7526. Written comments will be accepted through 4:00 p.m., November 30, 2021, and anyone may attend the INCOG Board meeting to express their opinions regarding this document or the projects.

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NATION

The Oklahoma Eagle

LEGISLATIVE MAPS

Gerrymandering surges as states redraw maps for House seats

By David A. Lieb
and Nicholas Riccardi
Associated Press

North Carolina Republicans are well positioned to pick up at least two House seats in next year’s election — but it’s not because the state is getting redder.

The state remains a perennial battleground, closely split between Democrats and Republicans in elections. In the last presidential race, Republican Donald Trump won by just over 1 percentage point — the narrowest margin since Barack Obama barely won the state in 2008.

But, last week, the GOP-controlled legislature finalized maps that redraw congressional district boundaries, dividing up Democratic voters in cities to dilute their votes. The new plan took the number of GOP-leaning districts from eight to 10 in the state. Republicans even have a shot at winning an eleventh.

North Carolina’s plan drew instant criticism for its aggressive approach, but it’s hardly alone. Experts and lawmakers tracking the once-a-decade redistricting process see a cycle of supercharged gerrymandering. With fewer legal restraints and amped up political stakes, both Democrats and Republicans are pushing the bounds of the tactic long used to draw districts for maximum partisan advantage, often at the expense of community unity or racial representation.

“In the absence of reforms, the gerrymandering in general has gotten even worse than 2010, than in the last round” of redistricting, said Chris Warshaw, a political scientist at George Washington University who has analyzed decades of redistricting maps in U.S. states.

GOP dominations

Republicans dominated redistricting last decade, helping them build a greater political advantage in more states than either party had in the past 50 years.

Just three months into the map-making process, it’s too early to know which party will come out on top. Republicans need a net gain of just five seats to take control of the U.S. House and effectively freeze President Joe Biden’s agenda on climate change, the economy and other issues.

But Republicans’ potential net gain of three seats in North Carolina could be fully canceled out in Illinois. Democrats who control the legislature have adopted a map with lines that squiggle snake-like across the state to swoop up Democratic voters and relegate Republicans to a few districts.

In the 14 states that have passed

new congressional maps so far, the cumulative effect is essentially a wash for Republicans and Democrats, leaving just a few toss-up districts. That could change in the coming weeks, as Republican-controlled legislatures consider proposed maps in Georgia, New Hampshire and Ohio that target Democratic-held seats.

A practice as old as the country

Ohio Republicans have taken an especially ambitious approach, proposing one map that could leave Democrats with just two seats out of 15 in a state that Trump won by 8 percentage points.

Gerrymandering is a practice almost as old as the country, in which politicians draw district lines to “crack” opposing voters among several districts or “pack” them in a single one to limit competition elsewhere. At its extreme, gerrymandering can deprive communities of representatives reflecting their interests and lead to elections that reward candidates who appeal to the far left or right — making compromise difficult in Congress.

While both parties have gerrymandered, these days Republicans have more opportunities. The GOP controls the line-drawing process in states representing 187 House seats compared with 75 for Democrats. The rest of the states use either independent commissions, have split government control or only one congressional seat.

‘They’re on a power grab for Congress’

“Across the board you are seeing Republicans gerrymander,” said Kelly Ward Burton, executive director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, which oversees redistricting for the Democratic Party. Burton didn’t concede that Illinois’ map was a gerrymander but argued that a single state shouldn’t suggest equivalency between the parties.

“They’re on a power grab for Congress for the entire decade,” Burton said of the GOP.

Former Attorney General Eric Holder, who leads the Democrats’ effort, has called for more states to use redistricting commissions, and a Democratic election bill stalled in the Senate would mandate them nationwide. Democratic-controlled states such as Colorado and Virginia recently adopted commissions, leading some in the party to worry it is giving up its ability to counter Republicans.

Still, Democrats have shown themselves happy to gerrymander when they can. After a power-sharing agreement with Republicans in



Sen. Rodger Smiththerman compares U.S. Representative district maps during the special session on redistricting at the Alabama Statehouse in Montgomery, Ala., Nov. 3, 2021. MICKEY WELSH / THE MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER VIA AP

Oregon stalled, Democrats quickly redrew the state’s congressional map so all but one of its six districts leaned their way. In Illinois, Democrats could net three seats out of a map that has drawn widespread criticism for being a gerrymander.

In Maryland, Democrats are considering a proposal that would make it easier for a Democrat to oust the state’s only Republican congressman, Rep. Andy Harris.

