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1921
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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
DROUGHT IS HITTING
BLACK FARMERS
HARD A14

By MAYA RICHARD-CRAVEN, WORD IN BLACK

DROUGHT

NATION
UNVEILING THE
HIDDEN TRUTH ABOUT
FIBROIDS A13

By AMAKA WATSON, WORD IN BLACK

FIBROIDS AWARENESS MONTH

IDA B. WELLS BARNETT, photograph taken in c. 1893. PHOTO MARY GARRITY

Top 10 BLACK HISTORY EVENTS In July

ASWAD
WALKER,
WORD IN
BLACK

BLACK HISTORY

A5

Man Imprisoned Nearly 50 Years For Deadly Oklahoma Robbery Is Freed After A Judge Orders New Trial

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MAN IMPRISONED, FREED

A3

LOCAL & STATE

MOST OKLAHOMA JAILS
FAILED HEALTH DEPARTMENT
INSPECTIONS IN 2022

By KEATON ROSS AND AINSLEY MARTINEZ, OKLAHOMA WATCH

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LOCAL & STATE

A STORM PACKING WINDS OVER
80 MPH DERAILS A TRAIN IN A
SMALL OKLAHOMA TOWN

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

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LOCAL & STATE

FOUR CHOCTAW NATION
TRIBAL COUNCIL INCUMBENTS
VIE TO RETAIN SEATS

By KATRINA CRUMBACHER, NonDoc

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VOL. 102 NO. 27

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#THE OK EAGLE

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PUBLISHER'S PAGE

Clearview

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

AD SERVICES

Jobs & Classifieds

Discover career opportunities, classifieds and time-sensitive notifications. A10

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Faith In Tulsa

The Eagle Church Directory is your source for finding a place to worship. A11



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OK JAILS FAILED INSPECTIONS IN 2022
Inspectors repeatedly cited the Oklahoma County Jail for failing to conduct mental health assessments. **A6**

STORM DERAILS TRAIN IN SMALL OKLAHOMA TOWN
A storm packing winds over 80 miles per hour blew through northern Oklahoma early Friday morning. **A3**



GLYNN RAY SIMMONS on Wednesday, Jul. 19, after Oklahoma County District Judge Amy Palumbo vacated his murder conviction and life sentence for the 1975 murder of Carolyn Sue Rogers at the Edmond Liquor Store. Simmons was granted a new trial. PHOTO FILE

Entitled to relief *for the state’s failure to disclose police department reports.*

MAN IMPRISONED, FREED *from AI*

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A man who had been imprisoned in Oklahoma for almost 50 years for a fatal shooting that he has long claimed he didn’t commit has been freed from custody after a judge ordered a new trial.

Glynn Ray Simmons had been convicted in the 1974 death during a robbery of Carolyn Sue Rogers, a liquor store clerk in Edmond, located just north of Oklahoma City.

A woman who was shot and injured during the robbery later picked Simmons out of a lineup. But Simmons, from Louisiana, has repeatedly said he wasn’t in Oklahoma but in his home state at the time of the robbery.

The Oklahoma County District Attorney’s office had asked District Judge Amy Palumbo to vacate the sentence and set a date for a new trial, saying prosecutors had failed to turn over evidence in the case, including a police report that showed an eyewitness might have identified other suspects in the case and not Simmons and a co-defendant, Don Roberts.

During a court hearing on Wednesday, Palumbo vacated Simmons’ murder conviction and life sentence, saying he was entitled to relief “for the state’s failure to disclose police department reports which denied Glynn Simmons a fair trial.”

Simmons was 22 when he was convicted.

He is now 70 years old.

Simmons was 22 when he was convicted. He is now 70 years old.

“I’m free now,” Simmons told KFOR as he walked out of the courtroom on Wednesday. “It’s indescribable. I did 48 years. Justice is out the window. This is mercy. I’m happy. I’m ready to move on and make something of my life.”

A jury had originally sentenced Simmons and Roberts to death. Their sentences were reduced to life in prison in 1977 after U.S. Supreme Court rulings related to capital punishment.

Roberts was released on parole in 2008 and testified at an April hearing that he was innocent, the Oklahoman reported.

Oklahoma AG Wants Law Firms To Investigate Winter Storm Natural Gas Costs

By PAUL MONIES, OKLAHOMA WATCH

STORM NATURAL GAS COSTS

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond on Tuesday promised the “largest lawsuit in state history” if natural gas marketers manipulated the trading market during a massive winter storm that hit the central United States in February 2021.

Ratepayers of the state’s top investor-owned utilities are paying billions of dollars in higher bill surcharges for decades stemming from natural gas purchased during Winter Storm Uri. Prices in the trading hub covering Oklahoma spiked from \$2 a unit to almost \$1,200 during the storm.

Drummond said his office plans to contract with outside law firms to help with a possible lawsuit against market manipulators. He said none of the blame for the higher natural gas prices lay at the feet of either Oklahoma’s oil and gas industry or the utilities buying the fuel for heating and electricity generation.

“Here in Oklahoma, families and businesses suffered greatly and they are still suffering, paying the prices in the form of higher utility rates. It’s important to understand our oil and gas industry is not to blame. It is equally important to understand that our utility companies are not to blame,” Drummond said.

“But make no mistake: There are indeed guilty

STORM NATURAL GAS COSTS *cont. A6*



OKLAHOMA STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL GENTNER DRUMMOND, his office plans to contract with outside law firms to help with a possible lawsuit against energy market manipulators. 8, 2023. PHOTO PAUL MONIES/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Oklahoma Lobbyist Spending Rebounds From Pandemic-Era Decline

By KEATON ROSS, OKLAHOMA WATCH

SPENDING REBOUNDS

Oklahoma lobbyists have spent nearly \$380,000 this year on gifts, meals and beverages for state legislators and other elected officials through May, a 42% increase over the same period two years ago.

With COVID-19 concerns heightened, advocacy groups scaled back large in-person gatherings during the 2021 legislative session. Expenditure reports filed with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission show that sort of spending has rebounded.

In late April, the Oklahoma Restaurant Association spent \$21,000 to host a dinner reception for legislators at the Embassy Suites hotel. The Oklahoma Cattleman’s Association spent nearly \$3,900 to serve lawmakers and their staff ribeye steak sandwiches and chips for lunch on May 16. Under current reporting guidelines, lobbyists aren’t required to disclose individual recipients if every legislator is invited to an event.

Geoff Long, executive director of the Oklahoma Society of Professional Advocates, said scarce venue availability and rising inflation coupled to make hosting large-scale events during the pandemic more difficult. As concerns over the virus wane, lobbyists

SPENDING REBOUNDS *cont. A6*

Clearview: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

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

Located in Okfuskee County eight miles southeast of Okemah, County eight miles southeast of Okemah, Clearview is one of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing.



The town was founded in 1903 along the tracks of the Fort Smith and Western Railroad. J. A. Roper, Lemuel Jackson, and John Grayson platted the town site and formed the Lincoln Townsite Company to attract settlers and advertise the settlement. The post office was originally designated Lincoln, but in 1904 a postal service order changed it to Abelincoln. This, however, was rescinded a month later. From its beginning the community supported a newspaper, the Lincoln Tribune, which evolved into the Clearview Patriarch. Grayson and Roper also organized the Abe Lincoln Trading Company to

operate a general store, deal in farm produce, and buy and sell real estate. Grayson also became the town’s first postmaster, and Roper owned a sawmill and lumberyard.

