The Oklahoma Eagle

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THE OK EAGLE.COM | "WE MAKE AMERICA GREAT, WHEN WE AID OUR PEOPLE" | SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

5,320 weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre

NAOMI HOOKER CHAMBERLAIN was 3 years old when her family's home on Independence Street and business at 123 N. Greenwood Avenue were destroyed by the white mob.

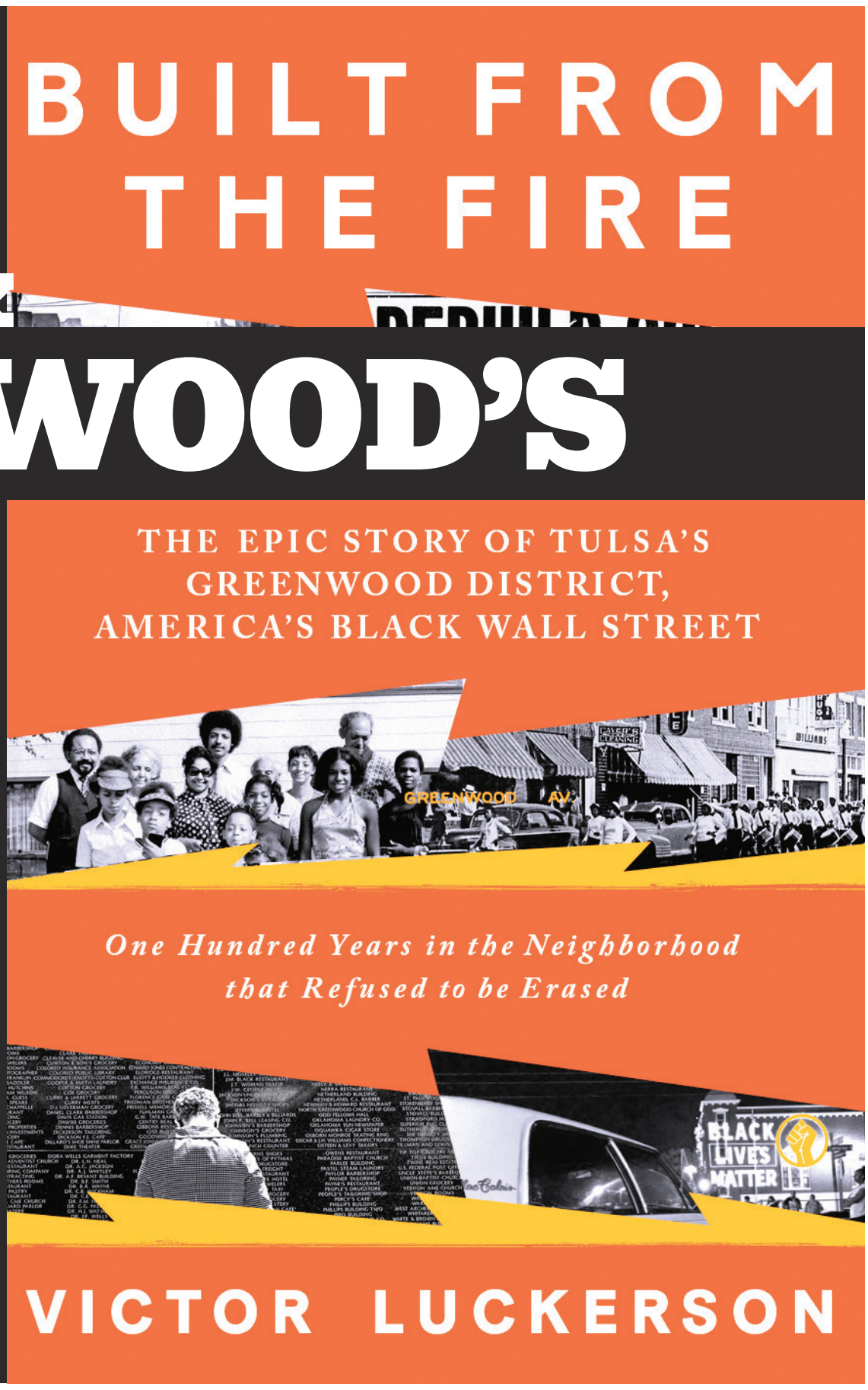
It's long overdue for the criminals who destroyed the Greenwood community in 1921 to be held accountable. Each week we remember a departed member of our community.

BLACK WALL STREET & GREENWOOD'S EPIC STORY

Luckerson, An Award-Winning Eagle Contributor, Pens Sweeping Book on Black Wall Street

By **M. David Goodwin**, The Oklahoma Eagle

BUILT FROM THE FIRE *On* A2



LOCAL

TPS BOARD MAKES HISTORY BY APPOINTING DIAMOND MARSHALL TO FILL DIST. 2 SEAT

By **John Neal**

TULSA – For the first time in its history, the Tulsa Public School's Board of Education will have three African American members after they appointed community activist and educator Diamond Marshall as the new District 2 representative for Tulsa's Northside schools. **TPS BOARD APPOINTMENT** *On* A8

STATE

DEBT, FINANCES LEAVE LEGISLATURE 'CONCERNED' ABOUT OU HEALTH PROBLEMS

By **Tre Savage**, NonDoc

A massive $1 billion debt load and another bond downgrade have combined with pandemic-related revenue loss and higher staff salaries to create a precarious financial position for OU Health, the state-supported hospital enterprise that partners with **OU HEALTH PROBLEMS** *On* A9

NATION

1ST BLACK VEGAS OFFICER ROLE MODEL 'FOR PEOPLE OF ANY COLOR'

By **Rio Yamat** , Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas was still heavily segregated in 1946 when Herman Moody became the city's first Black police officer. He served for more than three decades in the role, continuing to mentor officers long after he retired in 1977. **BLACK VEGAS OFFICER** *On* A13

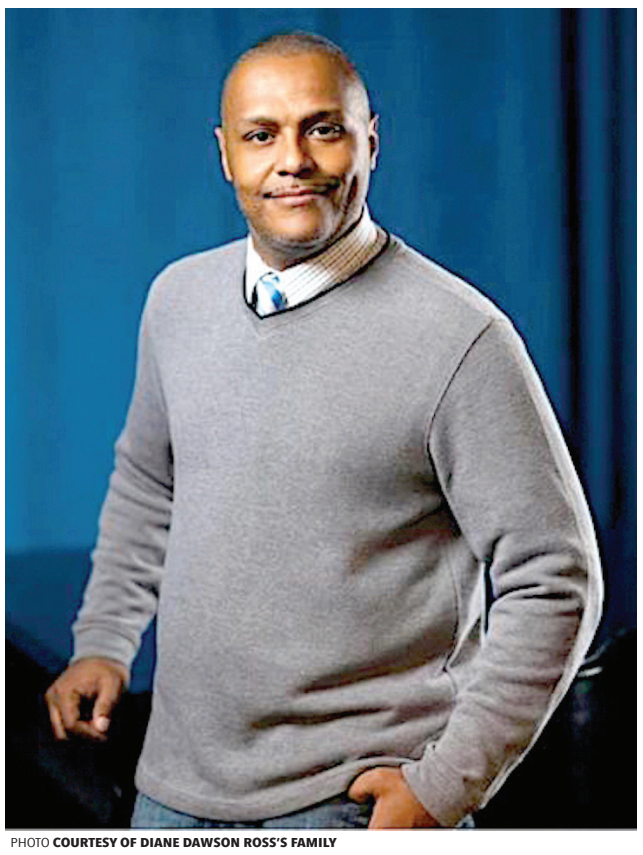


PHOTO **COURTESY OF DIANE DAWSON ROSS'S FAMILY**

STATE

NEW PROGRAM TO PROVIDE LEGAL TRAINING FOR TULSA, OKC STUDENTS

By **Gary Lee,** The Oklahoma Eagle

TULSA – A newly created nonprofit, the Neal Center for Justice, Inc., is set to launch a legal studies program this summer geared to encourage Black and Brown high school students in Tulsa and Oklahoma City to pursue legal careers.

The initiative has been made possible by a $250,000 grant to the Neal Center from a native Oklahoma recording artist. The donor asked to remain anonymous, Neal said.

The program is designed to encourage knowledge of the law in general and the legal system, as well as provide legal **STUDENT LEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM** On A8

STATE

IN THE WAKE OF SCHOOL CHOICE FINANCIAL SCANDALS, LEGISLATURE PURSUES TAX CREDITS OVER VOUCHERS

By **Jennifer Palmer**, Oklahoma Watch

Financial scandals at a pandemic relief voucher program and an online charter school demonstrated the risks of directly handing parents state dollars to educate their children. **SCHOOL VOUCHERS** On A11

STATE

In OKC and Tulsa, A Small Project to Address Panhandling is Working – Too Well

By **Ari Fife,** Oklahoma Watch

Max Murphy tries to be in line by 7 a.m., waiting for a green van carrying the promise of a day's work and a $65 paycheck.

