

# The Oklahoma Eagle

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SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

LEGACY  
5,347

Weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and a denial of justice.

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*Personal belongings and household goods had been removed from many homes and piled in the streets. On the steps of the few houses that remained sat feeble and gray Negro men and women and occasionally a small child. The look in their eyes was one of dejection and supplication. Judging from their attitude, it was not of material consequence to them whether they lived or died. Harmless themselves, they apparently could not conceive the brutality and fiendishness of men who would deliberately set fire to the homes of their friends and neighbors and just as deliberately shoot them down in their tracks.*

TULSA WORLD DAILY, JUNE 2, 1921

## Updated Status and Progress on the 2001 Tulsa Race “Riot” (Massacre) Commission Report

By ROSS JOHNSON

RACE MASSACRE COMMISSION REPORT *from A1*

Don Ross, then Oklahoma State Representative, serving District 73, gave voice to a city and a nation whose demands for accountability and remedy for the sins of the state of Oklahoma during spring 1921. The prologue of the 2001 Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, authored by Ross, framed the historic atrocities committed against Black Tulsans, the depth of their impact and a call to be compelled by our country’s moral obligation to reveal those responsible and commit to applications of remedy.

In the four-and-a-half pages of the prologue, Ross skillfully shepherded readers along a journey of awareness, outrage, and proposed remedies.

The state legislator revealed how he learned about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, at the approximate age of 15, and his initial naïve refusal to accept the facts offered by Booker T. Washington High School teacher and Race Massacre survivor W. D. Williams. Ross shared that the day following his discussion with Williams was one of profound meaning, inspiring a commitment to not merely become familiar with the chronology of events, but to consider how the related facts would shape his life. Williams’ key question to Ross was “What you think?” Answering that question guided much of Ross’ work in adult life.

Although more than 22 years has passed since the report was published, St. Rep. Regina Goodwin, of Tulsa’s District 73, and civic leaders throughout Oklahoma have not forgotten the spirit and substance of Ross’ prologue, the personal accounts of Black Tulsans victimized, the breadth of property destruction, the chronology of hate-inspired violence, and the complicit actions by city and state officials.

Goodwin has championed the recommendations for remedies detailed in the 2001 Report since taking office in July 2015. A legislator who has well-earned a reputation as a stalwart supporter of equity and justice, Goodwin has remained committed to many of the proposed remedies.

Goodwin, a daughter of Greenwood, recalled the state of Oklahoma of recommendations from the 2001 Race Riot Report: survivor, descendant and victim compensation; education scholarships for low-income Tulsans; substantive economic development and a memorial that properly captures the legacy of the Historic Greenwood District community.

Before the Oklahoma House General Government Committee on Oct. 5, Rep. Goodwin led the Interim Study, “Updated Status and Progress on the 2001 Tulsa Race “Riot” (Massacre) Commission Report” review, centered within an examination of the 2001 Tulsa Race Riot (Massacre) Commission Report recommendations and the progress achieved since the report’s original filling in 2001.

“While this study is long overdue, we are blessed to have eyewitnesses, our great survivors, more than 100 years later, among us,” said Goodwin. “We will stare American history in the face to truthfully discuss recommendations, challenges, reparations, and policy. Right solutions lead to long-sought restorative justice.”

The Interim Study report, built on the 2001 Report recommendations, is now informed by recent data from historians and contributors, who passionately shared their findings throughout the three-hour session.

1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission appointees, Dr. Vivian L. Clark-Adams and James ‘Jim’ Lloyd, appointed by then Tulsa Mayor Susan Savage in 1997, offered a summary introduction for attendees. Clark-Adams framed the Interim Study as an accounting of progress and accountability, emphasizing the significance of reparations for 1921 Massacre survivors and descendants.

“The reason the commissioners listed the reparations for survivors, and reparations for descendants as one and two is because they were the most important things, we think, that’s needed to restore what was stolen from this community,” said Clark-Adams.

The legacy commissioner reminded attendees that reparations was not a demand unique to Black Tulsans, by chronicling the restorative efforts related to Rosewood, Fla., Native American tribes, Alaskan natives, Hawaiian natives and Japanese/Japanese Americans for past atrocities.

**James Lloyd**, an attorney, who also appointed as a commissioner in 1997, reminded state officials of the moral and ethical obligation for repair and rebuild. Lloyd concluded his remarks with a biblical reference, citing Luke 19:8, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

**Steven Bradford**, California State Senator, District 35, recounted the 100-year journey undertaken by the Bruce family to return ownership of Bruce’s Beach to the closest living legal heirs of Charles and Willa Bruce, after decades of legal challenges.

As is the shared sentiment of Black Tulsans, Bradford noted that “the Bruce family was robbed of their land, their business, their dignity, and the opportunity to pass on generational wealth to their descendants.”

