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WEEK
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**SINCE THE
1921
TULSA
RACE
MASSACRE**

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.

**NATION
FREE MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT REACHES HBCU
STUDENTS A11**
By ISAAH SINGLETON, WORD IN BLACK

**NATION
EDUCATORS NATIONWIDE
PLEDGE TO TEACH TRUTH IN
SCHOOLS A12**
By AZIAH SIID, WORD IN BLACK

“All The
FIXINS’”

WELCOME TO BLACK WALL STREET’S NEW EATERY

TULSA - It’s only Tuesday night, and every seat at Fixins Soul Kitchen, 222 N. Detroit Ave., is taken.

By GARY LEE, THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

FIXINS On

A9

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CORN
FRITTERS

FRIED
CATFISH

Cornmeal crusted catfish served with corn fritters and your choice of two Fixins



PHOTO ROSS JOHNSON

LOCAL

TULSA POLICE DEFY DEPARTMENT POLICY BY HIDING INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

By WHITNEY BRYEN AND JAZZ WOLFE, OKLAHOMA WATCH

Tulsa police officers heckled a great-grandmother in the throes of a bipolar episode and then tackled her in October 2021. Public outrage over video of the incident prompted the department to launch an investigation into its officers

TPD INTERNAL INVESTIGATION *cont. A3*

STATE

IN CLOSE RUNOFF, COMANCHE NATION CITIZENS UNSEAT TWO INCUMBENTS

By KATRINA CRUMBACHER, NONDOC

Comanche Nation citizens elected a new tribal attorney and a new Business Committee representative in a runoff election Saturday that saw some of the tribe’s slimmest electoral margins in more than four years, according to

IN CLOSE RUNOFF *cont. A8*

STATE

OKLAHOMA CITY MAN FINDS SWASTIKA CUT INTO GRASS IN FRONT OF HIS HOME

By KEN MILLER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — An Oklahoma City man who found a swastika cut into the grass in front of his home said Thursday that he believes it was done by a neighbor with whom he has had a long-running dispute.

MAN FINDS SWASTIKA *cont. A8*

VOL. 102 NO. 24

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PUBLISHER'S PAGE

Tatums

One of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing. A4

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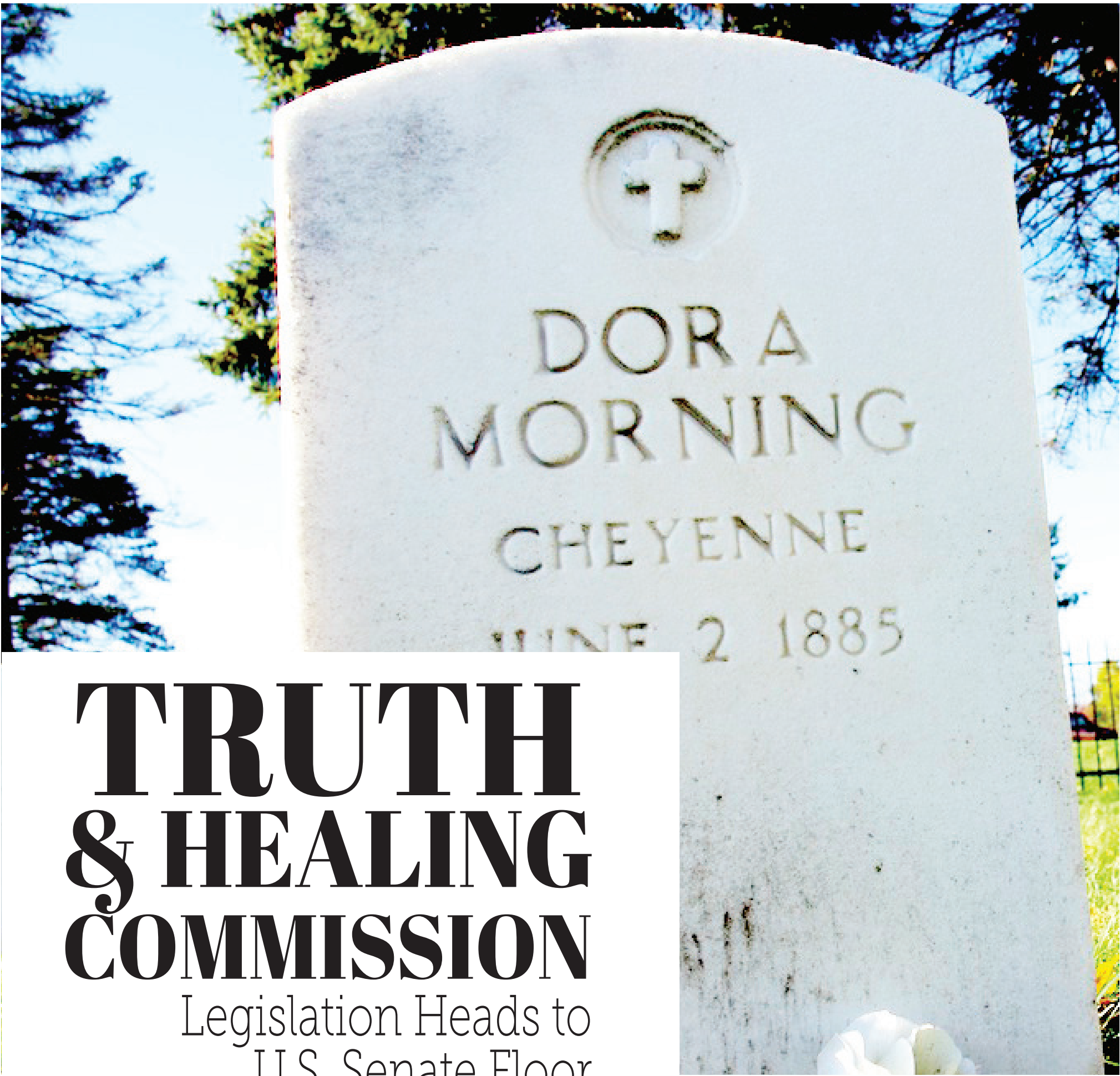


TPD INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

Tulsa police officers heckled a great-grandmother in the throes of a bipolar episode. A5

OK CITY MAN FINDS SWASTIKA NEAR HOME

Man suspects neighbor with whom he has had a long-running dispute. A3



TRUTH & HEALING COMMISSION

Legislation Heads to U.S. Senate Floor

By DACODA MCDOWELL-WAHPEKECHE, NonDoc

TRUTH AND HEALING COMMISSION

DORA MORNING, a member of the Cheyenne Nation, is buried in the Carlisle Indian Cemetery on the former grounds of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, where she died in 1885. The Carlisle Indian Industrial School sits on the grounds of the present-day U.S. Army War College. PHOTO ADDISON KLEWER / GAYLORD NEWS

The U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs has sent the full Senate legislation that would create the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies.