As a bonus, those who make it onto the van gain assistance with housing and finding a permanent job, things Murphy, 38, has lacked since arriving from Los Angeles to meet family about a year ago. **PANHANDLING** On A12

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VICTOR LUCKERSON WITH CHILDHOOD FRIEND CHEIKH ROBERTSON visiting in Atlanta, Georgia in 2017. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

BUILT FROM THE FIRE from A1

TULSA — Victor Luckerson was having lunch with his high school friend Cheikh Robertson on the rooftop patio at Republic Social House in the trendy Grant Park neighborhood just southwest of Atlanta's downtown.

It was October of 2017.

As their conversations often go, they coursed through the recent elections and ongoing race relations that inevitably led them to confront a topic of shared interest and concern: What is our role to uncover a full and vivid history of Black Americans?

As he is apt to steer, Luckerson — who had been writing articles about the intersection of technology with culture and politics for the sports and pop culture digital publication The Ringer— asked if Robertson had seen either the 2016 acclaimed film "The Birth of a Nation" or the 2013 Academy Award winning film "12 Years a Slave."

'No. I didn't want to," Robertson replied. "…No matter how good these movies are, [slavery] wasn't something that I wanted to celebrate or watch again."

He asked Luckerson, "why don't we have more stories of modern Black excellence and achievement and victory in this country? Something that might close that gap and answer that question that we have today all the time, which is, 'why do we feel like we're going backwards? Or why has nothing really changed?'"

'Modern Black Excellence'

Luckerson was living in one of Atlanta's oldest historical districts that was mixed with Victorian era mansions, small cottages and trendy restaurants anchored by the city's oldest — and integrated — resting place, Oakland Cemetery. He relocated to Atlanta after transitioning as a business reporter for Time magazine in New York City.

Robertson was reconnecting with his classmate from the famed Loveless Academic Magnet Program High School in Montgomery, Alabama, ranked as the state's — and one of the nation's — top public school. He was driving through Atlanta on his way to Miami, where he had just opened his own management and marketing company.

Luckerson followed up with what ultimately would be a lifechanging question.

"He asked me if I'd ever heard of Tulsa and Black Wall Street," Robertson said. "I had heard the term 'Black Wall Street,' but honestly, I didn't even know if it was a true story.

"So, he told me what he knew about it, and I just felt like this was the type of story

"Built from the Fire demonstrates how wealth is stripped away from black families whether at the hands of lawless white citizens, law enforcement personnel, or elected officials. It is also the story of black hope and the belief in the possibility of a brighter tomorrow"

Dorothy A. Brown, author of "The Whiteness of Wealth"

— the missing link — that I would really want to hear about; not just as an isolated case. But as a template for how this country developed after slavery and civil rights and up through the present."

Within days, Luckerson began researching about the history of Black Wall Street and its "level of Black economic success and self-determination that had never existed before in the United States," until it became a reality for the people of Greenwood.

He also learned more about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the destruction of the economically thriving Greenwood at the hands of Tulsa's white people — a bloodthirsty, murderous mob that included some of the city's leading citizens, regular folks, Klu Klux Klan members, armed militia, law enforcement, the state National Guard and even adolescent children.

That conversation with Robertson encouraged Luckerson to write "Black Wall Street: The African American Haven That Burned and Then Rose From the Ashes," for The Ringer on June 28, 2018.

"Before its burning, Greenwood Avenue had been lined with hotels, restaurants, furriers, and even an early taxi service using a Ford Model T," Luckerson wrote in The Ringer. "Nearly 200 businesses populated the 35-square-block district in all, as did some homes as stately as the ones owned by upper-class whites in the city."

The Exception Rather Than The Norm

After his article for The Ringer, Luckerson said he felt there was more of the Greenwood story that needed to be told, notwithstanding that some 30 books have already been written about the Race Massacre.

He learned of the resilience of the Goodwin family, who have remained committed to stay in Greenwood — through four generations and counting — and help continue to fight for its future. Outside of owning The Oklahoma Eagle, which has documented the lives of Black Tulsans since 1922, Luckerson said their family story has remained largely untold.

"Much of the national fascination with Greenwood is centered on

Black Wall Street and this idealized version of Black success," he said. "I wanted to follow one family that epitomized that and see how that success came to be."

After finding a book agent, Elias Altman at Massie & McQuilkin Literary Agency, Luckerson's 90-page book proposal was shopped around to every major publishing house in New York City. It was the spring of 2019, and many publishers asked if he could finish his book to coincide with the 100th commemoration of the massacre. He said he wanted to delay his book until after the Race Massacre commemoration so he could have the time to compile a full and accurate account of Greenwood's entire history. He also wondered whether his work would get lost among the more than two dozen books that would eventually be published in 2021 about Greenwood and the Race Massacre.

"My entry point to this story was not actually the massacre itself, but the ingenuity, solidarity, and entrepreneurship of the people who've called the place home for generations," Luckerson, 33, said. "I wanted to explore their legacies in full — the massacre is part of that, but it is not all-defining. Greenwood deserves to be a permanent fixture in the nation's understanding of our collective history, not just a 'trending topic.'"

Penguin Random House and senior editor Molly Turpin agreed to provide Luckerson the extra time he requested to complete his first book.

A Book Arrives

After moving to Tulsa in 2019, Luckerson spent time learning and researching how, in his words, "Greenwood residents fended off every obstacle white Tulsa threw in their way in the ensuing decades, from blatant job discrimination during World War II to the roiling conflicts of the Civil Rights Movement to the quieter, devastating destruction of urban renewal," to keep alive a legacy of hope and rebirth.

On May 23, Luckerson's book, "Built From The Fire: The Epic Story Of Tulsa's Greenwood District, America's Black Wall Street," will be released. There are book signing events and lectures scheduled during the week of May 21 in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, and later in Atlanta, Georgia, Birmingham, Alabama and New York City.

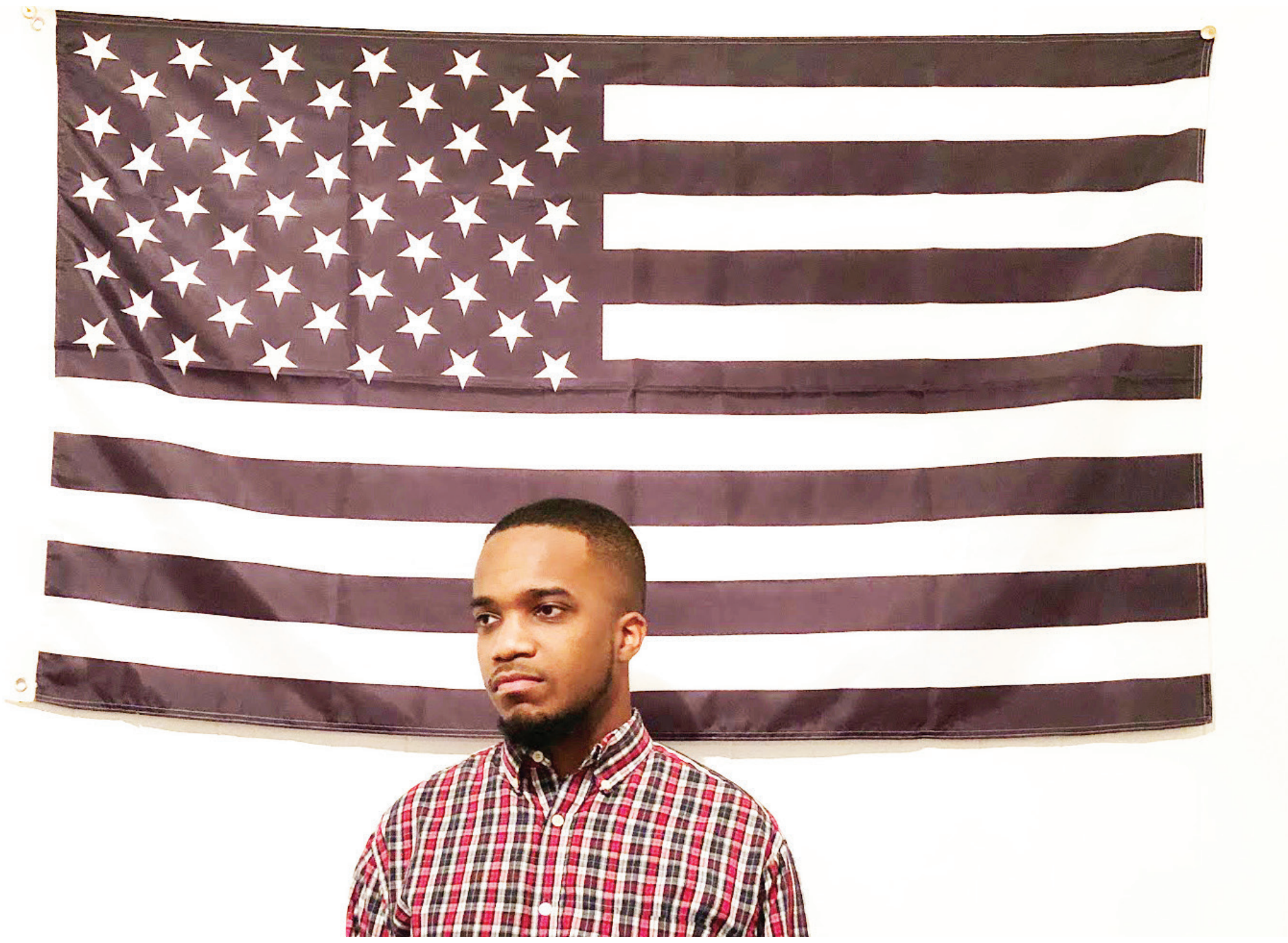
"I've been blown away by the care he shows for his subjects," Turpin, his editor, noted in a letter to readers. "Victor imbues 'Built From the Fire' with a thoughtfulness about what the role of a journalist is to a community, what they take away and what they give back, and his committed engagement with Greenwood is apparent on every page of the book."