**James ‘Jim’ Goodwin**, Esq., 1921 Massacre descendent and publisher of The Oklahoma Eagle newspaper, offered a pointed critic of progress achieved since the publishing of the 2001 Commission Report and unfulfilled promises of restoration. Goodwin, after characterizing the violent acts committed against Black Tulsans in 1921 as ‘domestic terrorism’, directed his concern towards the city’s and state’s “Token

RACE MASSACRE COMMISSION REPORT *cont. A3*





PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

RACE MASSACRE COMMISSION  
REPORT from A2

expressions of apologies and token remembrances, marking this infamous time.”

**Laura Pitter**, deputy director of the U.S. Program at Human Rights Watch, shared a comparable sentiment in US: Failed Justice 100 Years After Tulsa Race Massacre, a Human Rights Watch report in May 2021. In response to local Tulsan perceptions of Greenwood Rising, Pitter offered, “Creating a museum to showcase victims’ experiences can be part of reparations... But when it’s done in lieu of or at the expense of other types of necessary repair, and without properly consulting the survivors or the descendants it can be very damaging.”

The path forward, according to Mr. Goodwin, must be far more substantively paved with economic development initiatives that yield measurable outcomes, a state memorial that rightfully acknowledges the sins of the past and the resilience of Black Tulsans and tax incentives to encourage building a sustainable economy.

**Eric Miller**, professor of law at Loyola Law School at Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles), highlighted the insight gained since the 2001 Massacre Report was published. Miller noted the increased number of 1921 Massacre Survivors identified, historians’ work to more accurately frame the scope of the historic district destruction and governing agency complicity. According to Miller, “Armed mob patrols,” referenced within artifacts not available to initial commission members, were authorized to actively capture, kill, and incarcerate Black civilians during the 1921 Massacre. “A conspiracy of silence”, as described by Miller, blocked most efforts to identify those culpable and suppressed evidence regarding the crimes committed against Black civilians.

A letter, not available to commissioners for the 2001 Massacre report, from Major C. W. Daley to Lieut. Col. L. J. F. Rooney, July 6, 1921, detailing the Oklahoma State National Guard’s complicity in the mass arrests and civil rights violations against Black Tulsans, according to Miller, served as further justification for demands of state accountability. “Gathering up all negroes,” Miller noted, was the instruction provided by Daley.

**Damario Solomon-Simmons**, attorney, who has represented race massacre survivors, Viola Ford Fletcher, 109; Lessie Benningfield Randle, 108; and Hughes Van Ellis, 102, throughout their years-long legal challenge for restoration and victim compensation. Solomon-Simmons drew emphasis on the topic of restorative justice, an approach to justice that focuses on responsibility, accountability and restoration. The Tulsa-based attorney, Solomon-Simmons, whose “ministry” is law and “passion” is justice, reminded all that restorative justice is “the basis of our

civil justice system.”

The moral imperative, Solomon-Simmons noted, bolstered by well-established legal precedent, must compel the state of Oklahoma to satisfy insurance claims denied, approve tax abatements, provide tuition-free scholarships, and implement hiring preferences for survivors and descendants.

**Dr. Robert Placido**, vice chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs for the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, and Dreisen Heath, senior coordinator in

the United States Program at Human Rights Watch, provided insight about the effect of restorative policies, once employed, regarding education. Placido reminded event attendees of Rep. Goodwin’s leadership and the significant benefit of her fight to secure \$1.5 million of funding to support the Tulsa Reconciliation Education and Scholarship Program. The vice chancellor also announced that the program recently awarded a full scholarship to the “first documented descendant” this year, a goal far less than the intended 300 recipients

“If we can  
get it right in  
Oklahoma, we  
can get it right  
anywhere.”

DR. TIFFANY CRUTCHER

Race Massacre descendant and  
founder of the Terence Crutcher Foundation

envisioned.

**Heath**, who has advanced well-regarded research and authorship about the harms related to the Race Massacre, provided necessary context about available scholarships and funding. House Bill 1178 (1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconciliation Act), Heath noted, and the related Tulsa Reconciliation Education and Scholarship Trust Fund, were championed in spirit to address the historic disparity created as a result of the Race Massacre. In practice, Heath marked, the priority of funding was lacking, and/or the priority of hiring preferences.

**Chief Amusan and Kristi Williams**, members of the 1921 Graves Investigation Public Oversight Committee, framed a sharp critic of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Investigation committee’s efforts to date, focusing on the lack of transparency, rightfully perceived attempts to delay excavations and a general disinterest in uncovering the sins of the state of Oklahoma. Amusan and Williams are both descended from victims of the 1921 Race Massacre.