U.S. Sen. Markwayne Mullin, a Cherokee Nation citizen elected to the Senate by Oklahomans in November, was among the 10 other senators who make up the membership of the committee.

Mullin, who was absent for the majority of the hearing’s proceedings and when the final voting occurred, said he agreed with the decision to pass the bill.

“I support the bill. There is some work that needs to be done to it,” Mullin said (R-Westville). “We’re working with the chairman and the ranking member — everybody is working together.

“Even Sen. Warren is working, trying to improve some stuff,” he said, referring to Democratic Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who is the author of the bill.

The committee’s action came only two weeks after the Office of Army Cemeteries announced that the remains of five children who died at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a now-closed Pennsylvania boarding school for Native Americans, are going to be exhumed and returned to their families who have waited for their return for more than a century.

The children died between 1880 and 1910 while attending Carlisle, a government boarding school. The U.S. Department of Interior found in 2022 that Native Americans who attended school there were subject to physical and sexual abuse.

Committee Vice Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) referred to Carlisle by telling the story of a child from St. Paul Island, Alaska, who died in 1906 and was repatriated in 2021.

“(Sophia Tetoff) was sent to a boarding school in Pennsylvania — Carlisle Indian Industrial School — about 4,500 miles from her home,” Murkowski told the room. “In these schools, children were

forced to speak a language they didn’t know. Different clothing, different foods — all while living in fear that if they didn’t do exactly as they were told, there would be consequences.”

‘Fully reckon with this history’

The proposed commission follows the “Road to Healing” tour led by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, which kicked off last July at the Riverside Indian School in Anadarko.

Seven amendments were filed to the legislation, with a majority of those amendments coming from U.S. Sen. Steve Daines (R-Montana). Oklahoma’s Mullin also proposed one amendment, which the committee adopted.

Mullin’s amendment provides that a final report be publicly available on the website of the applicable agency in lieu of the originally proposed public education meetings that would have been held in each region of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to present the Commission’s findings.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has two regions that cover Oklahoma: the Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma regions.

Mullin said there is still some work to be done before the legislation is complete, especially surrounding subpoena power.

“There is a lot of concerns about the subpoena authority,” Mullin said. “It’s pretty broad. We’re trying to bring it in and make sure there’s some type of accountability for the commission back to the committee itself so we have oversight over some of this stuff.”

Murkowski said that one of Daines’ amendments clears up some of the issues with the bill.

His amendment that focuses on the subpoena authority changes the amount of Commission’s members needing to be in favor of a subpoena from three-fifths to unanimous consent.

Warren (D-Mass.) grew up in Norman and is a graduate of Northwest Classen



DELORES TWOHATCHET a gifts U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland a shawl during a Road to Healing event at Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, Oklahoma, on Saturday, July 9, 2022. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

“The federal government’s Indian boarding school policies caused unimaginable suffering and trauma that linger on in tribal communities today.”

SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN, Democratic, Massachusetts

High School in Oklahoma City.

“The federal government’s Indian boarding school policies caused unimaginable suffering and trauma that linger on in tribal communities today,” Warren said. “It is long overdue that the federal government fully reckon with this history and its legacy.”

Warren even gave a shout out to U.S. Rep. Sharice Davids (D-KS3) and Oklahoma U.S. Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK4), the co-chairs of the Native American Caucus in the House of Representatives, for their efforts of “carrying the baton in the House.”

The legislation surrounding the Truth and Healing Commission is now eligible to be heard on the Senate floor, and Warren’s Senate office said she is wanting to get the legislation through as soon as possible.

DACODA MCDOWELL-WAHPEKECHE is a journalism student in the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma.



PHOTO ADOBE STOCK

‘I Can **VIVIDLY REMEMBER THE VIDEO WAS HORRIFIC.**’

- **JEFF DISMUKES**, former law enforcement trainer for the U.S. Department of Justice

TPD INTERNAL INVESTIGATION *from A1*

nearly six months after the arrest.

Now, the department is violating its own policy by keeping the results of that investigation secret.

Department spokesman Capt. Richard Meulenberg IV confirmed in an email the investigation is complete but would not say which officers were under review, what investigators found or whether any officers were disciplined.

LaDonna Paris was a 70-year-old graduate student at Phillips Theological Seminary when 911 began receiving calls about her erratic behavior, according to the lawsuit filed in May 2022. Paramedics offered to take Paris to the hospital but she refused and drove off as police officers Ronni Carrocia and Daylan Root arrived, court records and video footage show. Officers followed Paris to a Habitat for Humanity Restore in east Tulsa, where Paris locked herself in an upstairs bathroom for nearly four hours.

Carrocia called Paris a cuckoo bird and threatened her with a Taser outside the bathroom, according to body camera video. Paris was hallucinating and paranoid, footage shows. Carrocia, Root and officer Ty Burns kicked in the door, knocked Paris down, handcuffed her and took her to jail.

“I can vividly remember the video was horrific,” said Jeff Dismukes, a former law enforcement trainer for the Department of Justice who now runs a statewide nonprofit that supports people with mood disorders. “It was completely inappropriate. It goes against how law enforcement are being trained on these issues.”