Luckerson said he not only provides "a full accounting of the massacre, but the book unearths lesser known history in Greenwood: its proud history of Black aviators; the battle by the Eagle to secure jobs for Black factory workers during World War II; the infamous 'numbers game' and the turf wars to control illegal gambling in the 1930s; the 1960s protests against Jim Crow segregation; the 1970s Freedom School movement to save Carver Junior High; and, for the first time, a thorough accounting of the impacts that urban renewal and the construction of the Crosstown Expressway/Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Expressway had on the neighborhood."

While Luckerson said the Goodwin family's saga comprises about a third of the book, it "is not just a family biography. It's a community chronicle that pulls in perspectives from more than 100 North Tulsa and Greenwood residents, both living and departed."

He worked with the descendants of the Stradford Hotel owner J.B. Stradford, Dreamland Theater founder Loula Williams and "Events of the Tulsa Disaster" author Mary Jones Parrish, who was the first to publish a book on eyewitness accounts of the Race Massacre in 1922, to tell their stories.

BUILT FROM THE FIRE continued on A3



(TOP) **VICTOR LUCKERSON** has lived in Tulsa since 2019 to work on his first book. PHOTO **CONTRIBUTED** (BOTTOM) **VICTOR LUCKERSON** interviewing Tulsa and Greenwood residents for his book, "Built from The Fire". PHOTO **CONTRIBUTED**

"A vital book *an ambitious chronicle of a racially motivated atrocity that still resonates today.*"

Kirkus Reviews

BUILT FROM THE FIRE from A2

Fighting Today's Battles

On contemporary issues, he chronicles the efforts of current Greenwood activists and community leaders as they fight for criminal justice reform, Black business opportunities and reparations from the Race Massacre. He includes on-the-ground reporting of recent pivotal moments in Tulsa history, such as the protests following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the June 2020 visit by President Donald Trump, and the historic visit by President Joe Biden for the 100th commemoration of the Tulsa Race Massacre in 2021.

The book also looks at the work of Dr. Tiffany Crutcher, who was thrust into the national spotlight following the shooting death of her twin brother Terence, who was killed by then-Tulsa police Officer Betty Shelby while holding his hands in the air.

He examines the legal crusade being waged by Tulsa lawyer Damario Solomon-Simmons on behalf of the last three survivors of the Tulsa Race Massacre — Lessie Benningfield Randle, 108; Viola Fletcher, 108; and Hughes Van Ellis Sr., 102.

Luckerson also documents the tireless – and sometimes frustrating – efforts of Oklahoma State Rep. Regina Goodwin as she fights to advance legislation that spans the political spectrum of issues, confronting criminal justice reform, championing voting rights and issues related to the Tulsa Race Massacre. Goodwin's commitment to the legacy of Tulsa also includes a longstanding support for the last three survivors, college scholarships for descendants and the proposal to remove a 1-mile stretch of the Crosstown Expressway that decimated the Greenwood community in 1967.

"On a more macro scale, the Goodwin family is always strategizing about how to outflank the racist power structures they and their community are up against," Luckerson said. "I wanted to illustrate some of the blueprints they pioneered that we can use today for collective action — whether it's pressuring corporations to do right by workers or partnering with people in your community to reject land grab schemes that are not in your interest. The Goodwin family and their neighbors were at the center of many of these efforts across an entire century. That's worthy of study and worthy of preservation."

City At A Racial Crossroads

Attorney and Eagle publisher James O. Goodwin, who remains one of the most consequential voices and protectors of Greenwood's legacy and future, said the depth of Luckerson's work "put flesh on the bones of historical facts."

As Luckerson researched his book in Tulsa, he continued to write about its history for Time, Smithsonian and The New Yorker magazines. He also became a award-winning writer for the Eagle.

He credits the efforts of many people, including Tulsans and its institutions, for helping him tell the stories of Black families who define the Greenwood spirit of perseverance. He also noted the incredible work completed by his cousin, Stanley Stoutamire Jr., who was 13 when he became Luckerson's research assistant. Now 18, Stanley spent nearly five years reading decades of Eagle editions, reviewing every lawsuit filed by Race Massacre survivors against insurance companies and analyzing land records to help Luckerson's chapter on redlining in Tulsa.

"Black history has to have some sort of message that can't just be: slavery ended, then Rosa Parks got kicked off the bus, then Martin Luther King had a dream, and then everyone was happy," Stanley told Luckerson for his blog, Run It Back. "There's a missing piece of the story of America. And it's not actually missing. It's been locked up in a cabinet so that way, the picture looks nicer. This puzzle that is America can't be complete, until that missing piece of Black history is added."

Pre-orders for "Built From the Fire" are available nowatlocal bookstores Fulton Street Books, Magic City Books, and Barnes & Noble, or online at Amazon.com and Bookshop.org

Luckerson said his time in Tulsa revealed that the city remains at a crossroads regarding race relations. Controversy swirls around the ownership of Greenwood's last remaining open property, the locations of mass graves and a century-old broken promise to help restore Greenwood.

"Tulsa is a very divided and factional city, though it has a veneer as a kind of progressive or too-busy-to-hate bastion in a very conservative state," he said. "I wanted to explore these fissures in the modern section of the book, which can hopefully open up some more honest conversations in public about how this city operates and who should be in control of the physical space in Greenwood."

Learning the stories of people directly impacted by the Tulsa Race Massacre and their ongoing fight for reparations, Luckerson forged a personal connection.

"I feel the weight of that obfuscation and lack of acknowledgment when I talk to massacre survivors and descendants," he said. "It's personal and it's painful, and the city, the state, and the nation have yet to do anything substantive to address that."

As Robertson reflects on his conversation with Luckerson in 2017, he hopes his friend's book will be valued as a tribute to more than the Greenwood community.

"To see this go from our casual conversation to this full-fledged book, published by one of the largest publishers in the world… is incredible," Robertson said. "I have no doubt it will have an impact and make a lasting impression for people."

Melvin Beaunorus Tolson

By **G. Matthew Jenkins,** The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture

A poet, a professor, and an essayist, Melvin B. Tolson liked to tell people that he was born in Moberly, Missouri, in 1900 to Rev. Alonzo and Lera Ann Hurt Tolson.

Nevertheless, convincing evidence has surfaced that 1898 was a more accurate date. What is clear, however, is that Tolson lived longer continuously in Oklahoma than anywhere else in his life, from 1947 until his death on August 26, 1966. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1923 from Lincoln College in Pennsylvania and teaching for nearly two decades at Wiley College in Texas, he taught English and drama at Langston University, in Langston, Oklahoma, from 1947 through 1964. He even served four terms as mayor of the town of Langston. He received a master's degree from Columbia University in 1940.

