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**1921 Tulsa
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NAOMI HOOKER CHAMBERLAIN was 3 when her family's home on Independence Street and business at 123 N. Greenwood Ave. were destroyed by the white mob.

It's long overdue for the criminals who destroyed the Greenwood community in 1921 to be held accountable. Each week we remember a departed member of our community.

Estimated 300k OKLAHOMANS TO LOSE MEDICAID COVERAGE

By SEAN MURPHY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Nearly one-quarter of Oklahomans receiving health care through Medicaid, about 300,000 people, will no longer be eligible by the end of this year, mostly because they or a parent earn too much to qualify, state health officials said Tuesday. Oklahoma Health Care Authority CEO Kevin Corbett outlined the state's plan to notify people who are losing coverage over the next nine months. Corbett says most of those people, including children, will be phased out because they or a caregiver earn more than 138% of the federal poverty level, which is the income threshold to qualify for the program called SoonerCare in Oklahoma. The threshold translates to about \$18,000 a year for an individual or about \$39,000 for a family of four.

MEDICAID COVERAGE On A3



PHOTO ADOBE STOCK

STATE

HOUSE REPUBLICANS CENSURE REP. MAUREE TURNER, DEMOCRATS CALL FOUL

By MICHAEL McNUTT, NonDoc

The Oklahoma House of Representatives today censured Rep. Mauree Turner (D-OKC), saying Turner impeded a law enforcement investigation into an alleged assault on a fellow member and a state trooper that took place last week at the State Capitol. **TURNER CENSURE** On A9

STATE

SHERIFF SEEKS PUBLIC MONEY TO INCREASE STAFF AFTER TWO WOMEN DIED

By WHITNEY BRYEN, OKLAHOMA WATCH

Jail medical staff assumed Amy Lynn Cross was faking as she seized, foamed at the mouth and her fingers turned blue in a Colorado jail, a December lawsuit alleges. The 41-year-old woman, who was facing another drug charge, died of an overdose **JAIL SAFETY** On A6

NATION

AFTER BREONNA TAYLOR DEATH, FEDS FIND POLICE DISCRIMINATION

By DYLAN LOVAN, ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department found Louisville police have engaged in a pattern of violating constitutional rights and discrimination against the Black community following an investigation prompted by the fatal police shooting of Breonna Taylor. **BREONNA TAYLOR** On A14

LOCAL

HAMILTON: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL IS HISTORY REFRAMED IN LIVING COLOR

By KIMBERLY MARSH

Hamilton, the breakthrough musical created on Broadway by composer and lyricist Lin-Manuel Miranda, tells the story of the life of United States founding father Alexander Hamilton, with a non-white cast, predominantly African American and Latino players, with a contemporary, lyrical hip-hop + jazz and blues score. The celebrated production is coming to Tulsa March 7-9.

Edred Utomi, who plays the lead role of U.S. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, talked to The Oklahoma Eagle about the musical.

HAMILTON On A13

STATE

CONTRASTING THE CENSURE OF REP. MAUREE TURNER WITH INACTION AGAINST GOP LAWMAKERS



By LIONEL RAMOS, OKLAHOMA WATCH

Oklahoma's House Republicans have declined to criticize two of their fellow representatives with pending criminal charges, but were quick to pass judgment last week **GOP CENSURE HYPOCRISY** On A12

STATE

STEM vs. STEAM: Advocating for the Return of Art and Music in School Curriculums

By AARON ALLEN, WORD IN BLACK

For the past twenty-five years, funding cuts to music programs in public schools have been on the rise, as school boards and superintendents often cite economic strains as a justification for the cuts, relegating music and the arts to after-school or enrichment programs.

Looking at the music education funding landscape, we can see that music education budget cuts disproportionately impact school

STEM VS. STEAM On A10

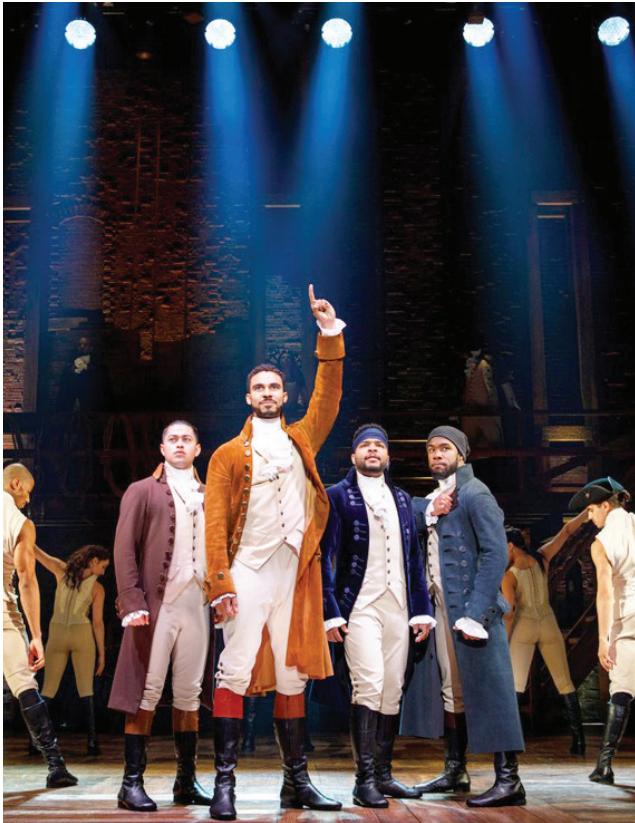


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MEDICAID COVERAGE *from AI*

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the federal government agreed to allow people to stay on Medicaid even if they started to make more money than usually allowed. That ended in December when Congress passed a bill that included ending the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Nationwide, millions are expected to be bumped from Medicaid, which provides health care coverage to nearly 80 million low-income people. The federal government also will wind down extra funds given to states for the added enrollees over the next year.

In Oklahoma, roughly one-third of the population, or 1.3 million people, receive health coverage through Medicaid, said Corbett, who also is Gov. Kevin Stitt’s cabinet secretary of health and mental

In Oklahoma, roughly one-third of the population, or 1.3 million people, receive health coverage through Medicaid

Kevin Corbett, CEO Oklahoma Health Care Authority

health. He estimated about 300,000 of those recipients would lose coverage, about 60% of whom are adults ages 19 to 64, and the rest being children.