Thousands watched the edited footage, which was posted by Paris’ son in March 2022. The department responded with a statement that said officers did not violate police policies. An Oklahoma Watch investigation found that officers’ actions conflict with policies outlining the department’s values, use of force and treatment of people suffering from mental illness.

Angry Tulsans condemned the officer’s actions and the department’s statement during a city council meeting and online, pressuring the department to launch an investigation.

In defiance of its own policy, department leaders refused to disclose the findings or say whether officers were held accountable.

Oklahoma law requires the department to disclose disciplinary action against police that results in loss of pay, suspension, demotion or termination. None of the officers faced those consequences, Meulenberg said in an email.

Payroll reports obtained by Oklahoma Watch revealed that Root has not worked for the Tulsa Police Department since at least April of 2022. Carrocia and Burns were still

In defiance of its own policy, department leaders refused to disclose the findings or say whether officers were held accountable.



TULSA POLICE OFFICER RONNI CARROCIA laughs as she pushes on the bathroom door where Tulsa resident LaDonna Paris, 70, had locked herself during a bipolar episode on Oct. 25, 2021. The Tulsa Police Department investigated the actions of officers who responded to the incident, which landed Paris in jail. The department refused to release the results of that investigation. PHOTO SCREEN GRAB FROM BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE

employed at the department as of May 22. Both received pay raises since the release of the video showing their response to Paris, according to the reports. Carrocia’s annual base pay is \$69,400, reports show. Burns makes \$66,670.

Meulenberg said the department won’t release any details about the investigation to the public. According to their own policy, they’re supposed to.

The Tulsa Police Department’s 537-page policy manual includes seven pages about complaints against police employees.

“The nature of the allegations, the results of internal investigations, and any disciplinary action taken will be treated as a matter of public information,” the policy states.

That section of the policy manual was updated and approved by Chief Wendell Franklin seven months before officers arrested Paris.

Oklahoma Watch requested findings and disciplinary action based on the department’s policy. Neither Meulenberg nor Franklin responded.

The decision of whether to discipline officers and how lies with Franklin. Since Oklahoma Watch began reporting on his department’s response to Paris, Franklin has not responded to interview or information requests about the case.

Oklahoma Watch sued the city and the police department over its refusal to provide the incident report for Paris’ arrest, which is a public record. The lawsuit is still open.

‘That Cannot Be Allowed to Continue’

After the video was released on March 30, 2022, Tulsa City Council members proposed creating a citizens’ oversight board and an independent office to monitor internal police investigations. The motion failed. Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper and former council member Kara Joy McKee were the only members to vote in favor of the changes.

“It should never be a crapshoot whether or not you’re going to get a good officer,” McKee said at the meeting. “Some things have changed under Chief Franklin. ... It’s obvious that not nearly enough has changed.”

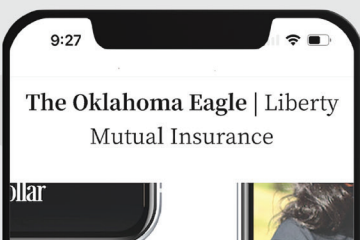
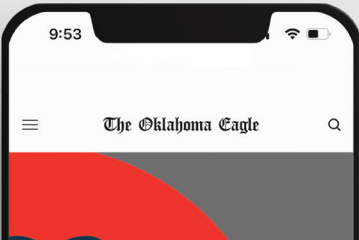
Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum refused interview requests. Spokeswoman Michelle Brooks said in an email that Bynum declined because Paris is suing the city, police department and officers.

Dismukes trained law enforcement for

TPD INTERNAL INVESTIGATION *cont. A7*

Our Mission

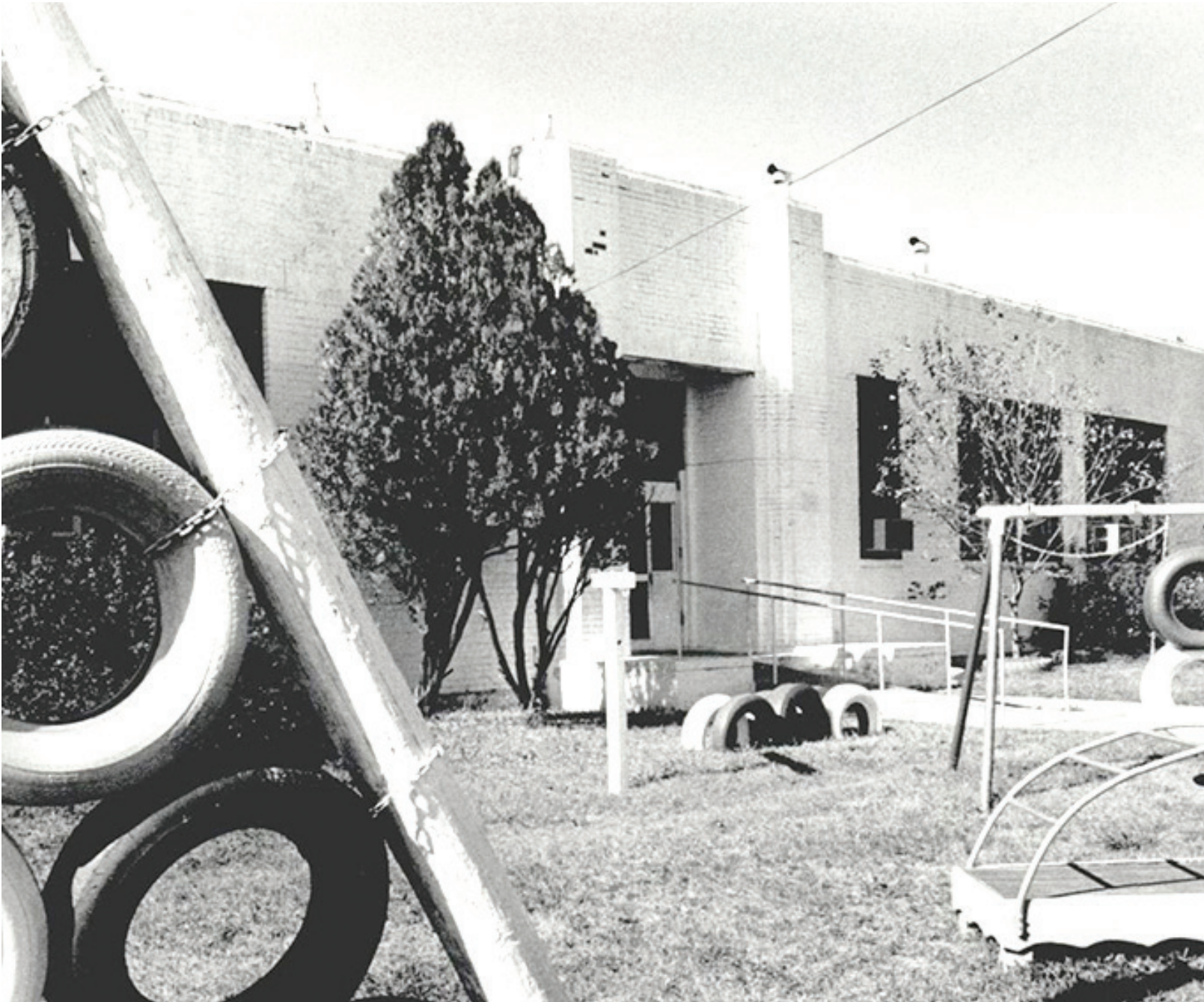
To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial” is the cornerstone of our continued success.