Maintaining GOP control

The legal landscape has changed since 2010 to make it harder to challenge gerrymanders. Though using maps to diminish the power of specific racial or ethnic groups remains illegal, the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that several states no longer have to run maps by the U.S. Department of Justice to confirm they’re not unfair to minority populations as required by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The high court also ruled that partisan gerrymanders couldn’t be overturned by federal courts.

“Between the loss of Section 5 and the marked free-for-all on partisan gerrymandering in the federal courts, it’s much more challenging,” said Allison Riggs, chief counsel for voting rights at the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, which is suing North Carolina to block its new maps.

Newly passed congressional maps in Indiana, Arkansas and Alabama all maintain an existing Republican advantage. Of the combined 17 U.S. House seats from those states, just three are held by Democrats, and that seems unlikely to change. In Indiana, the new map concentrates Democrats in an Indianapolis district. In Arkansas, a GOP plan that divides Black Democratic



People listen to speakers during the Redistricting Reform Rally at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis, Aug. 11, 2021. KELLY WILKINSON / THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR VIA AP

voters in Little Rock unnerved even the Republican governor, who let it become official without his signature. In Alabama, a lawsuit from a Democratic group contends the map “strategically cracks and packs Alabama’s Black communities, diluting Black voting strength.”

On Wednesday in Utah, the Republican-controlled state legislature approved maps that convert a swing district largely in suburban Salt Lake City into a safe GOP seat, sending it Gov. Spencer J. Cox for his signature.

Texas ignores shifting demographics

Though gerrymanders may not always be checked by the courts, they are limited by demographics.

In Texas, for example, the U.S. Census Bureau found the state grew so much it earned two new House seats. Roughly 95% of the growth came from Black, Latino and Asian residents who tend to vote Democratic. The GOP-controlled Legislature drew a map that, while creating no new districts dominated

by these voters, maintained Republican advantages.

Civil rights groups have sued to block it.

North Carolina Republicans took a different approach, much as they did a decade ago. Last cycle, courts first found that Republican lawmakers packed too many Black voters into two congressional districts, then ruled that they illegally manipulated the lines on the replacement map for partisan gain.

The new North Carolina map, which adds a 14th district to the state due to its population growth, already faces a lawsuit. Experts say it’s unlikely it would have been approved by the Department of Justice if the old rules were in place, especially because it jeopardizes a seat held by a Black congressman, Democratic Rep. G.K. Butterfield.

“It raises a boatload of red flags,” said Michael Li, an attorney at the Brennan Center for Justice.

North Carolina House Speaker Tim Moore, a Republican, says he’s confident the maps “are constitutional in every respect.”

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Florida officer’s convictions upheld in Corey Jones’s shooting

By Terry Spencer
Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The Florida Supreme Court rejected the appeal of a police officer convicted of manslaughter and attempted murder for the fatal shooting of a Black motorist whose car had broken down on an interstate off-ramp.

In a two-paragraph statement, the court said it would not consider the appeal filed by fired Palm Beach Gardens officer Nouman Raja, who is serving a 25-year sentence for the 2015 killing of 31-year-old Corey Jones.

Raja, now 44, was the first Florida law enforcement agent in nearly 30 years to be convicted and sentenced for an on-duty killing — and one of only a few officers nationwide.

The decision, signed by five of the court’s seven justices and filed Friday, lets stand an appeals court decision that said a defendant can be convicted of both manslaughter and attempted murder in the shooting of a single person.

Prosecutors declined comment Tuesday. Raja’s lead attorney, Ste-

ven Malone, and Brown’s family did not immediately respond to calls and emails seeking comment.

The Fourth District Court of Appeal ruled in April that Raja’s 2019 convictions were for distinct crimes, dismissing his lawyers’ arguments that the convictions were contradictory and constituted double jeopardy. First, the judges focused on Raja firing two volleys of shots separated by about 10 seconds, the last as Jones ran away.

They agreed with prosecutors, who argued at trial that while they could not prove in which volley the fatal shot was fired, the second volley was a premeditated attempt to kill Jones and qualified as attempted murder.

Second, the judges ruled that manslaughter — an unlawful, intentional killing without premeditation — and attempted murder are not versions of the same charge. Manslaughter requires a death and attempted murder does not, they ruled.

Prosecutors contended Raja escalated what should have been a routine interaction into a deadly confrontation with Jones, a housing inspector and part-time

drummer.

Raja, of Asian descent, was in plain clothes for a Palm Beach Gardens auto burglary investigation team when he spotted Jones’ SUV at 3:15 a.m. on Oct. 18, 2015.