By 1904 the town boasted a two-story hotel and a print shop. Very early in its existence Clearview residents enjoyed a brick school building and two churches. Around 1911 Roper and Jackson departed, and J. E. Thompson moved to Clearview. In 1914 at a Negro Business League meeting he announced to Booker T. Washington that he owned or managed a total of 5,800 acres of land in Okfuskee County.

From 1916 to 1920 J. C. Leftwich operated Creek and Seminole Agricultural College northeast of town. The 1907 population figure of 618 declined to 420 by the late 1930s. The Great Depression and the falling price of cotton had severely crippled the town. The 1990 census recorded only 47 inhabitants of Clearview. At the turn of the twenty-first century the community still hosted an annual rodeo and supported 56 residents. The 2010 U.S. Census counted 48 living there.

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.

A CHURCH said to have been located in Clearview, I.T. (20699.02.197.329, State Museum Collection, Currie Ballard Collection, OHS)

Featured Last Week



Man In Mental Health Crisis Killed By Passing Truck



Walters, State School Superintendent Drawn To Hotseat



ARPA Program Providing Tribal Small Businesses ‘Access To Capital’

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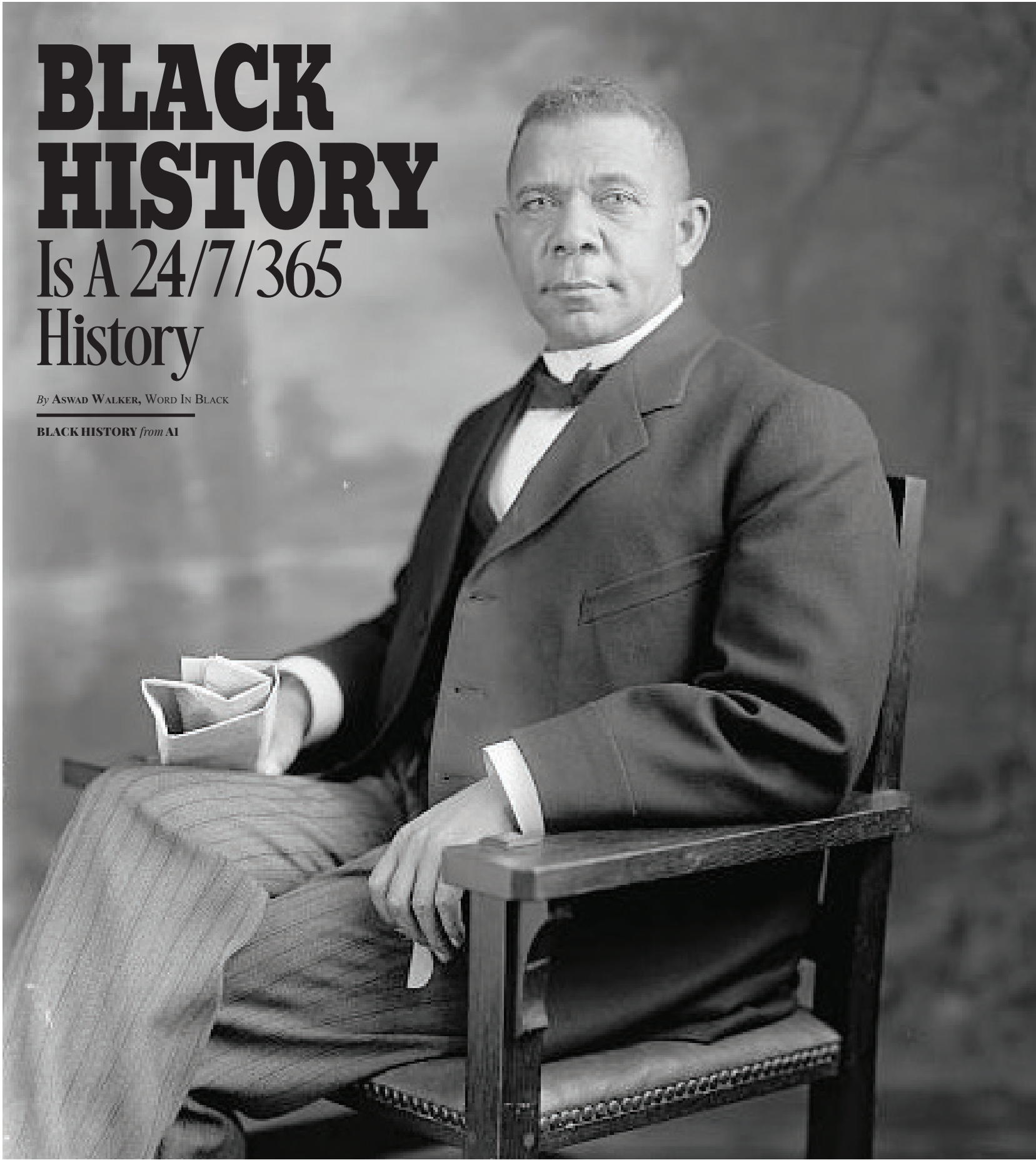
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BLACK HISTORY Is A 24/7/365 History

By ASWAD WALKER, WORD IN BLACK

BLACK HISTORY *from AI*



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Most certainly, Black/Pan-African history is a 24/7/365 history that can't be contained in February. Every day of every month of the year has something to say about Black power, Black brilliance, Black resistance and Black love.

But yo, July is literally overflowing with important moments from our ongoing, trans-generational story. Listed below is just a sampling of moments from our history that should be learned, studied, researched, taught, shared and learned from.

So, check out (and share with your peeps) the Top 10 July Black History moments. And holla if there are additional ones that need to be added to the list—along with this important nugget: my daughter Maisha's birthday (July 25)!

July 5, 1852: Frederick Douglass gave a speech that is now known as the “What To The Slave Is The 4th Of July” speech. Douglass was asked to give a speech on July 4th during a commemoration of the Declaration of Independence. However, he chose to give one on July 5th instead. When Douglass gave his speech he acknowledged the signers of the Declaration of Independence but he made it clear that there was too much work to be done before the 4th of July would be a day of celebration for Blacks.

July 16, 1862: Ida B. Wells Barnett, anti-lynching zealot, entrepreneur, publisher and powerful member of the Black Press, author and activist, was born in Holly Springs, Miss.

July 4, 1881: Booker T. Washington officially opened Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Tuskegee, Alabama.

July 11-14, 1905: A group of prominent Black intellectuals led by W.E.B. Du Bois met in Fort Erie, Ontario, near Niagara Falls, to form an organization calling for civil and political rights for African Americans. With its comparatively aggressive approach to combating racial discrimination and segregation, the Niagara Movement served as a forerunner to the NAACP.

July 4, 1910: The first Black heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson (born in Galveston, TX), successfully defended his heavyweight championship by knocking out Jim “The Great White Hope” Jeffries, who had come out of retirement “to win back the title for the White race.” Jeffries got his assed whupped so bad by Johnson that the police ordered the crew recording the fight to stop, jumped in the ring and ended the fight. White domestic terrorist attacks broke out across the country, with white mobs attacking and killing Blacks indiscriminately; angry because the “Great White Hope” caught that “Great Black Ass-whuppin’.”

July 1, 1917: The East St. Louis, Illinois “Race riot” occurred. This act of white domestic terrorism aimed at Black residents and business owners is estimated to have tortured and killed 200 (though probably more) Black people. Martial law was declared. A congressional investigating committee said, “It is not possible to give accurately the number of dead. At least 39 Negroes and eight white people were killed outright, and hundreds of Negroes were wounded and maimed. ‘The bodies of the dead Negroes,’ testified an eye witness, ‘were thrown into a morgue like so many dead hogs.’ There were 312 buildings and 44 railroad freight cars and their contents destroyed by fire.”