Tatums: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

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

Lee Tatum and his wife, Mary, applied for a post office designation in 1895, beginning the town of Tatums in Indian Territory.



Located in Carter County four miles northeast of Ratliff City, the town is one of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing. In addition to running the post office, the Tatums operated a small grocery in one corner of their house. Henry Taylor owned the community’s largest home and offered overnight accommodations for travelers. In addition to his postal duties, Lee Tatum was appointed a U.S. marshal. Tatums residents soon established a church and school. A hotel was built in 1899, a blacksmith shop in 1900, a cotton gin and sawmill in 1910, and a

motor garage in 1918. Oil wells were drilled in the area in the 1920s, bringing wealth to several of Tatums’s farmers and landowners. The Julius Rosenwald Fund helped build a brick school in 1925–26, and the WPA built another in 1936. Tatums’s Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 94001519), was completed in 1919. In 1927 Norman Studios filmed a silent movie, Black Gold, in Tatums and enlisted Marshal L. B. Tatums to play a role. Although a copy of the film cannot be found and probably no longer exists, the script and

camera are preserved at the Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage in California. Like most rural towns, Tatums experienced the crippling effects of the Great Depression, and many residents migrated to urban areas. The first federal census, made in 1970, found that Tatums had 133 residents, a number that grew to 281 in 1980. At the end of the twentieth century the population stood at 172, and the town awaited economic revival. The 2010 census counted 151 residents.

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.

TATUMS Headstart Center, 1983
(2012.201.B1275.0777, photo by P. Howell, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

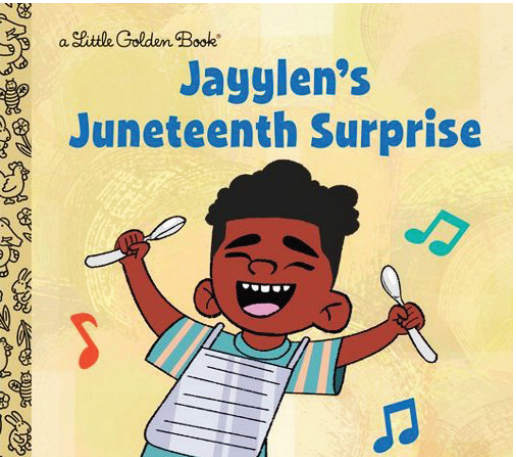
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The Evans-Fintube Saga



‘Tantrum’: Legislature Overrides 19 Stitt Vetoes



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TULSA POLICE ARREST A BLOODIED LADONNA PARIS, who suffered facial cuts resulting from the altercation that occurred on Oct. 25, 2021. Officers pulled Paris, who is Black, off the floor and escorted her from the store where she had taken refuge nearly four hours earlier. PHOTO TULSA POLICE BODY CAMERA

It’s disappointing that the department wouldn’t take the opportunity to use this and initiate continued discussion and corrective action that could be helpful for not just that department, but for others.

- **JEFF DISMUKES**, former law enforcement trainer for the U.S. Department of Justice

TPD INTERNAL INVESTIGATION *from A3*

the Department of Justice in the 1990s before his own struggle with mental illness. He said Tulsa’s police and city leaders missed an opportunity to change the department’s culture and set an example.

“It’s disappointing that the department wouldn’t take the opportunity to use this and initiate continued discussion and corrective action that could be helpful for not just that department, but for others,” Dismukes said. “That cannot be allowed to continue because when this type of activity is allowed to continue, we know it becomes worse. Now’s the time to be in front of this.”

Officers made jokes at Paris’ expense and laughed as she mumbled incoherently, talked to someone who wasn’t there and repeatedly said that police wanted to kill her, video footage shows. Officers called for the mental health response team but it was busy with another call. In the footage, Carrocia is seen jiggling the door handle and rattling the bathroom door while Paris screams for her to stop.

“This is gonna be so fun,” Carrocia said as

officers prepared to kick in the door.

Blood was visible in the video, smeared across Paris’ face as officers removed her from the store.

The lawsuit alleges that officers violated Paris’ civil rights when they arrested and jailed her instead of providing access to treatment.

The State Under Scrutiny

Similar claims triggered a statewide probe by federal investigators in November. Department of Justice investigators are scrutinizing Oklahomans’ access to mental health care and whether a lack of treatment options resulted in unnecessary psychiatric admissions and arrests.

Oklahoma law enforcement officers have killed at least 75 people who exhibited signs of mental illness from 2013 to March 2023, according to data from the Mapping Police Violence project.

Tulsa Police have killed 38 people, at least 13 of whom exhibited signs of mental illness, according to the data.