Jones was headed home from a nightclub performance by his reggae band when his vehicle stalled on a dark Interstate 95 off-ramp. He had a concealed-weapons permit and carried a handgun, purchased days earlier to protect his \$10,000 drum set, which was in the SUV.

Raja, wearing jeans, a T-shirt and a baseball cap, drove an unmarked van the wrong way up an off-ramp within feet of the SUV.

Prosecutors said Raja never identified himself as an officer and acted so aggressively that Jones must have thought he was about to be carjacked or killed. Raja’s supervisor testified the officer had been told to don a police vest if he approached a civilian. He didn’t, nor did he pull his badge.

What police didn’t know at first was that Jones had been talking to a tow-truck dispatcher on a recorded line. That recording shows Jones saying “Huh?” as his door



Former Palm Beach Gardens police Officer Nouman Raja (left) and Corey Jones. FACEBOOK

opens. Raja yells, “You good?” Jones says he is. Raja replies twice in an aggressive tone, “Really?” with Jones replying “Yeah.”

Suddenly, Raja shouts at Jones to raise his hands, using an expletive. Jones replies, “Hold on!” and Raja repeats his demand.

Prosecutors believe Jones pulled his gun and tried to run away. Raja fired three shots; Jones ran down an embankment. Prosecutors said he threw his gun, but Raja fired three more times, 10 seconds after the first volley. One of the bullets pierced the man’s heart. He was also hit in both arms.

Prosecutors said Raja, not

knowing of the tow-truck dispatcher recording, sought to deceive investigators. He claimed he said “Police, can I help you?” as Jones jumped from the SUV. He also told them Jones leapt backward and pointed his gun, forcing him to fire. Raja said Jones ran but turned and again pointed his gun, forcing him to fire the second volley.

But Jones’ body was found 200 feet (60 meters) from the SUV and 125 feet (38 meters) from his unfired gun. Prosecutors contended he had thrown it away well before Raja fired his second volley.

OPINION

The Oklahoma Eagle

EDITORIALS

Mayor gives the state some of Tulsa

Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum gave the usual state of Tulsa speech last week, and it was full of the usual report of new jobs, and sparkling development in a city that grows darker in complexion with each passing day. Hosted by his best friend the Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce, it was noted not for what it said but for what it didn’t say (or represent).

To listen to the State of Tulsa, you would think there is no Tulsa North, and no Hispanic communities or Native Americans living here. Bynum pointed to collaborations with civic stakeholders; however, those did not involve people of color. Tulsa, having a strained relationship with what used to be called the “minority” population is nothing new. Tulsa not improving that relationship is getting old and tired. Weak overtures and shallow rhetoric are especially cruel given the historic nature of 2021.

Bynum has pushed an excavation of possible gravesites in Tulsa that was meant to answer lingering questions and even form some kind of Tulsa acknowledgement of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Naturally, the dig has been closely watched given that this was the 100-year remembrance of the deadly race massacre. A lack of transparency has created some unnecessary doubt among some Black Tulsans.

A rush to rebury bodies excavated have some worried if the City of Tulsa is the right group to be overseeing a crime scene, they may be responsible for. Local groups led by the cream of Tulsa North have filed open records requests to the city. The city, typically slow on responding to inquiries is now facing pressure for the department of justice to take over the excavation. The city has also quickly taken reparations off the table in this year of the 100-year observation of the massacre. To quickly show the world how little has changed, Bynum welcomed racially insensitive President Donald J. Trump to town for his first campaign rally in the middle of the pandemic. The ill-advised and callous super spreader event jump-started COVID-19 that led to infecting Gov. Kevin Stitt and resulting in the death of former GOP presidential candidate and radio host Herman Cain.

Tulsans, like others around the nation were moved by the death of George Floyd and inspired the painting of Black Lives Matter mural on our historic Greenwood Avenue on the site of the 1921 Race Massacre. Not found in the State of City report was Tulsa being the first city to remove their street mural instead of protecting it like other cities.

Hispanics and Native Americans alike find their needs ignored in the halls of city government. In the case of Native Americans, Bynum has joined Owasso in filing an amicus brief in support of overturning the historic McGirt decision that has returned elements of sovereignty back to area tribes.

Needless to say, Tulsa’s state of the city paid little interest to people of color. That is a decision they may come to regret given the fact nonwhites are now the majority in Tulsa.

Racial makeup a point of contention in high-profile trials

There is no constitutional right to a jury of your peers. If you are expecting that those sitting in judgement of you must represent your sex, race, or religion that isn’t a guarantee or right. However, it is often a significant determiner of the outcome of trials. However, potential jurors are not to be removed because of their race, sex, or religion. Of course, they often are.