July 12, 1949: Inventor extraordinaire Frederick McKinley Jones patents the air conditioning unit (Patent No. 2475841)

July 1, 1961: Olympic legend and University of Houston alum Carl Lewis was born in Birmingham, Alabama. Lewis, who won 10 Olympic medals, including nine gold, over four Olympics, was named “Olympian of the Century” by Sports Illustrated; “Sportsman of the Century” by the International Olympic Committee; and “World Athlete of the Century” by the International Association of Athletics Federations. Additionally, UH named the Carl Lewis International Complex after him.

July 28, 1967: The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (The Kerner Report) is created. The Kerner Commission was charged with responding to the “racial disorder” that came with the summer of 1967 (especially riots in Newark and Detroit). Here are the opening words of that report which was published in 1968:

The summer of 1967 again brought racial disorders to American cities, and with them shock, fear and bewilderment to the nation. The worst came during a two-week period in July, first in Newark and then in Detroit. Each set off a chain reaction in neighboring communities.

On July 28, 1967, the President of the United States established this Commission and directed us to answer three basic questions: What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?

To respond to these questions, we have undertaken a broad range of studies and investigations. We have visited the riot cities; we have heard many witnesses; we have sought the counsel of experts across the country.

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal. Reaction to last summer's disorders has quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American. This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values. The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society.

This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will. The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted.

It doesn't take a genius to guess which route the U.S. took.

July 8, 2001: Venus Williams wins her second straight Wimbledon Women's Singles Championship. In so doing, Venus became the first woman to win consecutive Wimbledon Championships since 1995-96 and (with her 2000 victory) the first Black woman to win Wimbledon since back-to-back winner Althea Gibson, 1957-1958.

ADDITIONAL JULY MOMENTS

July 23, 1962: Baseball great Jackie Robinson was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame.

July 20, 1967: More than one thousand persons attended the first Black Power Conference in Newark, New Jersey.

July 25, 1984 : Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton, the blues singer and songwriter whose recordings of “Hound Dog” and “Ball ‘n’ Chain” later were transformed into huge hits by Elvis Presley and Janis Joplin, died. Thornton was born on December 11, 1926 outside of Montgomery in rural Arlton, Alabama. Following her years as a traveling blues singer, Thornton moved to Houston in 1948 to begin her recording career. In Houston, Thornton joined Don Robey's Peacock Records in 1951. One of her earliest and most popular recorded tracks was “Hound Dog.” Initially released by Peacock in 1953. Thornton's version topped the R&B charts for seven weeks and sold over two million copies nationwide. However, Thornton only received roughly \$500 for her smash hit. In 1956, Elvis Presley's version was released and became his first hit record, launching his career.

July is literally overflowing
with important moments
from our ongoing, trans-
generational story.

Oklahoma, families and businesses suffered greatly and they are still suffering

STORM NATURAL GAS COSTS *from A3*

parties who are to blame.”

The attorney general said he wants law firms to submit bids to the state by the end of the month for help in the investigation against natural gas traders who may have manipulated the market.

“After careful and diligent review of the conduct during Winter Storm Uri, It’s clear to me that several companies reaped billions of dollars at the expense of Oklahoma families and businesses,” Drummond said. “The magnitude of this scheme is staggering and unconscionable. The conduct in question is well outside the parameters and boundaries of ordinary capitalism.”

Mike Hunter, the attorney general during the 2021 storm, contracted with a Dallas law firm to look at allegations of price gouging in the weeks following the storm. But that investigation lost steam after he resigned from office amid revelations of an affair later that year.

Hunter’s governor-appointed successor, John O’Connor, did not pursue the matter any further. Drummond beat O’Connor in last year’s GOP primary and easily cruised to election in November against a Libertarian candidate.

Ratepayer-Backed Bonds

Rather than recover the cost of natural gas right away, Oklahoma’s biggest utilities settled on ratepayer-backed bonds to spread the enormous costs over several years. That involved selling bonds to private investors, with the proceeds going to the utilities to pay for the fuel costs. Bondholders are being paid back with monthly surcharges on customer bills for decades for not only the fuel costs, but interest payments.

AARP Oklahoma, which frequently intervenes in rate cases at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission on behalf of its members, said utility customers remain saddled with the costs for a generation.

“The companies who reaped billions of dollars on the backs of hard-working Oklahomans must be held accountable,” said Sean Voskuhl, AARP state director. “Oklahoma utility customers want action to be taken against the companies who bilked customers out of billions of dollars in a matter of days during Winter Storm Uri and further demand the recovered funds are returned to customers immediately.”

Oklahoma’s three elected corporation commissioners said Tuesday they welcomed a possible lawsuit by Drummond. But they remain split over whether the Corporation Commission should have done more as it reviewed fuel costs and the ratepayer-backed bonds when they came before the regulatory agency.

Longtime Commissioner Bob Anthony said the commission “refused to do its duty and protect ratepayers from fraud and market manipulation.”

Fellow Commissioners Todd Hiett and Kim David said investigations into possible market manipulation should be handled by the federal government or the attorney general.

“It is important to note that commission orders on fuel cost recovery from Uri require utilities to apply savings that result from future federal or legal actions to reduce customers’ bills,” said Chairman Todd Hiett.

Kansas is Suing Gas Trader

Drummond’s announcement comes several months after Kansas Attorney General Kris Kobach filed a lawsuit against a natural gas marketer, Macquarie Energy LLC over trades during the 2021 winter storm.

Macquarie, a subsidiary of an Australian bank, also sold \$154 million in natural gas to Oklahoma Natural Gas, Oklahoma Gas & Electric Co. and Public Service Co. of Oklahoma during the storm. Those three utilities spent more than \$2 billion on natural gas during the week-long storm, far outstripping their natural gas purchases for the entire previous year.

Drummond said he’s willing to work with attorneys general in other states but his focus remains on the fallout for Oklahoma consumers.

“We’ve done the initial investigation extensively, and now it’s time for research and gathering of evidence proposals from outside counsel,” Drummond said at a news conference at the Oklahoma Capitol.

Oklahoma’s utilities have maintained that they were at the mercy of the market during the price spikes of February 2021. Since the storm, OG&E and PSO have upgraded some equipment, changed how they buy natural gas and put more gas into storage.

In a statement on Tuesday, OG&E said it welcomed Drummond’s investigation and any attempts to claw back costs on behalf of customers.

“Uri was a once-in-a-generation winter storm, and we are proud that we preserved customer health and safety by keeping the heat and lights on,” OG&E said in the statement. “To protect our customers from natural gas price volatility to the extent we can, OG&E continues to source fuel at the lowest available cost for our customers.”

Chad Previch, public relations manager for Oklahoma Natural Gas, said the utility did everything it could to keep its customers warm and safe during Winter Storm Uri.

“Oklahoma Natural Gas secures the natural gas its customers need and delivers that gas to their homes and businesses,” Previch said. “We do not set the price of natural gas nor profit from it.”

PAUL MONIES has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2017 and covers state agencies and public health. Contact him at (571) 319-3289 or pmonies@oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter @pmonies.

Most Oklahoma Jails Failed Health Department Inspections in 2022

By KEATON ROSS AND AINSLEY MARTINEZ, OKLAHOMA WATCH

OKLAHOMA JAILS INSPECTED *from A1*



A state health department inspector found a man lying in soiled clothing during an unannounced examination of the Kiowa County Jail in early September.