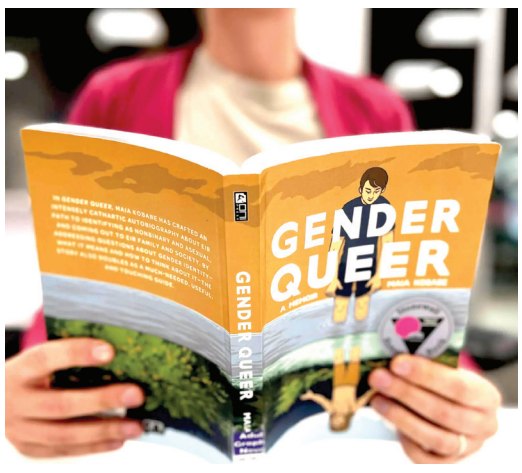
Tolson is one of the most important and distinguished of America's poets, having written three major, book-length works of poetry for which he is most famous: Rendezvous with America (1944), Libretto for the Republic of Liberia (1953), and Harlem Gallery (1965). In 1947 he was appointed Poet Laureate of the African nation of Liberia, for which he wrote his Libretto, and later garnered the poetry award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1965. He is notable for being one of the first African American poets to adopt the Modernist style of fragmentation, allusion, and condensation akin to that of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, though Tolson adamantly distanced himself from both of them because of their right-wing politics. Furthermore, he argued that such techniques have as much of an African heritage as they did European. In a journal he wrote tellingly that "poetry is the art of complicating," and his work seeks not only to complicate the views of a segregated America towards the black man but also to challenge the black man's version of himself. He wanted to open the so-called black experience to show its ineffable complexity; thus, his work has an epic and profound ethical bent. His papers are now housed in the Library of Congress.

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.

MELVIN TOLSON, 2012.201.B1177.0016, Photo 2012.201.B1289.1.0263, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS.

Featured Last Week

Black Tulsans Continue To Struggle At An Alarming Rate



Ed Dept Moves to Revoke Credentials of Teacher

'A Lady In Our World': Diane Dawson Ross: 1942-2023

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PHOTOS ADOBE STOCK

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

By Christina Greer, Word In Black

As we learn more about the amazing women who have run for office or started businesses or helped their communities, let's not forget to look closely at the amazing women who may be in our own homes.

March is Women's History Month. I don't know about anyone else who is reading this column, but this past Black History Month was a doozy. I felt like, in the words of my late grandmother, "People really showed their tails!" I'm hoping March will be filled with less nonsense and more focus on inclusivity and the myriad of ways women have been trailblazers in almost every facet of our lives.

I often think about the link between February and Black History Month with March and Women's History Month. I like to make a concerted effort to recognize the multitudes of Black women, past and present, who have changed my life and the world for the better. Making this list is so easy because I am blessed to be able to start with my mother, Gloria McCray Greer.

My mother has been, and luckily for me continues to be, the embodiment of a trailblazer and innovator. I think of her humble beginnings in Florida, which instilled in me the foundation of hard work and a love of nature. I think of her still sewing on the sewing machine she received for her Sweet 16 to make everything from prom dresses to curtains to now making sanitary goods for girls on the continent of Africa, which has instilled in me a creative spirit and a desire to make things with my hands and share my creative talents with others.

Most importantly, my mother is a connector and a friend. When I think of the power of women, I think of a collective. I think of deep bonds that withstand circumstance and time. I think of women coming together to lift one another up in the face of tremendous odds. I think of women sharing secrets, telling their stories, and living their truths, knowing they are surrounded by their sisters who will accept them and help serve as a foundation for them, through good times and bad. My mother has modeled the gift of friendship to me and my sister through the years and because of that, I have a collection of "aunties" who have served as an additional source of strength, guidance, mentorship, and love.

As we learn more about the amazing women who have run for office or started businesses or helped their communities, let's not forget to look closely at the amazing women who may be in our own homes…or cleaning our homes. I am so blessed to be surrounded by incredible Black women in my life, and I know it is because that sense of pride and comfort with talented and caring women began in my home. Happy Women's History Month. May you see the women in your life in the light they deserve.

CHRISTINA GREER, PH.D. is an Associate professor at Fordham University, the author of "Black Ethnics: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream", and the co-host of the podcast FAQ-NYC and host of The Blackest Questions podcast at TheGrio.

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle: March 24 and 31, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. 144863-S & TMUA-W 17-10

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 21st day of April, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 144863-S & TMUA-W 17-10 NON-ARTERIAL STREET REHABILITATION MAINTENANCE ZONE 8063 S

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 144863.Streets.NArtRhb.4275.42753122-541106; 144863.Streets.5453104.6331.42733122-541106; 2231W000014.WaterDist.Water.7400.74003122-541101

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 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/

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 21st day of April 2023.

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

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle: March 24 and 31, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. 144421, TMUA-W 16-15

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 21st day of April, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 144421, TMUA-W 16-15 NON-ARTERIAL STREET REHABILITATION AND WATER LINE REPLACEMENT IN MAINTENANCE ZONE 4021

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 144421. Streets.5453104.40583122-541101

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Monday, April 3rd, 2023 at 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/

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, C 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 21st day of April 2023.

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

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

NOTICE

CLASSIFIEDS

THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY

The Oklahoma Eagle **publishes news and annoucements for churches currently listed in** ***The Oklahoma Eagle's*** **Church Directory. For information, please call our office at (918) 582-7124**

Church Of The Living God

1559 E Reading St. Tulsa OK
(918) 584-3206

Minister RJ Smith

Sunday school – 9:30am
Sunday Worship – 10:45am
Monday Worship - 6:00pm
Wednesday Bible Study – 5:00pm

GTOMi

Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.
Traveling Outreach Ministries

609 E. Zion Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Elder Julius W. Bland Sr., Pastor
918-810-3882

ALL ARE WELCOME

Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

Rudisill Regional Library
1520 N Hartford Ave.
Tulsa OK 74106
(918) 409-4899

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons

Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p – 8p

"The Righteous Are As Bold As A Lion." - Prov.28:1a

CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1962 N. Sheridan Rd.
(918) 834-4747

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard

Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

Bible Study & Prayer Wednesday 7:00 p.m.

For Transportation (918) 402-6027

MOHAWK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 11 a.m.
Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m.

Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr. Pastor

SOLID ROCK 7th DAY BAPTIST CHURCH

123 E. 59th St. North
Ph: (918) 425-2077

Pastor Rick Bruner

Sabbath School (Saturday) 9:30-10:45 a.m.
Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

"The Seventh Day Is Still God's Sabbath"

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriot 3340 S 79th E Ave Tulsa OK
(918) 230-3022

Pastors Wesley & Alfie Gray would like to invite you to come and experience the Word of God in action this Sunday!
God has a word for you,
He Guarantee's it!
You'll be glad you did!!!

Gethsemane Baptist Church

727 East 56th St. North
(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Church Services 11:00 a.m.

Northside Christ Gospel Church

3101 N. M.L King Jr. Blvd.
Tulsa OK
(918) 625-2374

Sunday School – 10 am
Sunday Morning Worship – 10:45

Sunday Evening Prayer – 7 pm
Sunday Worship – 7:30 pm
Wednesday Prayer – 7:30 pm
Wednesday worship – 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

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VERNON AME CHURCH

307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.
P: 918-587-1428
F: 918-587-0642
vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

Sunday Church School 8:30 am
Worship Service 10:00 am
Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm

Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

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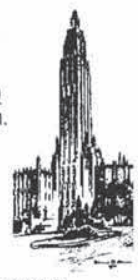
BOSTON AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1301 S. Boston
(918) 583-5181
Rev. David Wiggs
Senior Minister



Sunday Worship 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.
Sunday School 9:40 a.m.
Sunday TV Worship 11:00 a.m.

KTUL Channel 8

TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021

REV. TWAN T. JONES

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"We've come this far by faith"

NORTH PEORIA CHURCH OF CHRIST

2247 N. Peoria
Tulsa, Okla. 74106
(918) 425-1071

Warren Blakney, Minister

Sunday Bible School.....9:00 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

There's no place, like this place, anywhere near this place.

Pettie Chapel CME

19364 S. S. Mingo Road.
Bixby, 74008
Phone: (918) 366-8870

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

Church In Power

732 E. 31st North
Tulsa, OK 74106 - (918) 835-1525

Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

Service times: 9am Sundays, 7pm Wed, and **Special Supernatural Breakthrough Services** every last Friday and Saturday of every month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am
Wednesday Bible Study – 6:30 p.m.
Church Ministries: Children's Church, CIP Praise Dancers, and CIP Praise Tem.

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22

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- Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
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Mount Zion Baptist Church

419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma

Leroy M. Cole, Pastor

Office: 918-584-0510
Fax: 918-584-1958
Prayer Line: 918-584-PRAY
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45
Wednesday Bible Study Noon and 7:00

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THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US

Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

Sunday	Wednesday
Sunday School – 9:30 a.m.	Prayer Meeting – 6:30 p.m.
Morning Worship – 11:00 a.m.	Bible Study – Noon & 7:00 p.m.