More than 20% of Tulsa police officers received specialized training designed to help them respond to people in crisis, Tulsa

mental health coordinator Capt. Shellie Seibert told Oklahoma Watch in April 2022. None of the officers who responded to Paris had received the voluntary training.

The Tulsa Police Department no longer tracks its mental health calls because it was too time-consuming, Seibert said. Officers were responding to an average of 1,000 mental health emergencies per month at the department’s last count and those calls have continued to increase, she said.

For 20 years, Dismukes worked at the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. He partnered with police departments across the state, including in Tulsa, to train officers and develop best practices for crisis response.

“All I know is that we continue to have negative interactions and negative experiences,” Dismukes said. “We need to find a better way to address this moving forward.”

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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FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, winners of the Comanche Nation runoff election Saturday, June 10, 2023, include Alice Kassanavoid (Business Committee seat No. 3), John David Wahnee (secretary/treasurer) and Jordan Fox (Business Committee seat No. 4). PHOTO NONDOC

Comanche NATION CITIZENS Elected A New Tribal Attorney

On par with the May 13 general election, nearly 1,300 people voted in the runoff election. Roughly half voted through absentee ballots.

IN CLOSE RUNOFF *from AI*

unofficial results released Sunday.

On par with the May 13 general election, nearly 1,300 people voted in the runoff election. Roughly half voted through absentee ballots. Although the Comanche Nation currently has about 17,000 enrolled tribal citizens, no election has seen more than 1,500 ballots cast in the past five years.

In the race for tribal attorney, which is elected annually, prominent Oklahoma firm Crowe & Dunlevy edged out incumbent Minnesota-based firm Dorsey & Whitney LLP by seven votes. Crowe & Dunlevy received 620 votes (50.3 percent), while Dorsey & Whitney received 613 votes (49.7 percent).

Crowe & Dunlevy previously represented the Comanche Nation from 2012 to 2016. Dorsey & Whitney has represented the Comanche Nation since December 2020.

In the race for seat No. 4 on the Comanche Nation Business Committee, Jordan Fox won by nine votes, receiving 646 ballots (50.4 percent) and defeating incumbent Robert Komahcheet Jr., who received 637 votes (49.6 percent).

Incumbent Secretary/Treasurer John David Wahnee won reelection with 661 votes (51 percent). Receiving 757 votes (59 percent), incumbent Committeeperson No. 3 Alice Kassanavoid also won a second term.

Secretary/Treasurer candidate Michael Keahbone received 635 votes (49

percent). Committeeperson No. 3 candidate Tanisha Burgess received 526 votes (41 percent).

Owing to term limits, Wahnee and Kassanavoid will be ineligible to run for office in the Comanche Nation again until 2029.

Under the Comanche Nation’s election policy, candidates are allowed to file recount requests. However, the election office can grant recount requests only if the vote margin is less than 2 percent of total votes cast for a particular race or 24 votes or less, whichever is greater.

The races for committeeperson No. 4 and tribal attorney are the only two races from Saturday that qualify for recounts. The deadline to request a recount is set for 5 p.m. today. The deadline to file a challenge of the electoral process is set for 5 p.m. Tuesday.

If no challenges or recount requests are submitted, the results will be considered official after they are certified by the Comanche Nation Election Office. Elected officials are expected to be sworn in by June 23, a representative of the Comanche Nation said.

KATRINA CRUMBACHER is completing a 2023 reporting internship with NonDoc. She graduated from Rose State College in May 2023 and will be attending the University of Oklahoma in the fall.

“It’s Not Something The FBI Investigates.”

KAYLA MCCLEERY,
FBI spokesperson



MAN FINDS SWASTIKA *from AI*

Stan Sells said he was mowing when he discovered the swastika Tuesday on the shoulder of the road that passes in front of his home. It is not visible from the road but faces his home and can clearly be seen from his yard.

“I think I know who did it, but I ain’t got no proof,” said Sells. “It’s a neighbor I haven’t gotten along with for several years.”

Sells declined to identify the neighbor, but said the man would yell at him when he saw Sells in his yard.

“(I) try to talk with him and he’d start yelling at me, calling me names and telling me what he’s going to do to me” while cursing, said Sells, 67.

Sells said he has a home security camera, but it was no help because it is more than 250 feet away and it was dark when the swastika was cut into the grass.

Sells said he reported the swastika, which he said is cut into the public right-of-way, to both Oklahoma City police and the FBI.

FBI spokesperson Kayla McCleery acknowledged the report, but declined to call the incident a hate crime.

“While we feel this is hateful speech,

it’s not something the FBI can investigate because it ... probably falls under First Amendment protected free speech,” McCleery said.

Sgt. Dillon Quirk said the Oklahoma City Police are investigating the grass-cutting incident as vandalism.

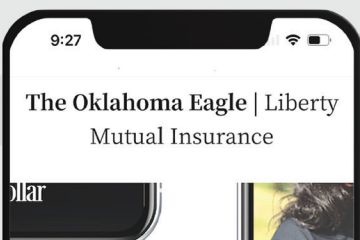
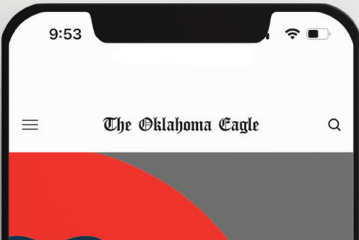
The swastika symbol, used by Nazi Germany, “has served as the most significant and notorious of hate symbols, anti-Semitism and white supremacy for most of the world” since 1945, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Sells, who said he is not Jewish, said the discovery made him mad.

“I just couldn’t believe anyone would do that,” Sells said. He declined to speculate on why anyone would cut a swastika into his grass.

In 2019, vandals spray-painted racist, anti-gay and anti-Semitic remarks, including a swastika, outside the headquarters of the Oklahoma Democratic Party and offices of the Chickasaw Nation.

Mauricio Garcia, the man suspected of killing eight people and wounding several others in a mass shooting in May at a suburban Dallas shopping mall, showed large tattoos on his arm and torso, including a swastika, in a post on a Russian social networking site.