Months earlier, in February 2022, an inspector cited the Bryan County Detention Center for failing to have working intercoms in every cell, raising the odds that detainees in distress would not be able to reach staff. A man detained in the facility died from a fatal methamphetamine overdose one month after the visit.

During a series of inspections in 2021 and 2022, inspectors repeatedly cited the Oklahoma County Jail for failing to conduct mental health assessments during its intake process. More than 30 detainees died inside the facility over those two years.

Oklahoma’s jails are bound by a series of minimum health and safety requirements codified in state law. For instance, jail administrators must provide detainees with a minimum amount of living space and provide additional supervision of individuals whose screening indicates substance abuse or mental health issues.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health enforces those standards through annual unannounced inspections. Jails that fail inspections must submit a corrective action proposal to the state health department within 60 days or risk a formal complaint being filed with the local district attorney or attorney general’s office.

But unless their facilities are continually cited for the same repeated deficiencies, jail administrators face

no formal repercussions for housing detainees in substandard conditions. The state health department filed a complaint against just one of the 78 city and county detention facilities, the Oklahoma County Jail, that failed their initial annual inspection in 2022. Three dozen facilities statewide have repeatedly failed inspections since 2020.

State jail inspectors found hundreds of violations in 2022, ranging from faulty smoke detection systems to raw sewage leaking into cells and common areas. The Hughes County Jail was cited for 48 health code violations during a March 2022 inspection, by far the most of any facility in the state last year. Erik Johnson, the district attorney for Hughes, Seminole and Pontotoc Counties who took

OKLAHOMA JAILS INSPECTED *cont. A7*

Lobbyists have spent more than \$183,000 on gifts, meals and beverages for state legislators, the highest total since 2019

SPENDING REBOUNDS *from A3*

are again using come-and-go events to converse with lawmakers.

“A big piece of government affairs is really educational. No legislator is going to be an expert on everything,” said Long, an attorney who previously worked as general counsel for the Oklahoma Ethics Commission. “They put these events together so you can put multiple together to talk about issues.”

Lobbyists have spent more than \$183,000 on gifts, meals and beverages for state legislators, the highest total since 2019. While lobbyists may not spend more than \$500 on gifts and food for an elected official over a calendar, elected officials aren’t capped on how much they can receive.

The average lawmaker took in \$1,245 in food and gifts during the five-month period, or \$18.86 per day the Legislature was in regular session. Twenty-three lawmakers, all Republicans, accepted more than \$2,000 in goods.

Sen. Casey Murdock, R-Felt, was the top recipient, taking in nearly \$4,900 worth of gifts and meals from lobbyists. Murdock, who also received the most goods among legislators during the 2021 and 2022 sessions, said last year that dinners with advocates offer an opportunity for discussions on complex issues but his voting decisions are grounded in the interests of his constituents and the state as a whole.

Six years ago, the Oklahoma Ethics Commission has sought new restrictions on when lobbyists may bestow a gift on legislators

Just two legislators, Reps. Tom Gann, R-Inola and Rick West, R-Heavener, did not accept gifts or food from lobbyists. Both staunch fiscal conservatives, Gann and West were the only legislative Republicans to vote against the majority party’s \$12.9 billion budget plan.

West was elected to represent House District 3 in 2016, opted not to run in 2018 and was re-elected in 2020. West said he sometimes attends lobbyist functions but always reimburses organizers for the cost of food and drink. He said he isn’t critical of fellow legislators who chose to accept a meal or gift but remains concerned that lobbyists have excessive influence over some lawmakers, particularly those with less experience.

“I may make a bad vote down here, most of us do, but my constituents can’t say that you voted for that because you took their money and you’re bought off,” West said. “It’s about freedom to represent my district.”

Six years ago, the Oklahoma Ethics Commission has sought new restrictions on when lobbyists may bestow a gift on legislators. A rule change implemented in January 2018 prohibits lobbyists from giving legislators or their family presents for annual events such as birthdays, and limits gift-giving to major life events like marriage or retirement. A 2017 Oklahoma Watch investigation found that lawmakers often received birthday presents, including golf outings and Oklahoma City Thunder tickets, more than a month removed from their actual birth date.

State law prohibits registered lobbyists from contributing to a lawmaker’s campaign fund while the legislative session is active, but individuals and political action committees remain free to do so. State senate and representative candidate committees received more than \$140,000 in monetary contributions from the onset of this year’s legislative session through March 31, Ethics Commission filings show. Reports covering the second half of the session are due by the end of July.

KEATON ROSS covers democracy for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at (405) 831-9753 or Kross@Oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at @_KeatonRoss.



RAILWAY CAR PHOTO BNSF.COM

A Storm Packing Winds Over 80 MPH Derails A Train In A Small Oklahoma Town

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

STORM WINDS from A1

FAIRMONT, Okla. (AP) — A storm packing winds over 80 miles per hour (130 kilometers per hour) blew through northern Oklahoma early Friday morning, derailing a train, bringing down trees and pushing planes around at an Air Force base.

BNSF Railway told The Associated Press that 29 rail cars derailed near the town of Fairmont while stopped for high winds. BNSF

said Friday afternoon that it has crews on site repairing the damage.

BNSF said no one was injured and that no hazardous materials were involved.

Fairmont, with a population of just over 100, is located near Enid, about 90 miles north of Oklahoma City. At Vance Air Force Base in Enid, trees were blown down and planes were pushed around, base spokeswoman Terri

Schaefer told the Enid News & Eagle.

Vivek Mahale of the National Weather Service told the newspaper that the highest wind speed recorded from the storm was 84 miles per hour (135 kilometers per hour) gusts at the base.

Enid and Garfield County Emergency Management Director Mike Honigsberg said there isn't a weather recording device in the

area where the train derailed but he estimated that, according to radar, winds could have reached 90 miles per hour (145 kilometers per hour).

At the Great Plains Co-op west of Enid, one of the grain storage structures collapsed. Co-op officials said it was empty when it collapsed.

OKLAHOMA JAILS INSPECTED from A6

Lawmakers this year passed Senate Bill 844, which requires the Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency to calculate the annual incarceration savings attributable to State Question 780 and directs the Legislature to appropriate that money to the County Community Safety Investment Fund



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

office in January 2023, has sought to close the facility and move detainees to the Seminole County Jail because of the increasingly severe violations.

Counties and cities rely on local bonds and tax revenue to build, operate and maintain their detention facilities. In some cases, raising taxes to construct a new facility or fund repairs has proven to be an unpopular proposition among voters. A supermajority of Hughes County voters soundly rejected a 2020 ballot measure to fund the construction of a new jail.

Meanwhile, Oklahoma continues to rely on jails to house individuals facing medical or mental health crises. A federal class-action lawsuit filed in early March claims upwards of 100 Oklahomans are sitting in jail awaiting court-ordered mental health treatment. The deaths of Ronald Given in the Pottawatomie County Jail and Shannon Hanchett in the Cleveland County Jail highlighted flaws in the state's ability to promptly and effectively provide mental health care to those in detention facilities. Last year, nearly three dozen facilities were cited for failing to conduct hourly sight checks or 15-minute checks on detainees whose screening indicated a suicide risk.

Timothy Edgemon, an assistant professor of sociology and criminology at Auburn University, said lack of funding, inadequate staff training and overcrowding contribute to unsafe jail conditions and detainee deaths. Records show twelve Oklahoma jails were over their rated capacity during inspections last year, up from seven in 2020.