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74103
918-582-5129
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"Come And Experience The Spirit"

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Tulsa, Okla., 74128
Phone: (918) 836-6823
Fax: (918) 836-6833

Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis,

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.

Wednesday Services	Sunday Worship
10:00 a.m. Spirit Seniors	Church School
5:30 p.m. Support Groups	9:45 a.m.
6:30 p.m. Community Dinner	Worship
7:00 p.m. Bible Study	11:00 a.m.

Ministries: Administration, Children's Church, Childen's Choir, Spirited Kids, Guest Services, Intercessors, Men's Fellowship, Outreach and much more...

"I am humbled and grateful"

-Diamond Marshall, TPS Dist. 2 board member

DIAMOND MARSHALL (LEFT) sworn in as the Tulsa School Board representative for District 2 . PHOTO TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TPS DISTRICT 2.
BOARD MEMBER

DIAMOND MARSHALL

TPS BOARD APPOINTMENT from A1

Marshall, an Afro-Latina, garnered the seat with the help of over a half dozen public speakers voicing their support for her to the Board of Education. By electing Marshall, the board, in a narrow 4-2 vote on March 20, averted having to call a mandatory special election per state law that would have left the seat vacated by Barbara Perez's resignation unfilled for several more months. Instead, District 6 board member Jerry Griffin reluctantly cast the deciding vote.

"I am humbled and grateful to have been entrusted as your representative for District 2," Marshall said in a statement on her Facebook page. "This opportunity to serve would not have been possible without the collective efforts of our community, and I want to express my heartfelt thanks to each one of you.

"It is truly an honor to work alongside such passionate and dedicated individuals who are committed to making a positive impact on our district. Your trust and confidence in me are deeply appreciated, and I want to assure you that I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our community are heard and that the needs of our students, families, and staff are met," she added.

Came to Tulsa 3 years ago

Marshall moved to Tulsa in 2020 to work as an educator in the Teach for America program. She graduated in 2020 from McPherson College in Kansas, where she also competed on the track and field team. Marshall attended high school in Flower Mound, Texas. Since completing her assignment with Teach for America, Marshall has worked with the Terence Crutcher Foundation as a community advocate. She has praised Dr. Tiffany Crutcher, the CEO of the foundation, as an influential mentor.

Marshall's election marks the first time in memory that the seven-member TPS board has had three Black members. The two other Black board members are Jennettie Marshall, who represents District 3, and E'Lena Ashley, who represents District 4.

The board has been deadlocked in naming a replacement for almost two months in a series of 3-3 votes. Board members Jennettie Marshall and Ashley had expressed dissatisfaction with the process. Jennettie Marshall said the procedure had been "tainted with shifting directions, unclear milestones and out of quorum meetings" by some board members. Consequently, earlier this month the board reopened the process to new candidates. Nine of the candidates appeared on the agenda as potential occupants for the vacant seat.

Board member Griffin originally favored a special election saying he "didn't want to substitute his judgment for the voters of District 2" and denied "the suggestion that we have dragged our feet."

He maintained that position when the voting began, only to be reminded by Board President Stacey Woolley that casting a "yea" or "nay" vote for candidates was a requirement under a previously agreed process by the board.

Diamond Marshall selection

Griffin then joined board members Woolley, John Croisant and Susan Lamkin to support Diamond Marshall in breaking the impasse. Diamond Marshall, who bears no familial relationship to existing board member Jennettie Marshall, was opposed by Marshall and Ashley. They cast votes in favor of candidate KanDee N. Washington. But Diamond Marshall was the only candidate to receive a majority of the votes. She was sworn into the seat immediately following the vote.

Marshall touted her two-year experience working for Teach for America and as a community organizer in her application for the position. She also listed involvement with the Terence Crutcher Foundation and several other organizations as a "community stakeholder." Multiple members of the public applauded her transparency, diligence and competence.

Nate Morris spoke of her willingness "to fight for what is good and is just," adding, "she is the will of the people you have heard from tonight."

Marshall also spoke directly to the board, asking "humbly" for their support.

District 2

District 2, which has a population of 43,000, is the most diverse in the Tulsa Public School district and has traditionally been occupied by an African American before Perez. However, the district has had an increasing Hispanic presence over recent years. Geographically, it straddles Interstate 244/the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Expressway in Central Tulsa. The seat represents 11 schools, including Emerson Elementary, George Washington Carver Middle and Booker T. Washington High schools. Marshall will hold the seat until the spring of 2024, when a regularly scheduled board election will occur.

The school board had 60 days from the resignation of Perez to fill the seat before state law required them to call an election. The earliest that the election could have been held was June 13th.

If a runoff were needed, that would take place in September. At every meeting over the last two months, District 2 residents voiced opposition to a lengthy delay and urged the board to fill the vacancy as soon as possible.

A pathway for students to pursue legal careers

LEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM from A1

training for students who are members of a demographic that has historically been disenfranchised by the justice system, C.J. Webber-Neal, president of the Oklahoma City-based Neal Center explained in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle.

Webber-Neal, a longtime Eagle contributor, said that his nonprofit hopes to provide a stepping stone for those youth interested in someday pursuing a career in the legal system. Students who complete the coursework will be provided a legal assistant certification.

Overall, the program strives to increase minority enrollment in law courses that lead to degrees in law-related fields and increase the number of minority students graduating from law schools. The Neal Center for Justice will also conduct community workshops to provide knowledge of the legal system to those who may not understand it or even fear it due to prior experiences within the courts.

"There is a lot of talk about the need for Justice," Neal told the Eagle. "But in many cases, people don't know the laws. We see this to start informing people about the ins and outs of the legal system."

The program also will provide scholarships to law schools for students who complete the program. Scholarships will be provided for high school seniors who have declared their college major to be around the law or a field related to the legal system. So far, scholarships in the names of Oklahoma native and noted law professor Anita F. Hill, former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and Eagle publisher and prominent attorney James O. Goodwin are planned, Neal said. Hill, a native Long Tree, Oklahoma, is a law professor at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, and has written a New York Times bestseller, "Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey To End Gender Violence."

The program is particularly crucial for Oklahoma, Neal explained. The state has the highest incarceration rate of men and women nationwide per capita. It is among the highest incarceration rates in the world.

The rate increases dramatically for the incarceration of minorities and low-income persons. Many of them are represented by public defenders or indigent legal counsel.

The classes will be held at convenient locations in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. They are set to begin in August 2023, and applicants may begin signing up for the program over the summer. The classes will be largely cost-free, but there may be some minor charges.

For more information

For more information about the programs being offered and student enrollment, contact the Neal Center for Justice, INC. at (405) 423-7167 or email nealcenterforjustice@yahoo.com.

OU CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, operated by OU Health, in northeast Oklahoma City. PHOTO **TRES SAVAGE**

"This *is a state asset. It's not like an ordinary hospital*"

- OU President Joe Harroz

OU HEALTH PROBLEMS from A1

the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and the OU College of Medicine to operate a fully integrated academic health system.

Created following a controversial 2021 merger and the $850 million 2018 buyout of a private hospital management company, OU Health operates the flagship enterprises of the OU hospital system, including the Oklahoma Medical Center, the Children's Hospital, the Stephenson Cancer Center, the Harold Hamm Diabetes Center and the Edmond Medical Center. OU Health also includes the state's only Level 1 trauma center.

Although the conflation of state and private resources and governing boards can be exceptionally confusing, state leaders uniformly view the OU Health enterprise as too important to fail — an incomparable intersection of Oklahoma's highest-quality health care services, its largest medical education system, and the state's social safety net.

"This is a state asset. It's not like an ordinary hospital. It provides care that is not available anywhere else," said OU President Joe Harroz, who also serves on the private OU Health governance board. "I think we're going to find a path. Here's the thing: We have to for the sake of our state, and we will."

While OU Health officials declined to be interviewed for this story, leaders of the Oklahoma Legislature have acknowledged their concern about the health system's financial picture, which includes a mountain of bond debt, covenant breach risks, a quiet loan from the OU Foundation, and a new operating plan for 2023. Vaguely described in press releases and public meetings, that plan involves staff reductions, increased patient quotas and other efforts to save and raise money.

The situation has stressed university officials, generating long hours of private meetings and delicate relations with legislative leaders, who have requested direct updates about OU Health's plan to avoid bond defaults and build 45 days of operational cash onto the balance sheet.

In late January, House Speaker Charles McCall said OU Health is facing "real challenges" and may ultimately request additional financial assistance from the Legislature.