The first group of people losing coverage will be out of SoonerCare by April 30, and consist of those earning more than the income threshold, who have no children and already have other health coverage, Corbett

said. Roughly a month later, more people without children will be cut off, even if they have no other coverage. That group will be limited to people with few or no health care claims over the last six months.

“We’ve thought long and hard about how to do this with a level of compassion and making sure we don’t impact our most vulnerable,” Corbett said.

Health officials are hopeful most of those who lose coverage will be able to enroll in a plan through the federal marketplace, which offers tax subsidies to help low- and moderate-income people purchase health insurance. Some who have found jobs may be able to join employer-sponsored plans.

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The Oklahoma Eagle

Fake Simmons, Jr.

By LARRY O’DELL, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE

African American oil broker and civil rights advocate Jake Simmons, was born on January 17, 1901, in Indian Territory at Sawokla, which later became Haskell.



He emerged from a Creek freedman heritage to broker multimillion-dollar deals between large oil companies and emerging African nations. His maternal great-grandfather, Cow Tom, formerly a slave of a Creek Indian, served as an interpreter for the Creek in dealing with the U.S. government after the Civil War and afterward as a leader for many of the newly freed Creek slaves. Simmons’s father owned a large ranch in the Haskell area. The senior Simmons’s prosperity captured the attention of Booker T. Washington on one of his trips to Oklahoma. Washington stayed an evening at the ranch and sold both father and son on

the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Jake Simmons, Jr., graduated from Tuskegee in 1919. After Tuskegee he married Melba Dorsey and worked in Detroit. By 1920 he had divorced Melba and moved back to Oklahoma, marrying Willie Eva Flowers. In the 1920s Simmons began brokering oil deals in eastern Oklahoma. During the hard times of the depressed 1930s he turned to real estate, selling farms around Muskogee to African Americans in East Texas who had made money in the new oil boom. The poor quality of the land in East Texas, as well as the area’s pervasive discrimination and violence, helped

Simmons convince many African Americans to move to Oklahoma. In the 1960s Simmons began brokering large deals with African countries, beginning with Liberia. He worked as a partner for Phillips Petroleum Company and later for Signal Oil and Gas Company. Always active in civil rights, Simmons pursued an early court case against separate schools in a 1938 suit under his wife’s name, Simmons v. Muskogee Board of Education. In March 1939 the Supreme Court dismissed the Simmons’ appeal from the U.S. District Court. Simmons acted as a leader in the local NAACP and served as state conference president

from 1962 until 1968. He also served as a member of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Commission, presided over the Negro Business League, and participated in the influential National Petroleum Council. Jake Simmons, Jr., died in Tulsa on March 24, 1981. His children, Jake Simmons III, a former undersecretary of the U.S. Interior, Donald, an economist who took over Simmons Royalty Company, Blanche, a social worker, and Kenneth, a Harvard-educated professor of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, all benefited from their father’s strong leadership.

THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma’s history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

JAKE SIMMONS, JR., (right) and E. Melvin Porter, 1964. (2012.201.B1028.0119, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS)

Featured Last Week



Oklahoma GOP-Led House Passes Landmark School Choice Bill



‘You Are Not Welcome’: Resources Limited for Unhoused



Ernestine Dillard, ‘The Voice Who Helped Heal The Nation,’ Dies

The Oklahoma Eagle

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NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
March 3 and 10, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. TD-2020-B1A

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, 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 31st day of March, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. TD-2020-B1A ARTERIAL BRIDGE REHABILITATION FOR BRIDGE 167 – CHARLES PAGE BLVD. BRIDGE 261A – WB 21ST STEET BRIDGE 261B – EB 21ST STREET BRIDGE 359 – S. ELWOOD AVE.

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 2037B0261A. Bridges.bridgMR.4281.42813122-541107 2037B0167Z.Bridges.bridg-MR.4281.42813122-541107 2037B0261B.Bridges.bridg-MR.4281.42813122-541107 2037B0167Z.Bridges.bridg-MR.4282.42823122-541107 2037B0261A.Bridges.bridg-MR.4282.42823122-541107 2037B0261B.Bridges.bridg-MR.4282.42823122-541107 2037B0359Z.Bridges.bridg-MR.4282.42823122-541107

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 9:30 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/>

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 holders of valid pre-qualifications certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A or C

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 at the City of Tulsa Engineering Services, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non-refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the City of Tulsa by check or money order.

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

The overall aspirational Small Business Enterprise utilization goal for this project is ten (10) percent.

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 City of Tulsa itself 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 City 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 City of Tulsa.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidders 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 City of Tulsa, 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 in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 31st day of March 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 3rd day of March 2023.

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
February 24 and March 3, 2023

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. SW-2020-01-06-02

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, 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 24th day of March, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. SW-2020-01-06-02 Towne Center Detention Pond Design

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 2131F0007Z.StmwtrPond. Flood.5600.56003122-541101 2331F00005.StmwtrPond. Flood.5600.56003122-541101 2231F00009.StmwtrPond. Flood.5600.56003122-541101

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 9:30 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/>

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 holders of valid pre-qualifications 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 at the City of Tulsa Engineering Services, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non-refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the City of Tulsa by check or money order.

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

The overall aspirational Small Business Enterprise utilization goal for this project is ten (10) percent.

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 City of Tulsa itself 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 City 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 City of Tulsa.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidders 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 City of Tulsa, 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 in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 24th day of March 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 24th day of February 2023.

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

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A WOMAN comforts her friend outside of the Cookie Cottage in Norman, which became a memorial after owner Shannon Hanchett died in the Cleveland County jail. The December deaths of Hanchett and Kathryn Milano, who was also incarcerated at the facility, caused county officials to scrutinize the jail's health care. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

“For us, it’s the way that they operate and employment decisions”

- Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs employee

JAIL SAFETY *from AI*

after a bag of methamphetamine broke inside of her body.

In Fort Smith, Arkansas, medical staff neglected 50-year-old Larry Price Jr., leaving him alone in a cell as he lost nearly half of his body weight, according to a lawsuit filed by his family last month. Price, arrested after cursing at and verbally threatening police during a mental health crisis, died of dehydration and malnutrition.

After nearly three weeks in the Cleveland County jail, Terrance Osborne died of congestive heart failure, one of two chronic diagnoses he suffered before he was arrested for suspected public intoxication, his family’s January lawsuit claims. Swelling in his face and legs left the 44-year-old unable to move, go to the bathroom or access food and medication, according to the lawsuit.