"Jails were built to house people to await

trial," Edgemon said. "They weren't housed to treat mental health conditions, and the staff in them are not trained to do that. So I think all of that creates the levels of violence and the levels of suicide ideation and suicide attempts that we see in jails today and also in prisons, but particularly in jails."

Demand for mental health and substance abuse treatment programs within local justice systems has increased following voters' passage of State Question 780 in 2016, which reclassified some drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. While felony criminal filings fell by more than 28% in the first year after the ballot initiative took effect, misdemeanor cases increased by 13.6%, according to an analysis from Open Justice Oklahoma.

A related voter-approved ballot initiative, State Question 781, was designed to transfer funds saved from reducing the state's prison population to local justice systems for treatment programs. But until recently, the Legislature has struggled to settle on a process to calculate the savings and disburse funds to counties, leaving diversion and treatment programs in some parts of the state unfunded.

Lawmakers this year passed Senate Bill 844, which requires the Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency to calculate the annual incarceration savings attributable to State Question 780 and directs the Legislature to appropriate that money to the County Community Safety Investment Fund.

The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services is charged with overseeing the fund and sending requests for

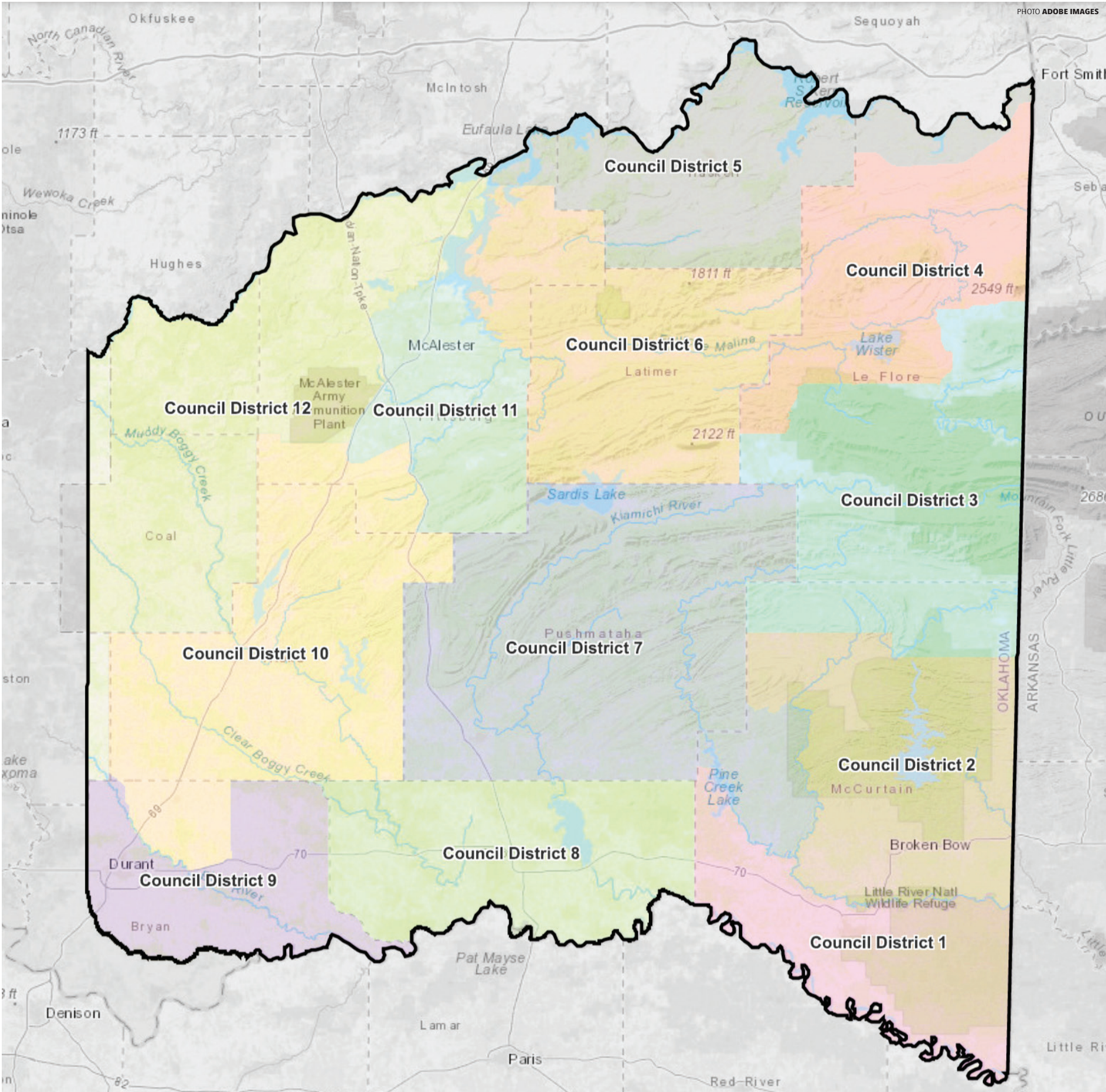
proposals to county governments. Local justice systems may seek funds to develop substance abuse treatment, diversion, employment or housing programs.

Damion Shade, the executive director of Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform, said he's hopeful the long-awaited implementation of State Question 781 will help local justice systems divert some individuals away from incarceration.

"With preventative care, there are fewer crimes on the front end and we can help people before they're in mental health crisis, before they're experiencing psychosis or before they commit a crime to feed their addiction," Shade said.

On Tuesday, Gov. Kevin Stitt's office announced the formation of the MODERN Justice Task Force. Its 11 members will review data from local jails over the next six months and offer policy recommendations to the Legislature leading up to the 2024 legislative session. Among the designees includes someone with expertise in successful diversion programs in rural areas.

"After years of focusing on statewide efforts, we've realized the extent of the strain our jails and sheriffs are facing and understand that reforms are needed," House Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, said in a press release issued Tuesday. "By investing time and energy through the Task Force process, we can be smart about local criminal justice in ways that will ensure we are being right on crime, while at the same time providing help to those who need it."



CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL RESERVATION MAP Council Districts. ILLUSTRATION CHOCTAW NATION.COM

FOUR CHOCTAW NATION TRIBAL COUNCIL INCUMBENTS Vie To Retain Seats

By **KATRINA CRUMBACHER, NonDoc**
CHOCTAW NATION TRIBAL COUNCIL

Choctaw citizens residing in Districts 2, 3, 8 and 11 are set to choose whether to retain or replace their representatives on the Tribal Council in the Choctaw Nation general election set for Saturday, July 8.

Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton and incumbent Tribal Councilors Thomas Williston of District 1 and Ron Perry of District 5 were also up for reelection this year. Drawing no opponents, all three won an additional term by default after the candidate filing period closed in April.

Appointed in 2014 after the retirement of former Chief Gregory E. Pyle and duly elected in 2015, Batton will step into his 10th year and third full term as chief. In 2019, he was the only person who filed to run for chief and won reelection by default.

The Choctaw Constitution requires candidates for chief, assistant chief and Tribal Council to possess no less than 1/4 Choctaw blood quantum. Unlike some other tribes, the Choctaw Nation does not employ term limits. Elected officials may serve an unlimited number of consecutive terms.

Choctaw citizens can vote early from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Friday, July 7, and polling locations are scheduled to be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, July 8. All absentee ballots must be mailed and processed by the Durant post office by 4:30 p.m. on Friday. No hand-delivered absentee ballots are accepted, but same-day voter registration is permitted Friday and Saturday.

The following summary of the Choctaw Nation general election is drawn primarily from news reports, government documents, campaign websites and the Choctaw Nation’s Biskinik tribal election guide.