Family members of Ahmaud Arbery and the judge are angry that the three white men charged with his murder will be tried before a practically all-white (one Black) jury. Potential Black jurors were in the judges’ words discriminated against in his opinion. Arbery was murdered by three white men who followed then killed him as he jogged along the city streets in the state of Georgia. One of the defendants’ videos taped the shooting death of Arbery.

Over in Wisconsin, the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse was also selected with a similar outcome. The 20-member jury is composed of 11 women and nine men, 19 of whom are white and one Hispanic. Rittenhouse was in Wisconsin after white policemen shot a Black man in the back sparking riots. During the riots, Rittenhouse was involved in the shooting deaths of two protesters. The protests were sparked by the shooting of 29-year-old Jacob S. Blake in the back by Kenosha Wisconsin police.

In 2020, Blake, a 29-year-old Black man, was shot and seriously injured by police Officer Rusten Sheskey in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Sheskey shot Blake in the back, firing seven times inflicting multiple wounds when Blake opened the driver’s door to an SUV and tried to get in the vehicle. The resulting wounds left Blake paralyzed. State and Federal prosecutors have both declined to file charges against Sheskey and he has returned to work.

Hopefully, media scrutiny will provide for a fairer trial. Already a juror was removed after making a joke about Blake. The atmosphere is awful and needs to continue to be monitored for unacceptable biases.

1921 Race Massacre borders stretches to accurate size

There isn’t a decision, comma or utterance that won’t be used against proponents of true history of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. At stake is potential reparations and damages in the 100-year-old massacre and torching of the Historic Greenwood District.

It wasn’t just one block. Death and destruction stretched over a wide area that needs to be identified for historic accuracy. Markers will show the true size of the carnage which erupted in racial hate a century ago.

The time of sweeping history under the carpet are over. So is ignoring responsibility for government roles in the Tulsa sin of burning and killing of fellow Tulsans. In one of the last acts of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Commission, they will do as much as they can with the time and resources they have. Not very funny, but the city has described the citizens of Greenwood as “resilient” and states admiration for their work to rebuild. Ironc given the city’s lack of real support and telling this important story.

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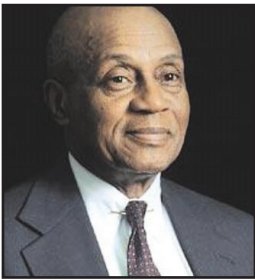
GUEST COMMENTARY

Black women leaders make their presence felt



It has been Black women who have helped ensure passage of a transformational legislative step that will help foster greater equity. **CHRISTINA MORILLO / PEXELS / WORD IN BLACK**

“Many current Black women elected officeholders are helping guide the future of the country and, by extension, the lives and wellbeing of African-American people.”



Donald M Suggs
Publisher & Owner
The St. Louis American

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures (Psalms 117:22), the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Again, during still another of the country’s inflection moments when divisions in the country run even more deeply, it has been Black women (a group that has often been scorned as inferior outside of and even inside of its own community) who have helped ensure passage of a transformational legislative step that will help foster greater equity.

According to reports in the media, there was a seemingly immovable impasse between some reluctant Democratic moderates and a much larger group of progressives who were demanding passage concurrently with the \$1.85 trillion social welfare and climate change bill.

Black lawmakers’ proposed plan was deemed too mild and convoluted to have a chance to be accepted, because it sought to pass the long-overdue infrastructure bill first, then hold a good faith procedural vote on the larger social infrastructure and climate control bill prior to a final vote in mid-November.

Black women key to bill’s passage

Ultimately this proposal from the House’s largest caucus prevailed, and this huge public works bill passed with even some support from a few Republicans.

This Black woman-led Congressional Black Caucus (five out of the last chairs of CBC have been women in a heavily male caucus), whose 56 members include two non-voting delegates and five committee chairs and represents 25% of the Democratic House Caucus, brought this historic proposal across the finish line.

This is a dramatic recent example of the strong and growing role of Black women in the country’s elective politics. Many current Black women elected officeholders are helping guide the future of the country and, by extension, the lives and wellbeing of African-American people. Legendary African-American women from the past like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Eliza Church Terrell, and, more recently, Shirley Chisholm, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Angela Davis into this era of Stacey Abrams, one of the most important women in the country are some of the best examples of strong principled leaders dedicated to helping others. Abrams helped win Georgia for the Democrats and achieve their narrow margin in the U.S. Senate and for Joe Biden to reach the White House. Bottom of Form

They possess audacity, courage, resolve

Remarkable Black women have continued to rise to overcome the challenges posed by their sex and race that were compounded by other obstacles, like class differences, sexuality, and/or physical limitations.