"It seems like that would be a logical assumption," said McCall (R-Atoka). "[We are] going to want to know that OU has taken the necessary steps to right-size the situation, know how they are going to address their debt obligations and present a plan to the Legislature before the Legislature is going to consider that."

Budget chairman: 'Nobody likes surprises'

Whether lawmakers will need to appropriate millions of additional dollars through the University Hospitals Authority and Trust to support OU Health remains to be seen, but legislative budget leaders want a clear idea sooner than later.

"Nobody likes surprises. They assured me that they had a plan. They showed me the plan [in December] and by the beginning of the fiscal year July 1 they should be where they need to be on the daily cash on hand for days of operation — over 45 (days)," said House Appropriations and Budget Committee Chairman Kevin Wallace (R-Wellston).

Wallace said OU Health's problems stem from a "perfect storm" and "terrible timing," wherein the $825 million buyout of a private hospital operating company was compounded two years later by the pandemic-related economic disruption that hit American hospitals in 2020.

Months after hiring Dr. Richard Lofgren as CEO in February 2022, OU Health took out $150 million of additional obligations in an effort to improve liquidity, make operational investments and rectify the organization's capitalization concern.

OU Health operates the flagship enterprises of the OU hospital system, includingthe Oklahoma Medical Center, the Children's Hospital, the Stephenson Cancer Center, the Harold Hamm Diabetes Center and the Edmond Medical Center.

But with debt repayments and sagging revenues challenging OU Health's balance sheet, the organization ended 2022 by laying off about 100 employees and setting new patient-load obligations for physicians who teach at the OU College of Medicine.

As the state's new fiscal year approaches July 1, OU's Health challenges have spurred other creative conversations about financial options.

"From what I understand, there have been conversations with the Health Care Authority about bailing them out. And I sent the word, 'Do not do that,'" Wallace said. "If that's going to happen, they need to come here. We need to run legislation and direct those funds to be utilized that way by the Legislature, not the secretary of health."

Underscoring the complicated relationships among state, private and quasi-government health care entities that operate on the hospital complex south of the State Capitol, Health Care Authority executive director Kevin Corbett is also Gov. Kevin Stitt's Cabinet secretary of health, and he holds a seat on the five-member governing boards of the University Hospitals Authority and Trust.

Gary Raskob, who is employed as the interim senior vice president and provost for the OU Health Sciences Center, also serves on the UHAT boards, which oversee some funding that benefits OUHSC.

With 'junk' rating, OU Health carrying more than $1 billion in debt

OU Health ended its 2022 fiscal year carrying at least $1.3 billion in debt, according to a December report from the bond rating agency Moody's, which downgraded OU Health's rating to Ba3, a level generally considered "junk" or below investment grade. Bond rating downgrades make it more difficult and expensive to borrow additional money.

Moody's said the December downgrade "reflects the likelihood that [OU Health's] cashflow will continue to be well below historical levels and expectations, which will contribute to further declines in an already weak liquidity position and increase the risk of a covenant breach," a violation of lender-borrower agreements that can carry legal, compensatory or bond-rating ramifications.

Moody's forecasted a "negative" outlook for existing OU Health bonds, which "reflects risks that cashflow in fiscal year 2023 will be materially less than budget and the system will require sizable external financing assistance."

Senate Appropriations and Budget Committee Chairman Roger Thompson said the situation bears watching.

"I'm concerned about it. I'm not alarmed, but I'm concerned," Thompson (R-Okemah) said in January. "I have met with them. I will continue to meet with them. I feel confident in their plan moving forward that they're going to pull out of this. But to say that it is not concerning is not an accurate statement."

Wallace said that between January and March, UHAT revised its official budget request for FY 2024, which had originally included only $7.5 million of new funding. Now, UHAT's request is for $23.7 million in new appropriations.

OU Health officials have said little about their requests and goals, declining to be interviewed about the critical state hospital system's finances and business plans.

But during an OU Board of Regents on Tuesday, new board Chairwoman Natalie Shirley said regents discussed OU Health problems during a private committee meeting and executive session. Shirley had been the regents' designated appointee on the private OU Health board since January, but regent Bob Ross will now fill that role.

"As we have advised this board and the public before, there are certainly issues that OU Health is working through, but they have a tremendous team in place that I know will address

OU HEALTH PROBLEMS continued on A10

IF THE OU HEALTH SITUATION SOUNDS *Dire* *in the short-term, that's because it is.*

HOLLYE HUNT, left, OU's enterprise-wide executive director of governmental affairs, speaks with legislative budget chairmen Rep. Kevin Wallace (R-Wellston) and Sen. Roger Thompson (R-Okemah) on Tuesday, May 11, 2021. (PHOTO **TRES SAVAGE**

OU HEALTH PROBLEMS from A9

the financial and organizational issues that are presented to them," Shirley said in the public meeting.

In January, Thompson said he and OU Health leaders had not discussed additional state funding through the University Hospitals Authority and Trust.

Thompson said he must "understand all the numbers" and that his next meeting with OU Health officials will let him "sit down and go over the entirety of their books."

The "numbers" on OU Health's ledger are not entirely clear, but three major debt instruments have been publicly chronicled:

A 2018 bond series ultimately totaling $1.16 billion that featured initial use estimates of up to $30 million for proton beam equipment, up to $400 million for hospital tower construction and up to $825 million for the buyout of HCA Healthcare, a prominent hospital-management company that had operated the OU hospital system since the late 1990s;

A 2022 bonded loan for $50 million from Bank of America Public Capital Corporation that is secured by equipment owned by OU Health;

A 2022 bond series totaling $100 million that is backed by the revenues of OU Health.

Additionally, an official with the OU Foundation recently confirmed to NonDoc that OU Health took out a loan from the university's private fundraising arm sometime around the 2018 buyout of HCA Healthcare. Another official with knowledge of the situation also confirmed that the loan exists.

However, no one with OU, OU Health, OU Foundation or UHAT has been willing to provide details about the debt OU Health owes to the OU Foundation. As a result, it is unclear whether OU Health has met all of its payment obligations on that debt in recent years.

Wallace, the House budget chairman, said he has never heard of OU Health's loan from the OU Foundation.

"I'm not aware of their contractual agreements," Wallace said.

The Oklahoma Development Finance Authority, which has acted as a conduit for issuance of OU Health bond debt, provided a breakdown of OU Health's repayment obligations for the $1.3 billion in bonds over the coming years:

'We have some challenges in front of us'

If the OU Health situation sounds particularly dire in the short-term, that's because it is, at least according to the public officials interviewed for this story.

"I'm confident we have an excellent team in place, but it's going to take a while," OU Board of Regents member Frank Keating said in January while he was still chairman. "Obviously, the financial challenges are very real. The new leadership and the new structure needs to work, and I'm confident that is the case. We've gone out — certainly Joe Harroz has gone out — to find the best and the brightest for the purpose of providing these kinds of needs."

"Hospitals have not rallied from the financial losses due to the pandemic even with federal assistance in surges one and two."

- Patti Davis, president of the Oklahoma Hospital Association

Harroz said the 2018 buyout of HCA Healthcare was intended to allow OU to control its own destiny and long-term investments regarding the health system, and he said the reconfiguration of health administrators "was absolutely critical to have the modern kind of structure that can be successful."

"There was not a way for OU Health to be successful the way it was structured. It was an anachronistic structure. It's not how — not just academic health systems — but how any health system can really function. It was broken up. OU was in charge of the ambulatory piece, and the hospital had the piece over there. You had department chairs that were running their piece," Harroz said. "You had basically four co-CEOs and multiple boards, and you can't run an efficient operation and you can't deliver — more importantly — patient care in a way that is efficient."

On Jan. 17, OU Health CEO Dr. Richard Lofgren outlined those efficiencies and briefly discussed the organization's challenges during a 30-minute presentation to the Downtown OKC Rotary Club 29. Lofgren, who came to Oklahoma from UC Health in Cincinnati, said he was "well aware of the headwinds within the organization" when he took his new job.

"Coming into the pandemic as a start up (…) we didn't have a particularly strong balance sheet to start that. So we do recognize that we have some challenges in front of us," Lofgren said. "But I will tell you and leave you with the fact that I am incredibly optimistic. Optimistic about health care, optimistic about OU Health in particular. And why am I? It's because of the mission. It's because what we do matters."

To that end, Lofgren noted a few vital statistics of the OU Health enterprise:

- More than 1,000 credentialed providers;
- About 600 residents in training;
- Community access to 74 subspecialties of care;
- About 6,700 Oklahomans transferred to OU Health each year for specialized services;
- About 575 ongoing clinical trials.

"We need to be at the forefront of really addressing the issues of health disparities," Lofgren said.