The target of those lawsuits is the same health care provider responsible for thousands of incarcerated Oklahomans, including two women who died in December while waiting for mental health evaluations at the Cleveland County jail.

The deaths of Shannon Hanchett and Kathryn Milano caused Cleveland County officials to reevaluate the treatment of detainees. Now, the sheriff and the health care provider are asking commissioners for more taxpayer money to expand care.

Sheriff Chris Amason asked the county’s board of commissioners for an additional \$500,000 annually for more nurses and mental health professionals on Turn Key Health Clinics’ jail medical team.

In a Tuesday meeting, Rhett Burnett, a Turn Key official who oversees operations in Oklahoma and Kansas, told board members that good care is provided at the jail but an increasing population warrants more.

Founded in 2009 by state lawmaker Jon Echols, Turn Key Health Clinics operates in 100 detention facilities in nine states. The Oklahoma City-based

company is the target of lawsuits in at least three states where patients have died under the care of its medical staff. A former Turn Key nurse told Oklahoma Watch that inadequate staffing left patients with substandard care.

Caring for people in custody requires reliance on first responders, hospitals and mental health care facilities for treatment beyond the abilities of the jail, Amason said. People detained in the jail can refuse treatment and medical staff cannot override a patient’s decision without a court order, which further delays care.

“Correctional health care is a highly litigious environment,” Turn Key attorney Austin Young said in an email. “Allegations do not equate to evidence, and we believe this is reflected in our litigation record. We are proud of the exceptional care that is provided by our devoted health care providers.”

Amason said that when the company approached him about the needed changes, which would raise Cleveland County’s annual payments to Turn Key to more than \$1.4 million, Turn Key employees pointed to insufficient staffing, especially on the night shift.

One Nurse, 500 Patients

Turn Key is required to provide only one nurse to care for the jail’s hundreds of detainees, a contract provision that hasn’t changed since 2009 when the facility’s population was about half its current size.

“It’s very, very low for the acuity of care you have with people that are in jail typically,” said Richard Forbus, a former jail commander who recruits new clients and acts as a spokesman for the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. “That’s a very minimal level of care.”

Turn Key often provides more staff than its contract requires, according to an hourly report provided to Oklahoma Watch. Two nurses and a medical assistant are on duty most weekdays. Every night, a medical

The ODVA drama and governance questions have boiled over at recent meetings as the new members of the commission have attempted to learn more about the delays

assistant supports a nurse during a portion of the late shift.

But the report shows there are times on weeknights and weekends when one licensed practical nurse is responsible for the entire jail, which topped 500 in December when Hanchett and Milano were detained.

Sheriff Amason’s proposal to commissioners would amend Cleveland County’s contract with Turn Key, which was renewed in July. New staffing mandates would limit the time a nurse can be the only medical staff at the jail to eight hours per week. Two new positions would help care for patients overnight. And a mental health counselor would be at the jail five days per week instead of three under the proposal.

Burnett, a Turn Key director and former Cleveland County undersheriff, presented the plan to commissioners in a packed meeting Tuesday. Burnett briefly held the position of acting sheriff after his boss, former sheriff Joe Lester, resigned following a state audit that found misspending including overpayment for inmate medical services.

“It is a very, very hectic and busy place with the needs that come from the inmates and this would help us handle it better,” Burnett said.

Norman baker Hanchett, known to friends and customers as the “Cookie Queen,” was in medical cell four at the Cleveland County jail when she was found unconscious on Dec. 8, according to a state health department report.

The 38-year-old mother of two was arrested the day after Thanksgiving by Norman police on charges of obstructing an officer and false reporting after calling 911 repeatedly to request a welfare check on her son. The arresting officer wrote in a court document that Hanchett was suffering from a mental health disorder.

In jail, Hanchett was placed on suicide watch, according to the health department report.

After a mental health evaluation by Turn Key staff, she was taken off suicide watch and moved to a medical cell closer to the nurse’s station. She was dehydrated, and medical staff were giving her Gatorade, the report shows. Hours before Hanchett was scheduled to have a mental health assessment required to be transferred to a treatment facility, first responders pronounced her dead. The state medical examiner has not yet ruled on her cause of death.

Two weeks later, Milano, a 66-year-old grandmother, didn’t respond when a Cleveland County deputy knocked on the door of the medical cell where she was detained.

On Nov. 22, Milano was arrested by Norman police for allegedly violating a victim protection order but the jail refused to take her due to health issues. She was taken to a hospital, according to court documents. Milano was arrested again on Nov. 25 by Noble police on suspicion of burglary after her next door neighbor accused her of stealing from him. That time, the jail admitted her. Milano needed dialysis but refused treatment, court records show. She was scheduled for a court-ordered mental health evaluation.

On Dec. 20, Milano was found curled up on her side, her face blue and blood dripping from her nose, according to a state health department report. A Turn Key nurse tried to revive Milano by rubbing her sternum. The nurse and a deputy performed compressions until first responders arrived, according to the report. Milano’s family disputed a statement provided by the sheriff’s office that claims she died at Norman Regional Hospital as a result of a pre-existing medical condition. The medical examiner has not yet released her cause of death.

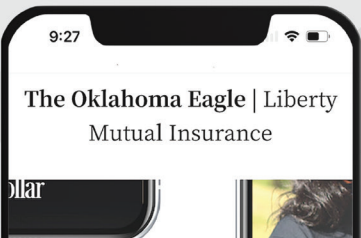
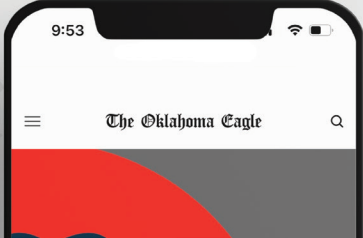
‘I Couldn’t Make Any Difference’

At least nine other Oklahoma jails contract with Turn Key Health Clinics, including the Oklahoma County

JAIL SAFETY *continued on A7*

Our Mission

To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial” is the cornerstone of our continued success.





MORE THAN 50 PEOPLE gathered outside of the Cleveland County jail on Jan. 1 to demand information and remember two women who were waiting for mental health evaluations in the facility when they died in December. PHOTO PROVIDED

A state multicounty grand jury is investigating the jail after a 2021 state inspection.

JAIL SAFETY from A6

Detention Center, which is under investigation for health and safety violations.