The history of their audacity, courage, and resolve against daunting odds personalized by Tubman and Truth’s faith and

determination gave them the strength to resist slavery and demand emancipation. They are role models in the history of the continuing struggle for full and equitable participation for Black people in American society. Their lives served as an inspiration for later activists and educators like Bethune and Terrell, who dedicated their lives to the struggle for full social and economic equality.

Black people in America have continued to resist because they refuse to accept the dehumanization and systemic racism that seeks to deny them full access to the privileges of full citizenship in this multi-racial country.

Yet, this entire chaotic legislative process, whose outcome will determine the future of all America, was being fought with uncertainty before the successful passage of the first part of Biden’s historic legislation initiative. Undeniably, the role of the women-led CBC was essential to the eventual passage of this critical legislative package that was opposed by 90% of Republican House members. There is also a new generation of Black women elected officials across the nation who are asserting themselves at the local level as well. There are now at least eight Black women who are mayors of some of the nation’s largest cities.

Black women remain our champions

The long fight for freedom and equality for Black people in the United States has been steadily led by Black women. They have been stalwart leaders of the Underground Railroad, under-recognized leaders for the suffrage movement, organized freedom riders, helped open the way for constitutional protections against sex discrimination, and now are the most consistent voting bloc in the country that stands up and organizes for the rights of all marginalized people. While they are no monoliths, their lived experience has given them a depth of understanding and feeling about the varied intersection of targeted oppression in all of its vile forms. They recognize the impact of intergenerational poverty, mass incarceration, and unaccountable police violence against Black people.

Most often, Black women leaders, beyond their strong determination and steadfastness, consistently bring empathy and commitment to the common good. More and more, there is recognition and appreciation of the unique value of Black women leadership. Although the experience of Black womanhood has been replete with multiple forms of oppression that denied them their full humanity, they have emerged, while strong, yet are still able to understand and share the feelings of others.

Whether Black women leaders are serving in public office or are making their presence felt in education, health care, legal, business areas, or many expressions of the arts as well as other pursuits, we agree that when Black women lead... everybody wins.

Donald M. Suggs is publisher and executive editor of The St. Louis American.

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(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

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Church Services
11:00 a.m.

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(918) 625-2374

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Sunday Worship – 7:30 pm

Wednesday Prayer – 7:30 pm
Wednesday worship – 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

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P: 918-587-1428
F: 918-587-0642

vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

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10:00 am

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VETERANS DAY

The Oklahoma Eagle

RACIAL INJUSTICE

Veterans Day legislation targets GI Bill racial inequities

By Aaron Morrison and Kat Stafford

Associated Press

In honor of Veterans Day, a group of Democratic lawmakers is reviving an effort to pay the families of Black service members who fought on behalf of the nation during World War II for benefits they were denied or prevented from taking full advantage of when they returned home from war.

The new legislative effort would benefit surviving spouses and all living descendants of Black WWII veterans whose families were denied the opportunity to build wealth with housing and educational benefits through the GI Bill.

Since 1944, those benefits have been offered to millions of veterans transitioning to civilian life. But due to racism and discrimination in how they were granted through local Veterans Affairs offices, many Black WWII veterans received substantially less money toward purchasing a home or continuing their education.

A House version was introduced by Rep. Jim Clyburn of South Carolina, the Democratic majority whip, and Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts.

“This is an opportunity for America to repair an egregious fault,” said Clyburn of the bill introduced last week. “Hopefully it can also begin to lay a foundation that will help break the cycle of poverty among those people who are the descendants of those who made sacrifices to preserve this democracy.”

Admitting 70 years of injustice

Moulton, a Marine veteran who served four tours during the Iraq War, said: “There are a lot of Black Americans who are feeling the effects of this injustice today, even though it was originally perpetrated 70 years ago.”

“I think that restoring GI Bill benefits is one of the greatest racial justice issues of our time,” he said.

A Senate bill was to be introduced later this month by Sen. Rev. Raphael Warnock of Georgia, the son of a WWII veteran.

“We’ve all seen how these inequities have trickled down over time,” Warnock said, adding that the bill “represents a major step toward righting this injustice.”

The legislation, authored by Moulton, would extend the VA Loan Guaranty Program and GI Bill educational assistance to Black WWII veterans and their descendants who are alive at the time of the bill’s enactment. It would also create a panel of independent experts to study inequities in how benefits are administered to women and people of color.