The Choctaw Constitution requires candidates for chief, assistant chief and Tribal Council to possess no less than 1/4 Choctaw blood quantum.



CHOCTAW NATION JUDICIAL CENTER. PHOTO CHOCTAW NATION.COM

Tribal Council District 2
Tony Ward (Incumbent)
Profession: Ward is the current speaker pro tempore and District 2 representative on the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council.
Experience: Ward was first elected in 2015. He currently serves as chairperson of the Commerce Committee, secretary of the Human Resources and Finance committees and a member of the Housing Committee. He also serves as a delegate to the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes.
Platform: Ward wrote in a statement to the Biskinik that he is hoping to continue working for the district. He also wrote that the district has seen growth, but the “work is not done.”
“Let us continue to move forward,” he wrote. “If re-elected I will continue to work extremely hard in our great district. We can accomplish more if we continue to work together. Again, as always, I look forward to listening to your ideas, suggestions, concerns and being your advocate. With your continued support and prayers, I will be honored to protect our sovereign nation and its great Choctaw members.”

Brent Minter
Profession: Minter and his wife are co-owners of 3 Feathers Construction LLC.
Experience: Minter has worked in various construction roles for the past eight years. He has never run for office before.

CHOCTAW NATION TRIBAL COUNCIL cont. A9

Choctaw Nation Tribal Council District Candidates

Tribal Council District 2



TONY WARD (INCUMBENT) – Choctaw Nation District 2 Tribal Councilor is running for reelection in 2023. PHOTO PROVIDED



BRENT MINTER – District 2 candidate in the Choctaw Nation 2023 general election. PHOTO PROVIDED

Tribal Council District 3



EDDIE BOHANAN (INCUMBENT) – Choctaw Nation District 3 Tribal Councilor running for reelection in 2023. PHOTO PROVIDED



KAY HAERING – District 3 candidate in the Choctaw Nation 2023 general election. PHOTO PROVIDED

Tribal Council District 8



PERRY THOMPSON (INCUMBENT) – Choctaw Nation District 8 Tribal Councilor is running for reelection in 2023. PHOTO PROVIDED



LARRY WADE – District 8 candidate in the Choctaw Nation 2023 general election. PHOTO PROVIDED

Tribal Council District 11



ROBERT KARR (INCUMBENT) – Choctaw Nation District 11 Tribal Councilor is running for reelection in 2023. PHOTO PROVIDED



NELLIE MEASHINTUBBY – District 11 candidate in the Choctaw Nation 2023 general election. PHOTO PROVIDED

CHOCTAW NATION TRIBAL COUNCIL from A8

Platform: In a statement to the Biskinik, Minter wrote he is looking to improve the Choctaw Nation’s hunting and fishing program, voucher program and transportation program for elders and disabled tribal members.

“If given the opportunity to be your councilman,” he wrote, “I promise that I will work for the Choctaw people of District 2 and listen to questions, concerns, advice, or any stories that you have to offer with an open-door policy, quick return of phone calls and by being readily available during any natural disasters or emergencies.”

Tribal Council District 3 Eddie Bohanan (Incumbent)

Profession: Bohanan is the current District 3 representative on the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council.

Experience: Bohanan was first elected in 2019. He is a retired Oklahoma Highway Patrol lieutenant who attended the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology.

Platform: Bohanan wrote in a statement to the Biskinik that he is proud to have served as the tribal councilor for District 3.

“It has been an absolute honor to serve within the Choctaw Nation and the great people of District 3 for the last four years,” he wrote in a Facebook post. “I am looking forward to another four years and would greatly appreciate your support moving forward!”

Kay Haering

Profession: Prior to running for Tribal Council, Haering was a real estate broker.

Experience: Haering has never held elected office.

Platform: In a statement to the Biskinik, Haering wrote that jobs are her priority. She wrote that she wants to be “an active voice” for her district.

“With the advancement of computer technology, many jobs could be brought into our area with proper internet,” she wrote. “Our children should not have to leave our area to find employment. We live in the most beautiful part of the state. We need to be included in the growth of our Choctaw Nation. And we need to have a seat at the table in all important considerations of jobs within the Nation. We need opportunities for our residents.”

Tribal Council District 8 Perry Thompson (Incumbent)

Profession: Thompson is the current District 8 representative on the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council.

Experience: Thompson has held office since 1987.

Platform: Thompson wrote in a statement to the Biskinik that serving as tribal councilor for District 8 for nine terms has been “fulfilling and uplifting.” Thompson wrote that he plans to “continue to advocate for tribal members to promote growth and prosperity for District 8.”

“Serving as your District 8 councilperson since 1987 has been a tremendous privilege. I would be honored to continue to work for you in that capacity,” he wrote. “Thank you for allowing me to work for you as your representative. My tribe has always stood by me and I plan to continue to stand by my tribe. I would be honored to continue to serve those in District 8.”

Larry Wade

Profession: Prior to running for Tribal Council, Wade served as the director of the Choctaw Nation’s Higher Education Program.

Experience: Throughout his career history, Wade has served as the facilities management and landscaping manager, as well as the housing improvement program director. He worked in the Choctaw Nation’s purchasing department and spent time as a recruiter for the Job Training Partnership Act Program.

Platform: In a statement to the Biskinik, Wade wrote that he has dedicated his life to serving his community. Wade wrote he is committed to using his knowledge and experience to continue to serve his community if elected.

“I began my career with the tribe on Aug. 29, 1986, and have since served in a variety of positions that have allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the needs and priorities of our community,” he wrote. “I will work to ensure that our community has access to quality education, affordable housing, and well-maintained facilities. I humbly ask for your support in this campaign. Together, we can build a better future for the Choctaw Tribe.”

Tribal Council District 11 Robert Karr (Incumbent)

Profession: Karr is the current District 11 representative on the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council.

Experience: Karr was first elected in 2019. Before he was elected to the Tribal Council, he served on the McAlester City Council representing Ward 4 from 2010 to 2018.

He has attended Eastern Oklahoma State College, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Kiamichi Technology Center and Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology. Karr has 34 years’ experience working for Rockwell, Boeing and Spirit AeroSystems.

Platform: Karr wrote in a statement to the Biskinik that he has delivered on his promises.

“When I first asked for your vote in 2019, I made a promise to you: that I will never forget who I work for, that I will strive every day to make you proud and be your voice for positive change,” he wrote. “I have held to that promise, and the last four years have been one of progress, and unified work to strengthen our cultural and community ties.”

Nellie Meashintubby

Profession: Meashintubby is a licensed alcohol, drug and mental health counselor.

Experience: Meashintubby ran for the District 11 Tribal Council seat in 2015 and 2019. She graduated in 2021 with a master of legal studies degree in Indigenous peoples law from the University of Oklahoma. She also holds a master of behavioral studies degree. She has never held elected office.

Platform: In a statement to the Biskinik, Meashintubby wrote that she wants to ensure continued access to food security, housing and economic assistance. She also wrote she would be “a voice for the people.”

“My work and educational background has given me the experience and knowledge needed to hold this important position within our tribe,” she wrote. “Our elders and youth should be protected. It is essential to help our Tribal citizens that are struggling and in need. Families should prosper with dignity. When we teach our children the culture, language, and traditions then our tribe will remain strong for the next seven generations.”

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.

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1921
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through
journalism
and
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The Oklahoma Eagle

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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

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

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriott 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!!!

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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



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

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.