Kimberly Goetz worked as a nurse for Turn Key and oversaw the nursing unit in the Oklahoma County jail for about six months in 2018. She said she quit after a woman having a seizure nearly died waiting for first responders to arrive because there was no doctor on site. Staff were not allowed to distribute medication or check on detainees without a corrections officer present, she said. She and her coworkers were often stuck waiting for an officer to become available before they could respond to patient needs, Goetz said.

Nurses sometimes lost track of who had received medications because there weren't enough staff to care for approximately 1,600 patients, many of whom came into jail with medical or mental health conditions that worsened the longer they were locked up, Goetz said.

Jail staff ignored requests for help or accused detainees of faking it, Goetz said. Patients requesting a medical appointment waited for weeks or even months, she said. Others were unable to afford the \$15 co-pay, which is collected by the county from detainees' commissary accounts.

"I felt like I couldn't make any difference or do any good because I was always being told to stop doing the work," Goetz said.

A state multicounty grand jury is investigating the jail after a 2021 state inspection uncovered bedbugs, mold, overcrowded cells, unsafe staffing levels and other violations. A month after the inspection and days after a deadly hostage situation, Turn Key representatives threatened to terminate their contract with Oklahoma County unless the jail hired more detention officers. It did, and Turn Key remains the jail's health care provider.

Echols, Oklahoma's house majority floor leader, started Turn Key Health Clinics with attorney Jesse White and Trent Smith, a former University of Oklahoma football player and current member of the state Board of Education. Echols remains the company president and a shareholder.

Echols, R-Oklahoma City, said he

works for the company's CEO mostly outside of Oklahoma to minimize perceived conflicts of interest.

Turn Key founders each donated \$1,000 to Tulsa Sheriff Vic Regalado's campaign in 2016 before county officials changed restrictions that made Turn Key eligible to bid on the contract. Turn Key won the contract. Echols denied any impropriety. He said the previous bid restriction excluded all Oklahoma companies.

Regalado said Turn Key has improved the care of people in custody in the Tulsa County detention center, which includes two mental health housing units. Among Oklahoma's 93 jails, only Tulsa County is accredited by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

Lawsuits Target Turn Key

The mental health of people detained in the Fort Smith, Arkansas, jail where Price starved wasn't Turn Key's responsibility, an attorney for the company asserted in an email to Oklahoma Watch. The company denied culpability in Price's death saying in an emailed statement, "crisis management and mental health evaluations/assessments were to be contracted by Sebastian County and performed by an independent community mental health provider, not by Turn Key."

In a court filing responding to the family's lawsuit, the company claimed Price was combative and refused medication for schizophrenia. Price refused to eat or drink, had an IQ under 55 and was disabled, according to his family's lawsuit. The case remains in litigation.

Second-degree manslaughter charges were filed and later dismissed against Turn Key staff in the 2016 death of Anthony Huff, who was strapped to a restraint chair in Garfield County jail for 48 hours without adequate food or water, court records show. Charges were also filed and dismissed against the sheriff.

In 2014, under its former name, ESW Correctional Healthcare, Turn Key settled lawsuits filed by the families of Curtis Gene Pruett, who died, and Lacey Danielle Marez, who fell into a coma under their care in Cleveland County.

Other lawsuits filed against Turn

Nurses sometimes lost track of who had received medications because there weren't enough staff to care for approximately 1,600 patients, many of whom came into jail with medical or mental health conditions that worsened the longer they were locked up.

Key by incarcerated Oklahomans or their families blame medical staff for the paralysis of a man detained in Muskogee County and the deaths of men imprisoned in Canadian County and Creek County.

Since Hanchett and Milano died, letters from attorneys asking Cleveland County to preserve documents signal likely legal action in those cases.

"All loss of life is tragic, and Turn Key always wants to look at each event and see if there is a way to prevent it from happening again," Echols said. "We also need to continue our efforts to help get patients out of jails that don't need to be there."

In November, the U.S. Department of Justice launched a federal investigation to determine whether Oklahoma fails to provide community-based mental health services to people in Oklahoma County, leading to unnecessary admissions to psychiatric facilities and police contact. Investigators will also examine Oklahoma City and its police department's response to people in crisis.

In Hanchett's case, jail staff asked for a mental health assessment, but Turn Key officials and Amason said they could not disclose how long before her appointment the request was made.

A judge ordered Milano's evaluation on Dec. 15, five days before she died, according to court records.

Jail Mental Health Unit Planned

This isn't the first time Cleveland County officials have considered expanding care for those struggling with mental health while in jail.

Six years before the deaths of Hanchett and Milano, a former sheriff and Turn Key representatives brought commissioners a plan to bring mental health services to the jail. The proposal prompted Commissioner Rod Cleveland to negotiate a better price for the service. Turn Key officials offered to provide limited counseling at no additional cost.

Soon, commissioners will have another chance to bolster jail health care.

Commissioner Rusty Grissom, who took office last month, took his first tour of the jail Feb. 13. Grissom said the north Norman facility was in good

order.

After two Cleveland County Detention Center administrators resigned in January, Amason hired former Norman police lieutenant Cary Bryant to evaluate the jail's mental health procedures and make recommendations. Bryant teaches law enforcement officers to detect signs of mental illness, how to calm someone who is struggling and when state law allows officers to detain someone in crisis against their will.

Up to 70% of people in custody at the Cleveland County jail have a mental health or substance abuse disorder, estimated Amason, who has overseen the jail since taking office in 2020. They don't all experience a crisis while in custody, but maintaining their stability has long been a concern for the sheriff.

Last fall, commissioners allocated \$8 million in federal pandemic relief funds to jail health care, including a mental health unit with separate housing for those suffering mental distress. Medical staff would be stationed in the unit providing more supervision and faster response times for people incarcerated in that area of the jail, Amason said.

The county has an open request for quotes for a jail consultant to develop a more detailed plan.

Cleveland County's proposed mental health unit is not a treatment center, Amason said. It would be aimed at easing suffering for people while they're in custody, and until they can be transferred or released and referred to certified treatment providers.

"I never wanted to be a mental health treatment center," Amason said. "I mean, I don't think people should come to jail to get mental health treatment. But we do have a responsibility to do what we can to provide them the best service while they're in our care."

WHITNEY BRYEN is an investigative reporter at Oklahoma Watch covering vulnerable populations. Her recent investigations focus on mental health and substance abuse, domestic violence, nonprofits and nursing homes. Contact her at (405) 201-6057 or wbryen@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @SoonerReporter.