But Lofgren emphasized that the 2018 buyout of HCA was followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has strained the nation's entire health care system. He noted that even the largest health care enterprises, such as Massachusetts General Hospital and the Cleveland Clinic, reported significant financial loses in 2022.

"The biggest issue we have facing us is really around inflation," he said. "Our labor costs are up. Our supply costs are up in our institutions anywhere between 5 and 15 percent. We have a whole host of staffing issues as well. (…) There is a significant shortage."

He said the hospital industry as a whole lacks "price elasticity," which limits the ability to increase revenue through patient care.

"Apparently my suppliers can increase the prices, but I don't actually have the luxury to do the same. Now, to be honest, looking at this audience alike, most of you all, you think we're overpaid. Health care is already pretty expensive. We don't really have an ability to pass that along," Lofgren said. "Despite how expensive (…) and how big we are, we're an industry that operates on pretty thin margins. So that this increase in the supply and labor costs and an inability to move our prices really does make it very challenging for all of us."

Patti Davis, president of the Oklahoma Hospital Association, said her organization has contracted with a group called Kaufman Hall to analyze the fiscal situation facing all of Oklahoma's hospitals.

"Hospitals have not rallied from the financial losses due to the pandemic even with federal assistance in surges one and two," Davis said in a statement. "Federal assistance was not available for surge three and there is no indication that additional federal funding will be coming to hospitals. In Oklahoma, nearly 74 percent of hospitals had negative operating margins in 2022."

Speaking after an OU Board of Regents meeting in January, regent Rick Nagel made similar observations about the industry.

"Everything about OU Health is getting attention, first of all because of the financial pressures that the entire system in the United States is under right now," Nagel said. "To the extent that misery loves company, there aren't really any health systems in America making any money right now. It's a combination of all the obvious stuff: labor shortages, you're not able to work with the same kind of patient load; the ones you are caring for are more expensive to treat."

Nagel noted that the OU Health operating agreement with UHAT requires two annual payments of $20 million each from OU Health to the state, for a total of $40 million per year. At the Feb. 27 UHAT board meetings, members discussed SB 330, by Senate Floor Leader Greg McCortney (R-Ada) and Rep. Marcus McEntire (R-Duncan), which would allow UHAT to increase the required payments from OU Health without legislative approval of a modified operating agreement.

"As a function of the merger, there's a contractual schedule on those payments. It's not a question to us on being worrisome today. But as we look down line, we've got inflationary pressures everywhere, including the cost of our own professors," Nagel said. "It's been publicized, we've got a lot of debt."

William W. Savage III (Tres) has served as the editor in chief of NonDoc since the publication launched in September 2015. He holds a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma and covered two sessions of the Oklahoma Legislature for eCapitol.net before working in health care for six years. He is a nationally certified Mental Health First Aid instructor.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS are seen during class on Jan. 11, 2023, at Lawton Academy for Arts and Sciences, a private school located in a warehouse district. PHOTO **WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH**

SENATE LEGISLATION: *Provides parents tax credits for private school tuition to $7,500 per child*

SCHOOL VOUCHERS from A1

Now, the Oklahoma Legislature is pursuing a tax credit plan as its main vehicle for funding private and home school students this session — which some say has more accountability baked in.

Details of the plan are still in flux. Two bills moving through the Senate — House Bill 1935 and House Bill 2775 — are the current focus. House Bill 1935 authorizes the tax credits but is contingent on approval of House Bill 2775, which funds teacher pay raises, a bonus program for top teachers and additional school funding totaling $630 million.

In Oklahoma's Bridge the Gap Digital Wallet program, parents were given voucher-like accounts for students early in the pandemic. At least $650,000 in non-educational purchases were made, according to a federal audit. Some parents who received grants for educational items purchased TVs, furniture, home appliances, Christmas trees, gaming consoles, and more. Because federal pandemic recovery funds were used, the state may have to pay it back.

Epic Charter Schools has been giving parents similar accounts, filled with a portion of each student's education funding since the school opened in 2011.

For years, what parents purchased was shielded from public view, but in 2021, auditors gained access to the bank account for the learning fund. They found the school's founders used the account to pay for personal expenses, make political campaign donations and amass millions in profit, investigators allege in court filings. The two men and their chief financial officer have been charged with financial crimes, including embezzlement.

The state auditor calls it the "largest amount of reported abuse of taxpayer funds in the history of this state" with nearly $30 million in public dollars misused.

Accountability for both appears to be improving: Epic has tightened controls on its learning fund, and the state is working to strengthen oversight of federal grants amid the Digital Wallet fallout. But the public funds lost to waste and abuse may never be recovered.

Tax credits are seen as more accountable because, in most cases, parents spend their own money first. Also, tax credits aren't an up-front cost for the state, but instead a reduction of future tax collections.

Oklahoma provides tax credits to people and businesses that donate to private school scholarships through the Equal Opportunity Scholarship program.

Versions of legislation approved by Senate committees on Monday would provide parents tax credits for private school tuition to $7,500 per child or $1,000 per family for homeschool expenses. It caps household income at $250,000 to qualify.

House Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, has steadfastly opposed private school voucher legislation because of the potential negative impact on rural communities and their schools. Lack of accountability over the funds in the Digital Wallet program is one reason he prefers the tax credit approach, according to an interview with KGOU.

"The tax credit is not the state passing out checks or money to people just because they might ask for it. There is accountability and oversight," he said. "They'll have to prove up those expenses, submit those to the Tax Commission for review before the tax credit is granted or recognized."

Infighting between leaders of the House and Senate could doom the plan or scuttle other education-related bills. McCall, who authored the two bills, said if the Senate alters the legislation, he would consider the action "sabotage" against the education plan. He warned that the House will not consider any education bills from the Senate if his bills were amended.

On Monday, the Senate challenged the threat by amending and advancing both bills. The tax credit bill was approved by Senate finance and education committees and the education funding bill was approved by education and appropriations committees.

The Senate's version increased the tax credit for private school tuition, decreased the homeschool tax credit and added the income cap. It also removed a provision that would suspend the tax credits if funding for public schools is ever reduced.

"If you get a child who is excelling in a private institution and we have a 1% revenue failure, to completely yank away that opportunity was deemed inappropriate," Treat said. Instead, in the event of a revenue failure, the current version would reduce the tax credit proportionally.

The Senate committee also amended the education funding bill, mainly by moving from an across-the-board teacher raise of $2,500 in the House version to graduated raises of $3,000 to $6,000 depending on years of service, similar to what Sen. Adam Pugh, R-Edmond, proposed.

And it added a $30 million grant program for school districts to give some teachers merit-based bonuses.

Both bills are expected to be heard on the Senate floor on Thursday. If approved, the bills will move back to the House for consideration.

Treat said he hopes McCall will put historic funding of public education and school choice ahead of those claims. "I trust he'll do the right thing," Treat said.

Thirty-one senators have signed on as co-authors of the tax credit plan, signaling broad support.

But some say the plan is still not accountable enough. Sen. Julia Kirt, D-Oklahoma City, said these tax credits would create a headache for the Oklahoma Tax Commission and there aren't enough consumer protection measures. Kirt also said the Senate's estimated cost of $100 million is likely too low; under the House version, the fiscal impact was estimated to be $300 million.

Oklahoma already provides tax credits to people and businesses that donate to private school scholarships through the Equal Opportunity Scholarship program. Lawmakers expanded the cap on that program in 2021 to $25 million for donations to private school organizations and $25 million for public school organizations.

The impact of that program to state revenue is not yet realized. Total credits awarded for 2022 are not yet available because the filing deadline hasn't passed.

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BUDGET GROWTH STALLED

For Workforce Transportation Program

MAX MURPHY stood watching a van of workers, and his hopes of a paycheck, drive away one frigid morning in December 2022. Murphy waited in the cold to try to nab a spot in A Better Way's temporary work program, which pays unemployed and homeless people to pick up trash and debris at Oklahoma City parks. That day, 14 people showed up for the 8 spots. PHOTO **WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH**

PANHANDLING from A1

But the van has only eight seats. Murphy has made it onboard only once, spending the day cleaning up city parks for pay he could split with his mother on toilet paper and other supplies food stamps don't cover.

He's stood at pickup spots throughout the city, watching as the van pulled away without him more times than he can count.

"I'm still going to try," said Murphy, who often sleeps anywhere that feels safe for the night. "It's not the end of the world. They only own so many resources, and in this case, it's one van."

A Better Way is a program operated by the Mental Health Association Oklahoma that offers work and assistance to homeless and out-of-work residents in Oklahoma's two biggest metros, both of which have introduced laws criminalizing panhandling. Though Oklahoma City and Tulsa fund the program with public dollars, Murphy's experience is not an outlier.