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

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"

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

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

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA

THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

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

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Tulsa, OK 74103
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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

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



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

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Baptist Church
419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma

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



In The Spirit Christian Church

"Come And Experience The Spirit"

1020 South Garnett
Tulsa, Okla., 74128
Phone: (918) 836-6823
Fax: (918) 836-6833

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary
Worship, And Spirited Preaching.

Wednesday Services
10:00 a.m. Spirit Seniors
5:30 p.m. Support Groups
6:30 p.m. Community Dinner
7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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

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



Rev. Sharyn
Cosby-Willis,

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MARKS-JIMERSON

Appointed to Oklahoma Arts Council

Local Educator, Non-Profit Executive,
And Theater Professional



REBECCA MARKS-JIMERSON, was recently appointed by Oklahoma Governor, Kevin Stitt, and confirmed by the state Senate, to serve as a member of the Oklahoma Arts Council. PHOTO PROVIDED

OKLAHOMA ARTS COUNCIL

Rebecca Marks-Jimerson of Tulsa has been confirmed to the Oklahoma Arts Council by the Oklahoma State Senate. The Arts Council is the agency that leads and supports the arts and cultural industry across the state. Marks-Jimerson will be one of 15 members serving on the body and the fourth member currently serving from Tulsa.

Appointed by Gov. Kevin Stitt, Jimerson's term began July 1. St. Sen. Jo Anna Dossett, who represents Jimerson's district, carried her nomination. Jimerson will serve a three-year term.

"Ms. Jimerson has shown us all through a lifetime of action and achievement how to use our own unique gifts to become exactly who we were meant to be," said Sen. Dossett. "She's a perfect fit for the Oklahoma Arts Council, where her gift of inspiring those around her to meet their potential will be amplified statewide."

"Throughout Rebecca's impressive efforts, she has demonstrated an ability to bring people together, unifying members of a community for a common purpose," Oklahoma

"Throughout Rebecca's impressive efforts, she has demonstrated an ability to bring people together, unifying members of a community for a common purpose."

AMBER SHARPLES, Oklahoma Arts Council Executive Director

Arts Council Executive Director Amber Sharples said. "This intangible quality will be an immense benefit to our work, as the arts are natural bridge builders in communities. Complementing her community efforts, Rebecca's impassioned commitment to ensuring children have opportunities to thrive is a perfect fit for our agency's education-based mission. I look forward to having Rebecca on the Council."

A native Tulsan and fourth generation Oklahoman, Jimerson is a community leader and advocate whose efforts include heading the 2019 Tulsa Juneteenth celebration, for which she brought together an alliance of community organizations to present music and art in the Tulsa Arts District. Jimerson also chaired the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, helping broaden public understanding of the

district's history and the effect of the Tulsa Race Massacre by organizing pop-up exhibitions of related artifacts.

The daughter of a gospel pianist, instilled with deep appreciation for the arts, Jimerson has inspired countless young people as a drama coach. Named a "Hometown Hero" by KTUL Channel 8 (ABC) for her role as an educator, Jimerson's former students describe her as a mentor who is committed to helping young people. As an actress, Jimerson has performed the role of Harriett Tubman, and as a playwright, Jimerson wrote "Resurrecting Black Wall Street," depicting the Tulsa Race Massacre through the eyes of a survivor. The play premiered in Tulsa in 2019.

Currently, Jimerson is the coordinator for Community Engagement for the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office. Her leadership

and involvement have included service on the board of Arts Alliance Tulsa, and work with A Pocket Full of Hope, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Society, Booker T. Washington Foundation, and the Tulsa City-County Library Commission.

The Oklahoma Arts Council is the official state agency for the support and development of the arts. The agency's mission is to lead, cultivate, and amplify the transformative power of the arts for all Oklahomans and their communities. The Oklahoma Arts Council provides hundreds of grants to organizations and schools in communities statewide each year, organizes professional development opportunities for the state's arts and cultural industry, and manages the art collections at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Additional information is available at arts.ok.gov.



**FOSTERING
RACIAL HEALING**
Seventy Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Centers dismantles racial hierarchies. **A13**

**DROUGHT HITS
BLACK FARMERS**
Extreme heat, dry weather, places the livelihoods of Black farmers at risk. **A14**



UNVEILING The Hidden Truth About Fibroids

July is Fibroids Awareness Month. Here are 5 facts about fibroids that everyone should know.

By AMAKA WATSON, WORD IN BLACK
FIBROIDS AWARENESS MONTH



Deep-rooted systemic inequalities in the American healthcare system have contributed to skepticism within the African American community. With a history marked by disparities in pain management and healthcare access, the issue of fibroids and hysterectomies has emerged as a prominent concern, particularly impacting Black women.

As July marks Uterine Fibroid Awareness Month, it becomes crucial to shed light on the top 5 lesser-known facts about fibroids that everyone should know.

Widespread Prevalence: Fibroids, noncancerous growths in the uterus, affect a staggering 80% of women and individuals with uteruses by the age of 50, according to the Office on Women’s Health. This highlights the urgent need for understanding and addressing this common health issue.

Disproportionate Impact on Black Women: Shockingly, Black women are three times more likely than their white counterparts to develop uterine fibroids, as reported by the Mayo Clinic. This racial disparity underscores the urgent need for targeted awareness, support, and accessible healthcare for affected communities.

Varied Symptoms and Severity: Fibroids can manifest in various ways, leading to a range of symptoms such as heavy menstrual bleeding, pelvic pain, frequent urination, and even fertility challenges. The severity of symptoms can vary greatly, highlighting the importance of personalized medical care and tailored treatment plans.

Influence on Reproductive Health: Fibroids can significantly impact reproductive health, including fertility and pregnancy outcomes. They can increase the risk of complications during pregnancy, including preterm birth and miscarriage. It is crucial for individuals considering starting a family to be aware of the potential implications and seek appropriate medical guidance.

Diverse Treatment Options: While a hysterectomy, the surgical removal of the uterus, has traditionally been the standard treatment for fibroids, there are now a multitude of alternative options available. These include minimally invasive procedures, hormonal therapies, and uterine fibroid embolization, which offer less invasive alternatives and preserve fertility for those who desire it.



PHOTOS ADOBE IMAGES

Effort to Foster Racial Healing Flourishes on College Campuses

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS, WORD IN BLACK
RACIAL HEALING

Think of the phrase “racial healing,” and students sharing plates of tandoori or tikka masala in a college dorm room probably don’t come to mind. Perhaps as unlikely: That repairing centuries of trauma involves cadets at a once-segregated Southern military academy or a circle of people discussing their great-grandparents’ birthplaces.

Yet those scenarios, others like them, and the conversations around them, are elements of events happening in Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Centers, a network of facilitators and programs designed to help undo harmful stereotypes, rewrite damaging narratives, and train people to dismantle toxic racial hierarchies at the grassroots level.

Sponsored in part by the American Association of Colleges & Universities, Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Centers host a broad range of programs, workshops, and “healing circles” that tackles racism and the disparities that stem from it, says

Dr. Tia Brown McNair, AAC&U vice president for diversity, equity, and student success equity and inclusion and TRHT Campus Centers executive director.

“It’s necessary work, because the false belief in a hierarchy of human values still exists within our country and within our systems and our structures and our policies and our practices,” McNair says. “So as long as that still exists, there is a need for us to continue to do the work.”

Adapted from a five-point framework the W.K. Kellogg Foundation developed in 2016 with civic leaders and academics, the program aims to establish a basis for lasting change that pivots from conflict and division towards healing through facilitated dialogue, workshops, and exercises.