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REP. MAUREE TURNER (D-OKC) speaks with Sen. Julie Daniels (R-Bartlesville) on Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021. PHOTO MICHAEL DUNCAN

“This is a historic display of inhumanity by House Republicans to silence anyone who is different from them,...

- Rep. Mauree Turner (D-OKC), Oklahoma State House of Representatives

TURNER CENSURE from AI

Turner was censured for harboring a fugitive wanted for questioning in connection with the alleged assault inside of their House office and rejecting multiple requests by law enforcement to question the individual.

The censure, which serves as a formal reprimand, included Turner being removed from all House committees. Turner had been on the House Criminal Justice and Correction Committee as well as the chamber’s Rules Committee and two appropriations subcommittees.

House Democrats said Republican lawmakers wrongfully accused Turner of harboring a fugitive during a protest of HB 2177 on Feb. 28 at the Capitol. The bill proposes banning surgeries and treatments related to sex transition for people under age 18, with certain exceptions. Opponents of the legislation chanted outside the House chamber during the bill’s consideration, with an altercation ensuing after one protestor tossed water on Rep. Bob Ed Culver (R-Tahlequah) and another physical interaction occurred with a state trooper.

Troopers ultimately arrested both Savanna Mitchell and Austin Ross of Ponca City for the incident, but it was the search for Ross that lead law enforcement to Turner’s office, which they said was locked.

In a press release after Tuesday’s censure vote, House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson (D-OKC) said Turner

did not impede the investigation or prevent law officers from performing their duties. Turner, the first nonbinary person elected to the Oklahoma Legislature, cooperated fully and completely with the investigation, Munson said.

“This is a historic display of inhumanity by House Republicans to silence anyone who is different from them,” she said. “It is a manifestation of ignorance and hate.”

Turner denied the allegations.

“I just provide my office as space of grace and love for all the folks in all communities that seek refuge from the hate in this building,” Turner said. “Trans people don’t feel safe here. I receive death threats. I am a target daily in this building, yet I am silenced.”

House Speaker Charles McCall (R-Atoka) said in a press release that Culver and a state trooper were assaulted after an otherwise peaceful protest turned violent.

“Following this assault, one individual was apprehended by law enforcement while another involved in the incident fled the scene,” he said. “It came to the attention of law enforcement that the individual who fled was hiding in the official office of a member of the House.

“This member knowingly, and willfully, impeded a law enforcement investigation, harboring a fugitive and repeatedly lying to officers, and used their official office and position to thwart attempts by law enforcement to make contact with a suspect of the investigation.”

House Democrats said Republican lawmakers wrongfully accused Turner of harboring a fugitive during a protest of HB 2177 on Feb. 28 at the Capitol

McCall said he will not allow House members to use their House-assigned offices and official positions to impede law officers from carrying out investigations or making arrests in the State Capitol.

“The House stands by our law enforcement and will not allow what is an already dangerous and unpredictable job to become more dangerous due to the actions of a member of our body,” he said.

“The inappropriate, and potentially criminal, actions exhibited by this member of the House were deserving of censure, and the actions taken by the House today were both measured and just.”

The House voted 81-19 along party lines in favor of censuring Turner.

Prior reprimands of Oklahoma legislators

Censures and reprimands occur rarely in Oklahoma’s Legislature.

In March 2011, the House reprimanded then-Rep. Randy Terrill, a Republican from Moore, for threatening remarks he made in the Capitol that were directed at then-Speaker Kris Steele, a Republican from Shawnee.

On the same day, the House reprimanded then-Rep. Mike Reynolds, a Republican from Oklahoma City, after he interrupted the remarks of the chaplain by calling for a point of order as the chaplain discussed health care issues before leading the House in prayer.

In May 2011, the Republican-controlled House publicly reprimanded then-Rep. Sally Kern, a Republican

from Oklahoma City, for disparaging comments she made against Black people and women during a debate on affirmative action.

In March 2017, the GOP-controlled Senate formally censured Sen. Ralph Shortey, a south Oklahoma City Republican, shortly before he resigned. Shortey ultimately pleaded guilty to child sex trafficking and was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

In February 2021, then-Senate Floor Leader Kim David, a Republican from Porter, was reprimanded because of comments she made at a press conference on Medicaid, which had offended some senators. She was temporarily relieved of her floor leader duties for one week.

In April 2021, Senate leadership revoked access to the chamber’s communications department from Sen. Nathan Dahm (R-Broken Arrow) following sexual comments he made about Vice President Kamala Harris. Dahm’s access to communications staff members has since been restored.

MICHAEL MCNUTT became NonDoc’s managing editor in January 2023. He has been a journalist for nearly 40 years, working at The Oklahoman for 30 years, heading up its Enid bureau and serving as night city editor, assistant news editor and State Capitol reporter. He is an inductee of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame. Most recently, he served as communications director for former Gov. Mary Fallin and then for the Office of Juvenile Affairs. Send tips and story ideas to mcnutt@nondoc.

THE STEM TO STEAM MOVEMENT HAS BEEN TAKING ROOT

STEM VS. STEAM *from AI*

districts that serve students of color, immigrant students, and low-income communities. According to the most recent federal data, a majority of students in the U.S. have access to music education as part of their school day. The approximately 7,000 schools without music programs are predominantly in school districts that serve Black, immigrant, and low-income student populations.

Studies have shown that quality general music education has been linked to the development of self-control, planning, verbal intelligence, and enhanced math and science skills. According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), music is an essential component of a well-rounded education. However, school districts have been aggressively pushing STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics – programs in preparing students for the workforce of the future, while many advocates for the arts believe that schools need to have a STEAM curriculum – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics – that cultivates students who are more in tune with the arts.

“I believe music should be a mandatory class in schools,” says Thaddeus Turner, co-founder of Totem Star, a music program that provides positive identity development and career training opportunities within the music industry. “Music and art are always an elective; it’s not part of mandatory learning. When people walk up to me and say, ‘I wish I could do what you are doing,’ and nothing is stopping one from doing this, but it is not easy to do, like getting up and playing in front of people, practicing, learning songs.”

“It [playing music] looks like it’s fun; it looks easy, so how could it be educational?” added Turner. “How could it be science? How could it be math? Well, it is all of that. You have to count; you’ve got to learn music theory, read and calculate. It is a language all unto itself.”

Daniel Pak, who transitioned from a metallurgical engineering background to becoming a music teacher, firmly believes in the correlation between music and its influence on learning.