FIXINS

BLACK WALL STREET'S NEW EATERY



KEVIN JOHNSON, owner of Fixins Soul Kitchen, celebrates during the Black Wall Street location's ribbon ceremony. Community members, including survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre attended the opening in late May. PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA

FIXINS *from AI*

Across the spacious dining room of the new Black Wall Street eatery, everybody seems to be in celebration mode: a Black family of two adults and four kids making quick work of a bucket of fried chicken and big glasses of blue Kool-Aid; a couple on a first date downing margaritas like they're ice water in August; a quartet of folks dressed in business attire leaning into shrimp and grits, collard greens and serious conversation. The bar is packed, too, with folks sharing a plate of catfish and whiskey cocktails, ladies almost as decked out as Rihanna on Grammy night, and solo diners eating with one hand and snapping selfies with the other.

Fixins is the scene that Black Tulsans have been waiting for.

Even weeks after basketball great Kevin Johnson mastered over the restaurant's spectacular grand opening, the place has been packed with diners from opening until lights out. The clientele is mixed in every way- age, race, gender. The restaurant's welcoming style and location - smack between Greenwood and downtown - gives it crossover appeal. But more than half of the crowd, on any given night, is Black. Not since the heyday of Greenwood faded decades ago has one place in Tulsa become such a see and be seen locale for Black locals and visitors.

The cuisine, billed as contemporary soul food, is a major draw. It's not precisely the dishes your grandmas served on Sundays - fried chicken and pies that left you licking every plate all across north Tulsa. No restaurant could replace the serious home cooking that north Tulsans have done in their kitchens. But after sampling nearly every dish on the menu, from the oxtails to wings and waffles, we can attest that there is something that will satisfy every palate.

The classic dishes are done well. The fried chicken comes with a perfectly crispy and tender crust. The chef says the birds are brined for 24 hours, and the extra touch shows. The smothered pork chops were flavorful, tender,

Fixins is the scene that Black Tulsans have been waiting for... Not since the heyday of Greenwood faded decades ago has one place in Tulsa become such a see and be seen locale for Black locals and visitors.

“You people have been fighting for this community for a long, long time... And I think it's time we shine a light on Tulsa”

KEVIN JOHNSON, owner, Fixins Soul Kitchen.

and covered in just the right amount of gravy. The fried catfish was just right, too - tender and tasty.

Some critics say that the test of a restaurant is in the appetizers and side dishes. And with its impressive array of the usual southern food accompanying plates - mac and cheese, grits, collard greens - Fixins does not disappoint. The chargrilled okra, the fried green tomatoes, the candied yams, and the artichoke dip particularly wowed us.

Fixins' portions are pretty copious, too. Most times we have dined there, we have taken enough leftovers home for a great next-day lunch.

Some dishes gave us pause. The deep-fried deviled eggs, a Fixins' specialty, are crunchy and spicy. But fans of the traditional version of this take on it will have to make a palate adjustment. The shrimp and grits were tasty enough but deluged in way too much gravy. Fixins' house-made hot sauce is not quite fiery sufficient to doctor a dish up to the level that most fans of spicy food want. The pimento cheese dip could probably use a bit of tweaking.

Desserts could be helped along with a bit more zip as well. Banana pudding is an extreme indulgence that it doesn't seem quite right to dig into Fixins' version and find too few real bananas and wafers don't seem quite right. Likewise, the peach cobbler could be improved with more peaches and a touch more cinnamon.

FIXINS *cont. A10*

A Way To REVIVE & BUILD ON THE TRADITION OF *Black Wall Street*

FIXINS from A9

The Kevin Johnson touch

A big part of Fixins’ appeal is the star power it represents. Johnson, the former NBA player and previous mayor of Sacramento, Calif., is the owner and operator. He earned his sports fame as a point guard for the Cleveland Cavaliers and Phoenix Suns. From 2008 to 2016, he served as mayor of Sacramento. The Tulsa restaurant is Johnson’s third Fixins’ locale following Los Angeles and Sacramento.

On May 31, the charismatic Johnson staged about the grandest imaginable grand opening. Flanked by his A-team, Johnson explained that he chose Tulsa as the place for his third restaurant in part to honor his Tulsa roots. His grandmother and grandfather are from T-Town.

But Johnson also views Fixins as a way to revive and build on the tradition of Black Wall Street. He opened the new place on the 102nd anniversary of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, in a location just blocks from where the main destruction of the events of 1921 occurred.

During the opening ceremony, Johnson praised the resilience of Black Tulsans.

“You people have been fighting for this community for a long, long time,” he said. “And I think it’s time we shine a light on Tulsa.”

In paying homage to Black Tulsa history, Johnson gave a place of honor among those gathered for the opening ceremony to the three remaining survivors of the Tulsa Race Massacre — Hughes “Uncle Red” Van Ellis, 102; Viola Fletcher, 109; and Lessie Benningfield Randle, 108.

Johnson also gave a nod to members of Tulsa’s power elite and Black culture scene in the opening ceremony.

Johnson also used the opening event to pay tribute to the stalwart restaurateurs of north Tulsa. Before opening the doors, he called the owners of Wanda J’s and Sweet Lisa’s, north Tulsa’s best known Tulsa soul food restaurants, to join him on the stage. Fixins’ is built of the legacy of great soul food that they have established over years, he said.

Johnson says his plan is to eventually own 50 Fixins restaurants across the U.S. The fourth Fixins is scheduled to open in Denver this summer.

A blend of nostalgic and contemporary vibes

The ambiance at Fixins captures the brightest aspects of a bygone era in African American culture. Oversized posters on one wall recall three brand names that have been staples in the Black homes for decades: Crisco, Wonder, and Nilla and Kool-Aid. The sound track regularly features classic old school R&B and gospel songs. The service provided by servers, bartenders and other staff, always good natured, evokes an earlier tradition of hospitality.

Fixins is also intentional about sourcing many of the products they use from Black-owned companies. Several drinks feature whiskey from Uncle Nearest, an award-winning Black-owned whiskey company. The wine list boasts selections from well-known Black-owned winemakers, including The McBride Sisters, Maison Noire, and James Harden.