Based on five main concepts — narrative change, separation, economy, racial healing, and law — campus groups discuss everything from generational trauma to economic disparities and mass incarceration, according to the foundation’s web page.

Setting aside blame and castigation, participants are encouraged to share personal experiences, embrace history and practice empathy through “deep listening,” with an eye on achievable, real-world goals.

“The THRT effort is not about blaming one identity group as being the reason as to why another group is experiencing harm,” McNair says. “TRHT is about focusing and helping. It’s about healing and listening to one another, and engaging in deep listening and empathy and understanding our interconnectedness and our common humanity.”

“Yes, our (social) systems and our structures are flawed,” she adds, “but it is only together that we can actually do this work” of racial healing and societal progress.

According to the Kellogg Foundation, at the heart of TRHT is “community-led collaboration that is cross-racial, intergenerational, and cross-sector.” Open, honest conversations, the website says, are the best way to “gain an understanding of the predominant

RACIAL HEALING cont. A14

Drought Is Hitting Black Farmers Hard

By MAYA RICHARD-CRAVEN, WORD IN BLACK

DROUGHT from A13

“We’ve learned to keep our hands in the soil and ourselves in community.”

With the phrase “heat dome” entering our vocabulary and more than 2,300 heat records smashed so far this summer, extreme temperatures are endangering our lives. And for farmers, the scorching hot, dry weather also threatens their livelihoods.

According to the United States Drought Monitor, 22.57% of the United States and Puerto Rico are currently experiencing drought. And, as of July 2023, 40 states were in some level of drought, ranging from “abnormally dry” to “exceptional drought.”

It’s no wonder that in 2022, 75% of farmers in the United States said drought impacted their harvest. As climate change worsens, it’s getting tougher for Black farmers, who are only 1% of all farmers in the United States — and were rejected for USDA loans more than any other demographic — to protect their crops, livestock, and livelihoods.

A Struggle for Water

PJ Haynie, a fifth-generation farmer based in Reedville, Virginia, says drought has a greater impact on Black farmers.

“It hits Black farmers even harder because we do not have as many irrigated acres as our white neighbors,” he says.

Haynie is one of the founding board members of the nonprofit National Black Growers Council, and his family co-owns Arkansas River Rice Mill, the first and only Black-owned food-grade certified rice mill in the United States. He says he has taken extra measures to protect his crops from the impacts of drought.

“We are irrigating where we can to help with crop production,” Haynie says. “Where we cannot irrigate, we are using practices like cover crops and not till farming practices to help retain and conserve as much moisture in the soil as possible.”

Dealing With Drought in the Golden State

California, the state that produces almost half of the nation’s fruits and vegetables, made headlines this past winter for its torrential rainstorms and record snow accumulation. But the deluge of precipitation followed the “driest three years on record,” which brought “devastating drought impacts to communities across the state,” according to the California Department of Water Resources.

For Black farmers in California like Sam Cobbs, drought can lead to spending more money on upkeep. Cobbs started growing dates in 2002 and has his own date farm in Desert Hot Springs, about 100 miles east of Los Angeles. It’s naturally hot and dry in the area, with an average rainfall of just 6.6 inches annually. But in 2022, the area received a mere 1.37 inches of rain. The year prior? 1.18 inches.

To keep his crops from dying, Cobbs says his farm uses “irrigation water management techniques that are designed to monitor soil moisture and its dryness for proper plant root health.

During the dry summer months, it’s common for California farmers to pump water from underground aquifers. However, Cobbs says that’s been more difficult during the state’s drought years because the groundwater level drops so much — and that impacts his bottom line.

“When water is farther down, it is more expensive to pump out,” he says.

Bone Dry in the Nation’s Breadbasket

According to the United States Drought Monitor, drought is currently the most extreme in the Midwest, with nearly 60% of states in the region in drought. That’s why Black farmers like Cleveland, Ohio, resident Jennifer Lumpkin are struggling to stay afloat.

“The recent three-week drought in Ohio was felt by growers like myself who water crops naturally. I become more aware and in tune to the real change in climate,” says Lumpkin, the lead grower and founder of My Grow Connect, an organization that connects growers with sustainability practitioners.

As part of My Grow Connect, Lumpkin grows crops on shared land on the east side of Cleveland. She says she’s made major changes to survive the drought.

“I grow crops that are drought resistant. I have shifted my focus to certain resilient crops as a commodity,” Lumpkin says. “I had to hire help to water and maintain my crops, which was predicated on training and educating the support staff. This requires time, knowledge, resources, and capital.”

Lumpkin, who also has a full-time job that helps her sustain her land during drought, believes Black farmers are “collectively adjusting by applying much of the challenges [they] see in communities to the challenges in our environment.” However, it takes time and money to continue caring for at-risk crops due to the effects of climate change.

“If you do not have an automated watering system, you spend more time watering and maintaining crops,” she says. “You are using more water and capital to pay for both manpower and resources as dry weather and heat usually make these things cost more under these extreme weather and climate conditions.”

Lumpkin says with the right practices and substantial capital, some Black farmers will be able to maintain their land through the drought — and she believes Black farmers “are doing the work of connecting challenges with solutions.”

“We’ve learned to keep our hands in the soil and ourselves in community,” she says.

RACIAL HEALING from A13

factors and conditions that are blocking (racial) progress.”

Although the Kellogg Foundation had initially deployed the TRHT framework to civic leaders from Buffalo to Los Angeles, the AAC&U signed on as a partner in 2017 after hearing that campus conversations around racial conflict had instead taken a disturbing, us-vs-them turn.

Seeing an opportunity amid the crisis, McNair and an AAC&U team, along with Dr. Gail Christopher, an esteemed facilitator, helped design a college-level version of the TRHT framework. It was an important decision: for most students, post-secondary education is a transitional period in life in which they are often more open to new ideas and perspectives.

With grant money from the Newman’s Own Foundation, AAC&U put out requests for proposals to create TRHT Campus Centers on colleges across the country. Although there was funding for just 10 grants, McNair says more than 100 schools applied.

“Our goal at AAC&U is to ultimately partner with 150 higher education institutions to serve as host sites for TRHT Campus Centers at their institutions and within their communities,” she says. “We have an annual TRHT Summer Institute, which has served hundreds and hundreds of institutions who are interested in learning more about the THRT framework, and the methodology. And we now have 70 host institutions serving as partners with us.”

While the framework is largely the same from one school to the next, those campus dialogues and outcomes are unique to the community in which

they occur.

At Rutgers University, broader campus discussions began after three students involved in TRHT work — one white, one Muslim, and one Hindu — shared impromptu meals in their dorm rooms, sampling each other’s traditional foods.

The Citadel, a military academy in South Carolina, is rewriting its history to include stories of enslaved people working at the school as well as the attendance of cadets recruited from overseas, including Cuba and China.

And at the University of Maryland-Baltimore campus, TRHT meetings at the Shriver Center include prompts that encourage participants to family ancestry to promote empathy and shared experiences.

At a time when entire states have all but banned colleges from teaching about race and history, expanding TRHT Campus Centers seems like an effort that’s flying against the prevailing political winds. But McNair believes lasting change starts at the grassroots level.

“I believe in the possibility of change, and I believe in the goodness of people and the goodness of our communities,” she says. “I’m not naive, and I’m not going to say that I think this is going to be the one thing” that permanently eradicates racial hierarchies.

Still, “I do know that we have to try,” McNair says. “And I do know that any progress we make is progress that should be valued and appreciated, because this is a long journey. And I’m committed to that journey.”

This story was produced in partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



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Seeing an opportunity amid the crisis