“Music is not just about notes and lyrics; it goes so much farther beyond that,” says Pak. “When you can appreciate that holistic approach to learning, I think the future is brighter for anyone who loves the culture of learning.”

Thaddeus Turner agrees and believes that exposure to the arts is vital to the overall development and success of young people. According to Turner, music is a “multiplexed universe that engulfs everything all at once,”

including science, core chemistry, intonation, writing, and score writing.

“I think basically music is a great tool in achieving in academia,” says Turner. “It can teach students history, social justice. It can teach and strengthen math skills, math equations, all kinds of STEM-based fundamentals.”

“There are definitely aspects of music that can correlate to math and science,” says Pak. “Of course, at its most basic unit music is the function of time, volume, amplitude, and frequency of sound, when you talk about hertz range. So, for young people who are really invested in music to become their best songwriter selves, it is very much valuable for them to learn about frequency, amplitude, timing, fractions of time, whether it’s quarter notes, half notes, whole notes, sixteenth notes, how everything works together in a holistic manner.”

While STEM initiatives are a vital start in exploring the four disciplines, advocates for a well-rounded education experience believe that the critical process of creativity and innovation, teamwork, and camaraderie is missing. Students in STEM programs may have opportunities for experimental learning to excel, but these advocates believe that the success of students in the real world also requires the application of creation, teamwork, team building, and ingenuity.

“The most important thing that I have realized because of the way we live nowadays is that they have taken the teamwork out of learning,” says Turner. “There are no more bands. I remember being in high school, and we had band class. As much as the culture today promotes solo artistry, as a band, we were stronger together and as a unit.”

The STEM to STEAM movement has been taking root as a positive action to meet the needs of a 21st-century economy. Parents, educators, and employers have voiced that STEM alone is missing key components critical for children to thrive in the present and rapidly approaching future.

“We have used data like the Arts Survey, and it shows that students who take music and art as a part of their curriculum are way more successful in their core classes,” says Pak. “There is a higher graduation rate, higher rates of getting into college, and those who do not receive music or art because of cuts in school funding perhaps do not perform as well.”

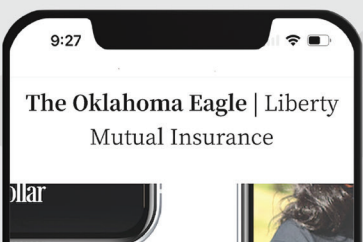
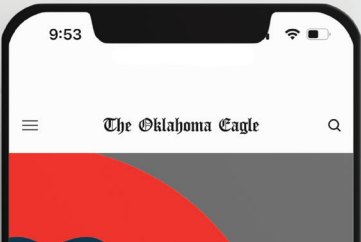
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Wednesday Bible Study - 5:00pm

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Pastor Ruthie I. Howard
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Ph: (918) 425-2077
Pastor Rick Bruner
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(918) 625-2374
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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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REP. MAUREE TURNER, answers questions from Rep. Kevin West about HB2343, a bill Turner introduced aimed at decriminalizing the spreading human immunodeficiency virus, March 1, 2023, at the state Capitol building. A week later, Turner would face a formal censure by fellow members of the House, stripping them from all committee assignments. PHOTO LIONEL RAMOS/ OKLAHOMA WATCH

House Speaker Charles McCall *accused Turner of impeding a law enforcement investigation*

GOP CENSURE HYPOCRISY from AI

on a Democrat who is the nation’s first non-binary state lawmaker.

House GOP leadership formally censured Rep. Mauree Turner, stripping them of all committee appointments.

House Speaker Charles McCall accused Turner of impeding a law enforcement investigation that led to two arrests after a protestor threw water at a House member and wrestled with a state highway patrol officer in a stairwell following a Feb. 28 vote on HB2177. The bill bans gender-affirming healthcare for minors and eliminates it from insurance coverage for people of any age.

Meanwhile, two Republicans maintain leadership positions in the House despite facing felony charges.

Rep. Terry O’Donnell, R-Catoosa, faces charges that include conspiring against the state for authoring a 2019 law allowing his wife to head a tag agency. O’Donnell, who was re-elected in November, now serves as House majority whip.

Rep. Ryan Martinez is charged with a felony for physically controlling a vehicle while intoxicated following an October arrest. Martinez, R-Edmond, remains vice chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee.

The differences between the treatment of felony-indicted Republicans and Turner are a matter of time and place, McCall said.

“The common denominator in terms of censure and even expulsion, which we have dealt with that during my tenure here in the House of Representatives, is predicated upon whether the occurrence or event takes place in the Capitol, or it takes places outside the Capitol, and whether or not we’re in session or out of session,” McCall said.

As House Speaker, McCall has the unilateral authority to preserve order and decorum on the chamber floor or anywhere else in the Capitol, per House rules. But Rep. Regina Goodwin, D-Tulsa, didn’t buy McCall’s reasoning. Goodwin said O’Donnell’s felony charges were related to a law the legislator wrote and had passed during the 2019 session.

“That legislation O’Donnell passed was written in the Capitol,” Goodwin said. “It was a conflict of interest. That is why it’s a

Turner’s censure leaves the 35,888 residents of House District 88 without committee representation.

big to-do.”

Brett Sharp has been a professor of public administration at the University of Central Oklahoma for 20 years. Sharp said a censure is a symbolic gesture, which in Turner’s case appears to have escalated the polarity between parties amid an already tense political climate.

“There’s some things that legislatures can do which involve symbolic politics,” Sharp said, “And this really fits that, you know, with all the anti-woke and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment in the state.”

Sharp said the heightened polarization in Oklahoma follows a national trend. As the nation’s only openly nonbinary legislator, Turner serves as a symbolic opposition to the morality play taking place in American politics today, he said.

Following the events of Feb. 28, Turner received a flurry of hateful emails and voicemails insulting Turner, the LGBTQ community, Black people and Muslims. Oklahoma Watch is not quoting the messages to avoid the amplification of hateful rhetoric.

The House censure comes during a legislative session featuring 40 anti-LGBTQ bills, among them HB2177.

Hearings on gender-affirming care bans have been heavily attended by LGBTQ community members, who view the bills as attacks on potentially life-saving treatment. Following a protest outside the nearby OU Health campus, about 40 people went to the Capitol to protest HB2177.

When it became clear that the bill would pass the House, protesters shouted expletives and chants at legislators. One splashed water on Rep. Bob Ed Culver, a Tahlequah Republican who voted for the measure, as Culver left the chamber.