Dream deferred, discriminated

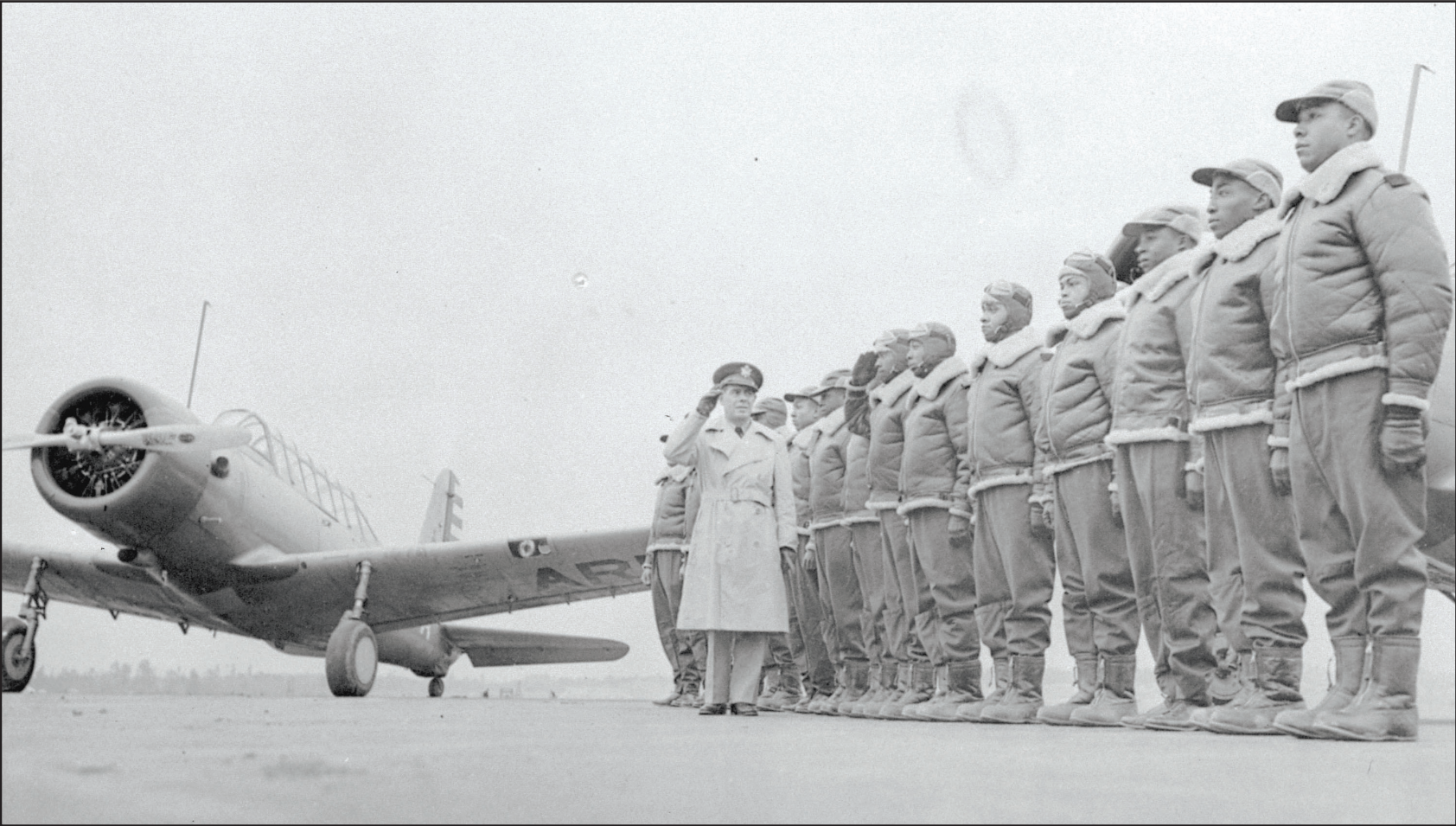
Lawrence Brooks, who at 112 years old is the oldest living U.S. veteran, was drafted to serve during WWII and assigned to the mostly-Black 91st Engineer General Service Regiment.

The Louisiana native, who has 12 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren, always believed that serving his country was the only way he could leave behind his life as the son of sharecroppers, said his daughter, Vanessa Brooks.

But after he was discharged in August 1945 as a private first class, he did not realize his dream of going to college, working instead as a forklift driver before retiring in his 60s. “He always wanted to go to school,” his daughter said.