With its uplifting combination of old school and new wave Black culture, and by offering a long-missing community gathering space, Fixins is taking the concept of Black Wall Street into the 21st century.

The restaurant’s out of the gates popularity makes getting a reservation tough.

But go when you can. It’s worth the wait.

FIXINS

222 N. Detroit Avenue
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74120
fixinssoulkitchen.com
918-818-7685

PHOTO ROSS JOHNSON



COLESLAW

POTATO
SALAD

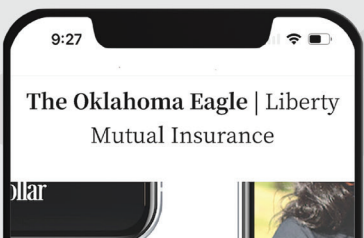
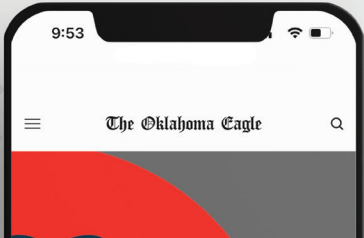
FRIED
CHICKEN

24 hour brined & fried until crispy, tender, & juicy. Served with your choice of two Fixins and a biscuit.

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**EDUCATORS
PLEDGE TRUTH**
On the #TeachTruth National Day of Action, teachers, parents, and students said they won't back down. **A12**

**RACIAL
GERRYMANDERING**
U.S. Supreme Court Upholds Federal Provision Barring Racial Gerrymandering. **A13**



FREE MENTAL HEALTH

Support Reaches HBCU Students

A New Partnership Between Xceleader and BetterHelp Is Providing 200 HBCU Students With Three Months Of Access To Free Counseling Services.

By ISAIAH SINGLETON, WORD IN BLACK
HBCU MENTAL HEALTH *from A1*

Xceleader announced a new partnership with BetterHelp, the world's largest online therapy platform, providing 200 students enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities with three months of access to free counseling services.

This partnership offers much-needed mental health support to students and promotes a proactive approach to mental health and wellness.

In 2018, Xceleader was created by three HBCU alumni: Aarian Forman (Tennessee State University), Jade Agudosi (Howard University), and Tevon Blair (Dillard University).

Recently, there has been a significant rise in the prevalence of depression and anxiety among Black students. A study from the National Institutes of Health found that approximately 34% of Black students reported feeling "so depressed in the last year it was difficult to function."

Xceleader's primary focus is on providing students with access to resources, mentorship, and opportunities to enable them to thrive academically and professionally. By partnering with BetterHelp, Xceleader aims to further their mission by addressing the pressing need for mental health support among students, especially those actively engaged in leadership roles on campus.

BetterHelp offers a wide range of mental health services, including therapy, counseling, and self-help resources. Now, HBCU students have access to additional resources to take charge of their mental health while being leaders on campus and in their communities.

This partnership represents a significant step forward in addressing the mental health challenges faced by students at HBCUs. By working together, Xceleader and BetterHelp hope to promote a proactive approach to mental health and wellness, creating a brighter future for students in the HBCU community. Students can access the voucher code by joining Xceleader's email list.

The three founders spoke to the Atlanta Voice about their new partnership with BetterHelp and furthering their organization.

The Atlanta Voice: How did the partnership with BetterHelp come to be?

Aarian Forman: Working closely with students, we started to hear more stories about the challenges they were facing, relative to their mental wellness, and the impact it was having on their academic and personal lives. Most recently, the tragic loss of a student's life has brought to light the critical importance of mental health support and services for students, especially within the HBCU community. We believed that BetterHelp, with its robust platform of virtual counseling services, was uniquely positioned to help address this pressing need.

AV: Is there a mentor in your life that inspires you as a business owner?

AF: Both of my role models in business are Black women. Dr. Glover, President of Tennessee State University, continues to inspire me to aim high, use my platform, and resources to support HBCUs and champion them in every space I'm in. Since my time serving as SGA President at TSU until now, she has continued to be an example of brilliance and leadership. Elicia Azali, Enterprise Chief Marketing Officer at American Family Insurance Group, gave me an opportunity of a lifetime, a seat at the table as a green professional. I was working directly with senior leaders early in my career and watching her has taught me so much and continues to inspire me. These women are two leaders that prove to me that it's possible for me one day.

AV: Was there a moment that inspired you to start Xceleader?

Jade Agudosi: As an alumna of Howard University, I understand the importance of giving back to my alma mater and driving change among the broader HBCU community. When we started Xceleader, we saw a need to create an organization to share our gained knowledge and experiences in leadership with new and aspiring leaders as an opportunity to give back through service, time, and

HBCU MENTAL HEALTH *cont. A12*



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

“Our work focuses on developing students as leaders whether it is on campus, in the classroom or within communities.”

HBCU MENTAL HEALTH *from AH*

resources.

AV: What are your business goals for 2023 with Xceleader?

JA: In previous years, our programming and engagement were mostly conducted in virtual settings. However, we are excited to share that Atlanta will now serve as the home for Xceleader. Moving forward, we will focus on programming specifically designed for HBCU students and alumni in the Atlanta area, while also establishing connections with university and non-profit leaders.

AV: Any advice to future business owners about taking the plunge?

Tevon Blair: For aspiring nonprofit leaders seeking to support Black students, my advice is to lead with purpose and the ability to be adaptable to change. In our experience, the

pandemic shifted how our programs and how we provided support to students. By listening to the challenges, they encountered, we were able to continue serving as a valuable resource to students as the outside environments constantly changed.

AV: How do you plan on building off this partnership with BetterHelp?

TB: At Xceleader, our work focuses on developing students as leaders whether it is on campus, in the classroom or within communities. However, mental health is often left out of the conversation when students are actively involved and we hope to address this issue through our partnership with BetterHelp by promoting a proactive approach to mental health and wellness, creating a brighter future for students in the HBCU community.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

“Refuse to lie to young people about U.S. history and current events.”