Oklahoma Highway Patrol capitol trooper Michael Brown followed the individual and

their spouse to the fourth-floor stairwell for the arrest. In a video captured by The Frontier’s Reese Gorman, Brown is seen tussling with them before bringing one to the ground.

McCall described the scuffle as an otherwise peaceful protest turned violent in a March 7 press release, adding that one of the combatants fled the scene and hid in Turner’s House office. In the statement, McCall accused Turner of harboring a fugitive and lying to troopers about whether the person was hiding.

McCall said the allegations against Turner are based on well-documented information provided to him by the Oklahoma State Highway Patrol, but produced no evidence of an investigation. He said the officers searching for the person in Turner’s office were repeatedly denied entry.

“The facts are not in dispute,” McCall said.

As members of the LGBTQ community, the accused’s names and pronouns are not as they are filed in probable cause affidavits, and Oklahoma Watch was not able to ascertain them in time for publication.

Visitors to the Capitol frequently seek a respite in Turner’s sixth-floor legislative office, the Oklahoma City Democrat said.

“People do not feel represented or protected by the people in this body,” Turner said. “They come to find refuge in my office. They come to decompress from some of the most stressful times, and I understand them because I do it too.”

In this case, a constituent came to process their spouse’s arrest, Turner told The 19th News.

Upon being informed that troopers were in the stairwells, Turner said they let the constituent get their affairs in order. “Everyone was in agreeance that they were going to turn themselves in,” Turner said.

No charges have been filed against Turner.

House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson, D-Oklahoma City, said Turner cooperated fully with troopers and did not get in the way of an investigation.

“This is a historic display of inhumanity by House Republicans to silence anyone who is different from them,” Munson said in a statement. “It is a manifestation of ignorance and hate. How can we attract businesses to Oklahoma when lawmakers make false allegations and promote fear and hate that results in targeting and endangers the safety of a fellow lawmaker?”

Turner’s assignments included the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, where they proposed bills like HB2343, which would have decriminalized the spreading of human immunodeficiency virus — a pertinent topic to the older generation of the LGBTQ community. The bill did not receive a second and failed in committee on March 1.

Turner’s censure leaves the 35,888 residents of House District 88 without committee representation and further reduces the already limited role of Democrats. Republicans make up 81 of 101 House members. Of the 430 bills that made it to Gov. Kevin Stitt’s desk in 2022, just a dozen had a Democrat as the original lead sponsor, according to an Oklahoma Watch review.

Turner’s position on committees can be reinstated and the censure repealed if they make a public apology to McCall and the Oklahoma State Highway Patrol, McCall said. Turner said apologizing for loving the people of Oklahoma is not something they can do.

“The people of House District 88 will never not have a voice at 23rd and Lincoln,” Turner said in an email exchange with Oklahoma Watch. “While I might not be able to vote in committees, the same bills that pass-through committees go to the house floor. As you have seen time and time again, with questioning and debate, I will be there on the house floor to do all of those things.”

LIONEL RAMOS is a Report for America corps member who covers race and equity issues for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at 405-905-9953 or lramos@oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at @LionelRamos_.



PHOTO FACEBOOK, TULSA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (TPAC)

HAMILTON

MARCH 7-19
TULSA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

HAMILTON from AI

Utomi first noted the tagline for Hamilton. “It’s the story of American then, told by the faces of America now. He said it is important to reframe what history would have been and see us in narratives where people of color have not customarily been a part.

“We all live in this country founded by immigrants, founded by people who may look like us or didn’t look like us, but either way, this is our country,” Utomi said. “It’s an important piece of theater, and I’m truly honored to be in it, to be playing the title character.”

A modern view of history

In historical retelling, the past and formation of the country is told from a white perspective. By considering and telling a story through people of all different ethnicities, it breaks down barriers and walls between different ethnicities and different types of people, Utomi said. While Hamilton is applauded for its multi-cultural casting and contemporary dialogue it has prompted much discussion on its real impact as a change agent for racial disparities.

In the Feb. 21, 2023, issue of Playbill, legendary composer Jonathan Larson, who inspired and mentored Miranda, acknowledged that Hamilton is a breakthrough, but it doesn’t exactly introduce a new era. “Nothing introduces an era. What it does is empower people to think differently. There’s always got to be an innovator, somebody who experiments first with new forms.” Scholars and authors have analyzed and debated whether Hamilton

signifies a post-racial society.

Utomi, joined Hamilton in 2017 and sought the lead role for two years. He learned all the lines and songs as an understudy and was finally rewarded with the “incredible opportunity to be in this show” as Hamilton. An actor who has been basically living in Hamilton for several years as a cast member, Utomi believes it has redefined musical theater as well as theater’s relationship to the general public. At the very least, reframing history gives the audience something to think about, he said.

“As a person of color, it is never good to learn about history. There are not always a lot of good things that happened, but we’ve come a long way. Many times, when you talk about our history, it is related to the trauma and pain of people of color.”

Hamilton changed the look and sound of musical theater, but the biggest piece begins with casting, Utomi said.

” As far as getting people on stage to look different, casting is where we have to see a lot of changes, but it goes deeper to directing, writing, producing, where the wealth is coming from and how it is being distributed. Hamilton kicks off the notion that what we see on stage is very different than what it was supposed to be like. (In reality) Thomas Jefferson wasn’t Asian and we have an Asian Jefferson, a black George Washington. I am Nigerian-American and I’m Hamilton.”

Hamilton started that movement, it’s not just what’s in your head but a change to what you may perceive. I think going forward we’ve already started seeing it. The changes in diversity have to come at all levels not just on stage and I think that’s happening. “

What can Tulsans expect to see and

experience in this musical? Utomi said the story told through the medium of hip hop... jazz elements, musical theater elements, and ballads, is at the end of the day “about humans who were flawed but did great big things and made great big mistakes as well.”

“To someone who hasn’t seen it, I would say to come out and experience the story and see what you can learn from it, feel from it and I’m sure you will take something from it.”

Utomi’s Background

Utomi began acting in high school and majored in theater in college in San Diego. He was selected for Hamilton in 2018 as a standby for several main characters and in January 2019 took over full time as Hamilton.

“It was an incredible blessing I couldn’t have imagined,” he said. “My world turned upside down - the people who have seen the show will get that reference,” Utomi said, referring to one of the most popular songs, Yorktown, and the lyrics: I’m not throwing away my shot til the world turns upside down.”