And when he bought his home, he used his retirement fund, not GI Bill benefits, she said.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act into law in 1944, making generous financial subsidies available to 16 million WWII veterans pursuing higher educa-



Major James A. Ellison, left, returns the salute of Mac Ross of Dayton, Ohio, as he inspects the cadets at the Basic and Advanced Flying School for Black United States Army Air Corps cadets at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Ala., in Jan. 23, 1942. For Veterans Day, a group of Democratic lawmakers is reviving an effort to pay the families of Black servicemen who fought on behalf of the nation during World War II for benefits they were denied or prevented from taking full advantage of when they returned home from war. U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS

tion and buying their first homes. Irrespective of race, veterans who served more than 90 days during the war and had been honorably discharged were entitled to the benefits.

But after returning from the war, Black and white veterans faced two very different realities.

Jim Crow barriers

Because the GI Bill benefits had to be approved by local VA officers, few of whom were Black, the process created problems for veterans. This was particularly acute in the Deep South where Jim Crow segregation imposed racist barriers to homeownership and education.

Local VA officers there either made it difficult for Black veterans to access their benefits or lessened their value by steering them away from predominantly white four-year colleges and toward vocational and other non-degree programs. Meanwhile, the nation’s historically Black colleges and universities saw such a significant increase of enrollment among Black veterans that the schools were forced to turn away tens of thousands of prospective students.

Sgt. Joseph Maddox, one of two WWII veterans Moulton and Clyburn named their bill after, was denied tuition assistance by his local VA office despite being accepted into a master’s degree program at Harvard University.

“When it came time to pay the bill, the government just said no,” said Moulton, who himself attended Harvard on the GI Bill. “It actually is pretty emotional for vets who have gone through this themselves and, like myself, know what a difference the GI Bill made in our lives.”

Bill named for WWII vet

The bill is also named for Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr., a WWII veteran from Winnsboro, South Carolina, who was brutally beaten and blinded by a small-town police chief in 1946 after returning home from the war. The acquittal of his attacker by an all-white jury helped spur the integration of the U.S. armed services in 1948.

In contrast to the treatment of Black veterans, the GI Bill helped home ownership rates soar among white veterans in a post-war housing boom that created a ripple effect their children and grandchildren continue to benefit from today.

Of the more than 3,000 VA home loans that had been issued to veterans in Mississippi in the summer of 1947, only two went to Black veterans, according to an Ebony magazine survey at the time.

The Federal Housing Administration’s racist housing poli-



World War II veteran Lawrence Brooks holds a photo of him taken in 1943, as he celebrates his 110th birthday at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, on Sept. 12, 2019. For Veterans Day, a group of Democratic lawmakers is reviving an effort to pay the families of Black servicemen who fought on behalf of the nation during World War II for benefits they were denied or prevented from taking full advantage of when they returned home from war. GERALD HERBERT / AP



In this photo provided by the U.S. Army Women’s Museum, members of the 6888th battalion stand in formation in Birmingham, England, in 1945. The Women’s Army Corps battalion made history as the only all-female Black unit to serve in Europe during World War II. For Veterans Day, a group of Democratic lawmakers is reviving an effort to pay the families of Black servicemen who fought on behalf of the nation during World War II for benefits they were denied or prevented from taking full advantage of when they returned home from war. U.S. ARMY WOMEN’S MUSEUM

cies also impacted Black WWII veterans, undoubtedly fueling today’s racial wealth gap. Typically referred to as redlining, realtors and banks would refuse to show homes or offer mortgages to qualified homebuyers in certain neighborhoods because of their race or ethnicity.

A legacy of racial inequities

Preliminary analysis of historical data suggests Black and white veterans accessed their benefits at similar rates, according to Maria Madison, director of the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity at Brandeis University, who has researched the impact of racial inequities in the administration of GI Bill benefits.

However, because of institution-

al racism and other barriers, Black veterans were more limited in the ways in which they could use their benefits. As a result, the cash equivalent of their benefits was only 40% of what white veterans received.

After adjusting for inflation and for market returns, that amounts to a difference in value of \$170,000 per veteran, according to Madison. Her ongoing research seeks to put a dollar amount on the wealth loss to Black families caused by racism and GI Bill inequities.

Black WWII veterans who were lucky enough to have gained full access to GI Bill benefits succeeded at building good lives for themselves and their families, said Matthew Delmont, a history professor at Dartmouth College. It’s a clear argument, he said, for why the new legislation is necessary.

“Because the GI benefits weren’t distributed more evenly among Black veterans, we lost an entire generation of Black wealth builders,” Delmont said. “After the war, we could have had even more doctors, lawyers, teachers and architects.”