TEACH TRUTH IN SCHOOLS *from BI*

As efforts to suppress and eliminate the teaching about America’s history of racism and oppression ramp up, it’s easy to forget that a group of stalwart advocates has been on the frontline of this fight for decades, lobbying for an accurate and comprehensive student curriculum: teachers.

For the last two summers, educators have rallied together — along with students, parents, and community members — to speak out against the anti-CRT movement. They kept the same energy this year as they pledged to #TeachTruth and defend LGBTQ+ rights.

On Saturday, June 10, 2023, people came together at roughly 100 locations nationwide for the #TeachTruth National Day of Action.

From Ruben F. Salazar Park in Los Angeles and abolitionist bookstore 1977 Books in Montgomery, Alabama, to the Stonewall Inn in New York City and the African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, D.C., attendees rallied against the anti-history education bills proliferating across the United States.

Together, they pledged to “refuse to lie to young people about U.S. history and current events.”

The Zinn Education Project, the African American Policy Forum, and Black Lives Matter at Schools coordinated the day of action, which had more than 50 co-sponsors, including the SNCC Legacy Project.

As SNCC veteran Judy Richardson told the crowd at the Washington D.C. event, “White supremacists say they want to protect their children from feeling bad about racism. What about the pain Black children have felt for decades as we were consistently fed lies and distortions about this country’s history?”

Michele Coles, author of the award-winning novel “Black Was the Ink” knows what Richardson is talking about. Coles wrote the coming-of-age novel about the Reconstruction Era due to her not learning much about that period of history in school. After one complaint from a parent, the book, told through the eyes of a Black teenage boy, was recently pulled from classrooms.

“I support the campaign to teach truth and the freedom to learn. Any society that begins banning books is headed in the wrong direction,” Coles said. “We can’t be afraid of knowledge or empathy.”

Educator, author, and Teach Truth organizer Jesse Hagopian also laid out what’s at stake.

“Lawmakers in at least 44 states have introduced legislation or pursued other measures that attempt to require educators to lie to students about the role of racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, and other forms of oppression throughout U.S. history,” Hagopian wrote on Instagram. “These laws and restrictions have been imposed in at least

18 states. The Right has declared war on teaching the truth about structural racism and sexism and on LGBTQ+ youth.”

Richardson explained at the event in D.C. that supporters of these bills are afraid “that if young people — children of color and white children — see themselves in this history — in Ruby Doris Smith Robinson and Julian Bond and Anne Braden and Betty Garman Robinson and Maria Varela — then they’ll know that they can change things, too — just like the youth leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.”

New Jersey educator Thuraya Zeidan said that on Teach Truth Day, she’s championing the need to teach students from a global perspective rather than the Eurocentric lens.

“The reason that I’m here is because it’s foundational to my education philosophy that students are able to learn about themselves. We should be teaching students from a lens that is global as opposed to a lens that is Eurocentric,” she told Ande Richards, managing producer for Diversity Voices.

Organizations and bookstores like Bookworks ABQ in New Mexico that work to give access to banned or challenged books also showed up for the day of solidarity. With a table set up in the shop — and a colorful sign to jot down the name of your favorite banned book — supporters came through to take a pic with a banned book and sign the Teach Truth Pledge, while educators were offered 10% off.

Ahead of the official Teach Truth Day, national speakers, educators, and other supporters also gathered on a call before the event to share their commitments against the war on teaching the truth about structural racism, sexism, and on LGBTQ+ youth.

“We are disgusted, and we are outraged, but we’re not just angry because we can’t just be angry,” Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association, said on the conference call. “We are organizing, and we are united. We are channeling our anger into multilayered comprehensive actions to beat back these oppressive and offensive laws — dangerous laws.”

Indeed, educators, community members, and parents are making it clear they will not back down from the fight to teach all students the full scope of what it means to be a student in America.

Whether it’s speaking out against the “Stop Woke” laws that seek to prohibit teaching about how systematic racism impacts every system in the United States or opposing the “Don’t Say Gay” bills that have students afraid to be themselves — and educators frightened to support them — supporters of the Teach Truth movement are ready to take action.

As Hagopian said, “Our movement is creating a new vision for education where history is a human right!”



PHOTO PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TEACHINGFORCHANGE/FLICKR



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Supreme Court Upholds
FEDERAL PROVISION
BARRING RACIAL
Gerrymandering

By KEATON ROSS, OKLAHOMA WATCH

RACIAL GERRYMANDERING from A11



In a 5-4 ruling issued late last week, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that Alabama illegally packed Black voters into a single congressional district following the 2020 Census and must redraw its maps to create a second minority-majority district. Census Bureau figures show Alabama, which has seven congressional seats and a population of just over five million people, is about 27% Black. The decision marked a victory for voting rights activists, who feared a ruling in favor of Alabama would have eradicated Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act. This part of the law prohibits voter discrimination based on

race and color and allows groups to petition for relief if they feel their rights have been violated. “The Court’s opinion does not diminish or disregard the concern that may impermissibly elevate race in the allocation of political power within the States,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion. “Instead, the Court simply holds that a faithful application of precedent and a fair reading of the record do not bear those concerns out here.” The conversation regarding race and political representation accelerated during Oklahoma’s last redistricting cycle in late 2021 when the state’s Republican-controlled Legislature opted

to split the state’s growing Latino population in southwest Oklahoma City into three congressional districts. Critics of the decision told Oklahoma Watch that the shift would mute the growing political voice of the group, which leans Democratic. Republican leaders defended the move, saying the state’s Latino population is more varied geographically and politically than one might initially assume. “What language do you think is the predominant language in Guymon Public Schools?” House Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, said in response to a reporter’s question about what people in southwest Oklahoma City

have in common with panhandle residents. “It’s Spanish, not English.” Several notable Supreme Court cases remain pending as the body approaches a late June recess, including one that Oklahoma tribal nations fear could erode their sovereignty. My colleague Lionel Ramos has reported extensively on *Brackeen v. Haaland*, where plaintiffs argue that a federal law prioritizing family or tribal placement for Native children discriminates against non-native families. Click [here](#) to read Lionel’s story.

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