Utomi began in theater in Riverside, CA, playing Jim in Big River, adapted from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. His shows include How The Grinch Stole Christmas! Once On This Island, Big River, and Sister Act The Musical.

Utomi said it was important to look to others who have the career you desire, so he studied not only everything that happened on stage, but also Denzel Washington, Michael B. Jordan, Will Smiths and other actors of their caliber.

“Hamilton was my goal for a while. I obsessed over it. I did everything I could

to be a part of it. I learned all the lyrics and spent all my time studying to become a better musical theater performer, instead of being backstage relaxing, I’d be in the wings watching the leads that I respected and was moved by,” adding that watching included every microscopic move they made, from the way they held their tongue to the way they turned their head.

“What I said to myself growing up and trying to make it is, ‘hard work beats talent and when talent doesn’t, work hard,” Utomi said. “It’s easy to count yourself out when you feel like you’ve started too late. This is a marathon not a sprint, unless you know somebody, or you are the son or daughter of somebody famous. It’s not something you’ll get in a year, or five years. It might be 10 and it might be 20, but I’m a firm believer that if you work hard enough whatever version of success, you’re looking for will come your way. You have to work harder than everyone you know, set unrealistic dreams and shoot for the moon. If you miss, you will hit the stars.”

What’s next for Utomi? After Tulsa the show heads to Kansas City, Minneapolis, and more cities.

“After that, I’ll see what God has in store for me,” he said. “I’d love to originate a role, do more TV and film. For now, I’m happy with the role I’m in and doing best to my ability.”

Celebrity Attractions is bringing the Angelica Company’s production of Hamilton to Tulsa March 7-19, at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center, 110 2nd Street, in the Chapman Music Hall. Tickets are on sale now online at tulapac.com or by calling 918-596-7111.

“WE Have to Come to Terms With Where We’ve Been, So We Can Get To Where We want to be”

BREONNA TAYLOR *from AI*

Attorney General Merrick Garland made the announcement Wednesday. A Justice Department report found the Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government and Louisville Metro Police Department “engage in a pattern or practice of conduct that deprives people of their rights under the Constitution and federal law.”

The report said the Louisville police department “discriminates against Black people in its enforcement activities,” uses excessive force and conducts searches based on invalid warrants. It also said the department violates the rights of people engaged in protected speech, like the street protests in the city in the summer of 2020 after Taylor’s death. Garland said some officers have assaulted people with disabilities and called Black people disparaging names.

“This conduct is unacceptable, it is heartbreaking,” Garland said. “It erodes the community trust necessary for effective policing and it is an affront to the vast majority of officers who put their lives on the line every day to serve Louisville with honor.”

The sweeping probe announced in April 2021 is known as a “pattern or practice” investigation — examining whether there is a pattern of unconstitutional or unlawful policing inside the department. The city will sign a negotiated agreement with the Justice Department and a federal officer will monitor the progress.

Taylor’s mother, Tamika Palmer, said Wednesday that she remains upset that it took so long to feel some vindication.

“It’s heartbreaking to know that everything you’ve been saying from day one has to be said again,” Palmer said.

One of Palmer’s attorneys, Lonita Baker, said she was encouraged by the Justice Department’s findings, but it’s “unfortunate that it took the murder of Breonna Taylor and protest after protest after protest through 2020 to come to this point.”

Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg said the city “has wounds that are not yet healed.”

“We have to come to terms with where we’ve been, so we can get to where we want to be,” Greenberg said.

Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, was roused from her bed by police who came through the door using a battering ram after midnight on March 13, 2020. Three officers fired shots after Taylor’s boyfriend, fearing an intruder, shot an officer in the leg. Taylor was struck several times and died at the scene.

The warrant used to enter her home is now part of a separate federal criminal investigation, and one former Louisville officer has already pleaded guilty to helping falsify information on the warrant. No drugs were found in Taylor’s home. Two more officers are charged in the warrant probe, and a



U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL MERRICK GARLAND speaks during a press conference at Louisville Metro Hall in Louisville, Ky., Wednesday, March 8, 2023. The U.S. Justice Department has found Louisville police have engaged in a pattern of violating constitutional rights following an investigation prompted by the fatal police shooting of Breonna Taylor. PHOTO AP PHOTO/TIMOTHY D. EASLEY

Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, was roused from her bed by police who came through the door using a battering ram after midnight on March 13, 2020.

third, Brett Hankison, is charged with endangering Taylor and her neighbors with his shots into her apartment.

The report said Black motorists were more likely to be searched during traffic stops, and officers used neck restraints, police dogs and Tasers against people who posed no imminent threat. Garland cited one incident where two officers threw drinks at pedestrians and recorded the encounters. Those incidents happened in 2018 and 2019. Both officers are facing federal charges.

NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson applauded the Justice Department findings but said

federal lawmakers have yet to step up and enact wider police reforms.

“While Congress continues to fail our country with police reform, at least the Department of Justice is taking their jobs seriously. Today marks a meaningful step toward police accountability and — should Congress now decide to step up — police reform,” Johnson’s statement said.

He added that the group lauded Garland and the Department of Justice for continuing a “pursuit of justice” and added, “Congress should take a page from their book, do their jobs, and pass the legislation necessary to

save innocent lives.”

Louisville police have undergone five leadership changes since the Taylor shooting, and new Mayor Craig Greenberg is interviewing candidates for the next chief. The city has settled a number of lawsuits related to the incident, including a \$12 million payment to Taylor’s family that ended a wrongful death lawsuit.

Garland also mentioned some reforms the city has undergone since Taylor’s death, including a city law banning the use of “no-knock” warrants in 2020. The warrants are typically used in surprise drug raids. The city also started a pilot program

that aims to send behavioral health professionals to some 911 calls, expanded community violence prevention efforts and sought to support health and wellness for officers, the report said.

Also Wednesday, the Justice Department announced it will review the Memphis Police Department policies on the use of force, de-escalation strategies and specialized units in response to the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols during an arrest. The 29-year-old motorist died Jan. 10, three days after his violent arrest.

LOUISVILLE MAYOR CRAIG GREENBERG, right, speaks during a press conference at Louisville Metro Hall in Louisville, Ky., Wednesday, March 8, 2023. The U.S. Justice Department has found Louisville police have engaged in a pattern of violating constitutional rights following an investigation prompted by the fatal police shooting of Breonna Taylor. Rear left is U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland. PHOTO AP PHOTO/TIMOTHY D. EASLEY




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