With only one van operating three days a week in each city, there are more people seeking A Better Way than funding and resources can support.

Case manager Trudi Islas, employment specialist Genaro Pratcher and van driver Steven Blaser make up the A Better Way team in Oklahoma City. Islas ran a sober living home in Oklahoma City before joining the Mental Health Association. Pratcher worked in mental health services for 15 years. Both say being a part of changing clients' lives is addictive.

"A lot of these people have lost any hope," Islas said. "And when they get that back, it changes their whole appearance. Their eyes are lit up, their skin is glowing. They have a smile on their face, maybe for the first time in a long time, and it's because they have seen some results."

The van drops off A Better Way participants interested in finding long-term work at the Mental Health Association office after their shifts. There, Islas helps identify and address their barriers to employment and housing, like not having a Social Security card or not being enrolled for food stamps.

Once clients have a Social Security card, they're considered employable and are referred to Pratcher. He helps them build an employment profile based on the types of work they're interested in. They then work together to fill out applications or put together resumes.

Many participants in A Better Way have been the targets of laws aimed at panhandling and homelessness. In 2015, the Oklahoma City council passed an ordinance that banned sitting, standing or staying on certain medians for any reason. Though a federal appeals court ruled the ordinance to be unconstitutional, city leaders spent almost $1 million in taxpayer dollars unsuccessfully appealing the decision to the Supreme Court.

The Tulsa city council passed a similar ordinance in 2017, revising it after the Oklahoma City decision. Tulsa leaders started the A Better Way program the following year, based on a program in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Oklahoma City program launched in September 2021.

Ward 4 councilmember Todd Stone was elected in 2017 and was part of Oklahoma City's debate on whether to appeal the federal court's decision.

A Better Way is a program operated by the Mental Health Association Oklahoma that offers work and assistance to homeless and out-of-work residents in Oklahoma's two biggest metros.

Stone said he voted to appeal because he saw the ordinance as a safety measure, a decision he regrets. Directing the $1 million to some of the city's organizations addressing homelessness, like A Better Way, instead of using it on legal fees would have been a definite benefit, Stone said.

Despite only having one van in each city, the program isn't receiving a bigger budget from either local government for the next fiscal year. Oklahoma City contributed about $271,000 this year. City officials are looking for partners to help offset operating costs next year, city spokeswoman Kristy Yager said.

Tulsa contributed $200,000 this fiscal year with plans for the same amount for 2024, said Carson Colvin, a spokesman for the city.

Islas said the limited resources have forced her team to leave behind would-be participants almost every day, amounting to close to 1,000 people in 2022. She said the original purpose of the program was to scour the city for people who panhandle, but demand has outgrown that ambition.

Arzell Gaddis, 49, knows what it's like to struggle to participate. As Gaddis helped bag leaves in Washington Park, about a mile from the pickup point, he said he was a part of the program three times in 2021. As word of mouth spread, he noticed it becoming harder to join.

"Maybe they can get a bigger contract or bigger program to where more people can participate in it if they really need the money," Gaddis said.

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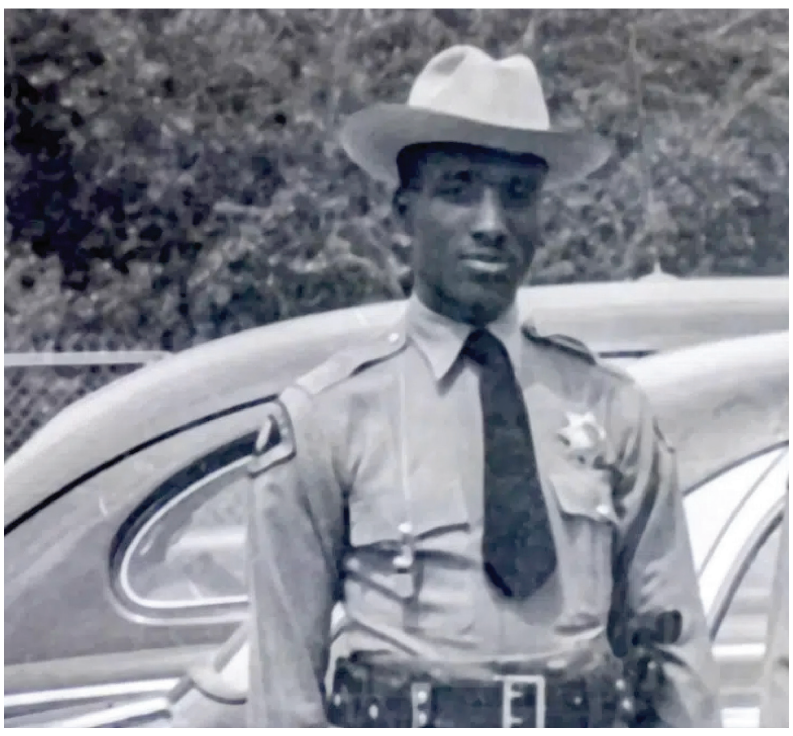
ERVIN TESTER picks up garbage on a frigid December 2022 morning at Washington Park in Oklahoma City as part of A Better Way's program. Tester said his $65 paycheck will help pay off a loan he took out for living expenses. PHOTO **WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH**



(TOP AND RIGHT) **HERMAN MOODY**. This undated photo provided by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department shows Las Vegas police officer Herman Moody. Las Vegas was still heavily segregated in 1946 when Moody became the city's first Black police officer. Because of the color of his skin, his police work was confined to the Historic Westside, the heart of the city's Black community near downtown Las Vegas, where Moody grew up, met his wife, raised their five daughters and died Feb. 25, 2023. He was 98. (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department via AP). (PHOTO **LAS VEGAS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT VIA AP**)

"I hope he will serve as an icon, an example, a motivating factor for the generations to come."

- Dolores Brown, the eldest of Hermann Moody's five daughters

BLACK VEGAS OFFICER from A1

Moody died Feb. 25 at his home in the Historic Westside, the heart of the city's Black community near downtown Las Vegas. He was 98.

Family, friends, and police officers will gather Thursday in Las Vegas to remember a man they praised as a dedicated lawman, a mentor for "young people of any color" and a man of religious faith.

"I hope he will serve as an icon, an example, a motivating factor for the generations to come," said Dolores Brown, the eldest of Moody's five daughters.

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department credits Moody for helping improve policing standards at a time when there was no police academy and Black families were forced to live and work west of the railroad tracks.

Moody was self-taught, reading countless books about Nevada law and the profession. He widely shared what he learned with other officers. But because of the color of his skin, his police work was confined to the Westside, which had dirt roads at the time and no running water or sewage lines.

Nearly eight decades since Moody began his barrier-breaking career, police agencies across the nation are still confronting a lack of diversity amid challenges in recruiting and retaining officers.

About 10% of the Las Vegas police force is Black compared with 56% white. About 12% of the city's population is Black.

Nationwide, about 17% of officers are Black, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That figure drops to 5% for police supervisors and detectives. The U.S. population is about 14% Black.

Moody himself was a detective when he retired. But he never reached a higher rank despite his years of seniority and having passed the exams needed to be promoted.

While reflecting on his career in 1976, Moody told the Las Vegas Review-Journal that his supervisors had promoted white officers with less experience over him throughout his career. Moody got the sense that the department's leadership "was not ready for a Black officer of rank."

"Since he never got promoted, he wanted to help others be the best cops, the best detectives, the best traffic officers, the best sergeants, lieutenants and chiefs they could be," said retired Assistant Sheriff Greg McCurdy.

By the time McCurdy joined the police department in 1983, Moody had retired but was still mentoring police officers.

"He laid out a stack of books in front of me when I was a young cop," McCurdy said, "and he told me, 'Read these books, and you will be fine.'"

Moody served in the Navy during World War II and aspired to be an engineer before has recruited to law enforcement by a police inspector who remembered Moody as a high school athlete.

When several more Black officers were hired in Las Vegas, Moody trained them at his home using the same books that taught him how to be a policeman.

Clark County commissioners honored Moody last year for his impact on southern Nevada. Commissioner William McCurdy praised Moody for being a "beacon of light and a role model for young people of any color."

Moody wore a sweater that read "BLACK EXCELLENCE." His family told stories of Moody's love for policing and community, and the importance of reputation.

Moody died in the house he built for his wife, Magnolia, and their daughters — in the same neighborhood as his parent's home affectionately known as the Moody House. It sits along a trail celebrating the Westside's history, with a marker recognizing its famous resident.

"Moody insisted that most residents wanted and appreciated good police protection," the marker reads, "and for thirty-one years he gave it to them."

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