Dovey Johnson Roundtree, a Black woman who was a WWII veteran, attended Howard University’s law school with GI Bill benefits. She then became a nationally known Washington criminal defense attorney who played a pivotal role in the desegregation of bus travel.

And WWII veteran Robert Madison, who served as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, credited his GI benefits for his success as a renowned architect.

ARTS & CULTURE

The Oklahoma Eagle

OUR MUSICAL ROOTS

Artists, historians examine country music’s past and future

By Kristin M. Hall
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, TENN. – As country music’s biggest stars prepared to celebrate the annual CMA Awards, a group of artists, academics and historians gathered to correct the record on the genre’s past and offer ideas on how it can expand outside its typical white lines.

Just steps from the show’s home at Bridgestone Arena, speakers addressed the erasure of Black artists from country music’s history and whether the industry could be more welcoming to artists of color.

Dubbed the Rosedale Summit and held Monday simultaneously in Nashville at the National Museum of African American Music and the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles, it was a timely event acknowledging the genre’s recent struggles to address race within its ranks.

“It’s overdue. The CMAs are later this week and we want to have a conversation about what the awards really should look like,” said Sam Viotty, co-founder of the record label Rosedale Collective and one of the organizers of the event.

Beyond the glittery awards and dazzling on-stage performances, country music has been confronted this year with racial representation not just in its past, but in its future as well. One the genre’s biggest stars, Morgan Wallen, was disinvited from the CMAs this year, after he was caught on camera using a racial slur, but still remains a nominee for album of the year.

The issues that plagued country music in 2021 were reflections of what was happening decades prior. Two pioneers and activists — Dr. Cleve Francis and Frankie Staton — both spoke about being silenced as Black country artists.

Francis, who stepped away from his career as a cardiologist to pursue a career in country music in the 1990s, said in a videotaped message during the event that he was told that the genre would only support one Black country artist and that was Charley Pride.

“It was if the music industry shook the music tree and just one Black man could sing country music,” said Francis. “They were accepting no one else.”

Undeterred, he continued to record and tour and went on to co-found the Black Country Music Association.



Valerie Ponzio (from left) Claude Kelly, and Chuck Harmony take part in a discussion moderated by Rissi Palmer, on screen, during the Rosedale Summit at the National Museum of African American Music Monday, Nov. 8, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn. The Rosedale Summit brought artists, academics and historians together to address racial representation within the genre of country music. MARK HUMPHREY / AP

“It wasn’t enough to ask people to let us in the industry. We needed our own recording studios, our own association,” said Francis.

He later handed over the reins of the organization to Frankie Staton, a country singer-songwriter, who hosted the first ever showcases for Black singer-songwriters at the famed Bluebird Cafe, a venue known for making songwriters famous.

Staton said when she first started shopping her songs around Nashville, the publishing houses dismissed her, telling her they didn’t believe she wrote them. Her dream became to help others like her.

“It wasn’t the fans that stopped us,” she said of the barriers to artists of color in country music.

Their work was the blueprint for present day leaders like Rissi Palmer, an Apple Music Radio host who

created the Color Me Country Artist Grant program for artists of color; the Black Opry; and Rosedale Collective’s foundation, which is starting an artist residency.

Decades later, artists who work in Nashville say some progress has been made, but much more is needed. Valerie Ponzio, a Latina country musician from Texas, said that progress has yet to extend to writing rooms, where the hit songs are created.

“I want to see it happening in the Music Row writing rooms, where we are comfortable to bring our stories in a country music setting,” said Ponzio.

Ponzio noted many white male new country acts in Nashville have a big financial advantage over a new artist who may be Black, Indigenous or Latino.

“There are so many artists that

are funded, but they are all the same type of artist,” said Ponzio. “So surprise, surprise. Who are we hearing making money on the radio?”

The panels also challenged the tokenism that Black country artists often face, such as being invited to certain events because of their race or being the only non-white artist in a lineup.

“I’m really hoping with all the changes that are going on now, it’s not going to be surprising when you see people like us in country music,” said Reyna Roberts, a country artist who spoke from Los Angeles at the Grammy Museum. “I can’t wait when it’s not a surprise anymore, when it’s an everyday thing.”



Frankie Staton, a country music singer and songwriter, speaks at the Rosedale Summit held at the National Museum of African American Music Monday, Nov. 8, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn. The Rosedale Summit brought artists, academics and historians together to address racial representation within the genre of country music. MARK HUMPHREY / APOKLAHOMAN VIA OKLAHOMA WATCH

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U.S.31.4

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TULSA35.0

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U.S.14.0

OK18.9

TULSA17.3

Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2019

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