Amusan’s and Williams’ concerns were centered within a denial of dignity of Tulsans murdered during the Race Massacre, reported by The Oklahoma Eagle in Nov. 2022. The committee members have challenged city of Tulsa officials’ commitment to reconciliation, citing mass grave excavations delays and the scarcity of information provided to oversight committee members as required by Oklahoma statute.

In the absence of a clear path forward to identify potential mass grave sites, a consistent approach to identifying the exhumed, and an open dialogue with Tulsans is key, the oversight committee members shared, to restoring the faith and trust of Tulsans.

“If we can get it right in Oklahoma, we can get it right anywhere,” declared **Dr. Tiffany Crutcher**, during closing remarks. A Race Massacre descendant and founder of the Terence Crutcher Foundation, she has been an unwavering voice for restorative justice for Race Massacre survivors and Tulsans disenfranchised by economic, civic, and legal institutions. Crutcher’s remarks were not merely an impassioned parting sentiment, intended to evoke optimism amongst event attendees and those who streamed the session. Her [Crutcher] call to ensure that “these survivors, our descendants... receive the proper repair, the proper respect and the proper restitution” was a stark reminder that the 2001 Commission’s work was incomplete, that the city’s and state’s rhetoric has once again fallen far too short of a moral obligation.... And that Tulsans have not forgotten.



# Inman Edward Page: Oklahoma Educator

By CYNTHIA SAVAGE , THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



The first president of the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (CANU), later Langston University, and an influential Oklahoma educator, Inman Page was born into slavery on December 29, 1853, in Warrenton, Virginia. During the Civil War his family fled Virginia and later moved to Washington, D.C. Page attended Howard University for two years and then enrolled at Brown University. He was among the first African Americans to be admitted to the prestigious Providence, Rhode Island, college. In 1877 Page and George Washington Milford became the first blacks to graduate from Brown, with Page selected as class orator for the commencement. He took a teaching position at Natchez Seminary in Mississippi. In 1878 he married Zelia R. Ball, and the couple had two children, Zelia N. and Mary. After one year he left Natchez for Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City, Missouri, and he became the school’s president in 1888.

In 1898 the Colored Agricultural and Normal

University at the All-Black town of Langston chose Page to be its first president. In his seventeen-year tenure at CANU he increased the school’s enrollment from an initial forty to more than six hundred, and its faculty from four to thirty-five. He traveled the state recruiting students, expanded the agricultural and industrial courses, established the college department, and supervised the construction of numerous university buildings. Within a few years partisan politics emerged. By 1915 controversy swirled around the direction of the college’s mission from industrial and agricultural education to liberal arts. After scandalous allegations were reported in the Oklahoma Tribune, an Oklahoma City African American newspaper, Page resigned his position and sued. A Logan County jury found the Tribune editor, Melvin Chisum, guilty of libel and one of his employees guilty of extortion against Page. Although the educator was vindicated, the change in administration sent the university into chaos. Enrollment dropped from 639 to 184 for the

summer semester and to 322 in the regular term. Page left the state for a time. He moved back to Missouri as the president of Western College and Industrial Institute at Macon and by 1918 was president of Roger Williams University in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1920 he returned to Oklahoma due to ill health. When recuperated, in 1922 he accepted a position as principal at Oklahoma City’s Douglass High School. He soon became the supervising principal of the city’s separate school system. Inman Page died on December 21, 1935, at the home of his daughter, Zelia Breaux, in Oklahoma City.

Roscoe Dunjee called Page “the grand old man of education.” The city named a park and a school in his honor. Brown University’s African American graduates named their association the Inman Page Black Alumni Council. Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, named the Inman Page Library for him. Langston University commemorated his leadership in Page Hall.

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.

ROSENWALD HALL AT NEW LIMA (19687.  
TO.N033.67.1.4, Chester R. Cowen Collection, OHS).

## Featured Last Week



‘The Rebuilding of Black Wall Street’: Scenes From The Revival

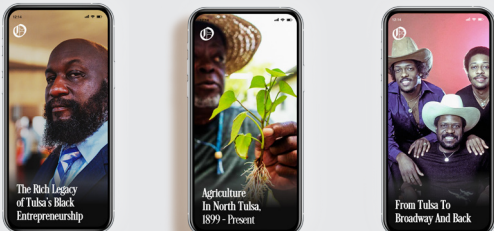


New TPS Supt.Gives Progress Report To State Board



Minority Oklahomans Disproportionately Sued Over Debt

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## WHEN COMPLETE The Agency Expects To Have Removed 272,000 Members From SoonerCare Rolls

### HEALTH CARE from A1

More than 14,000 African Americans across Oklahoma have lost SoonerCare health coverage (also known as Medicaid). Four thousand residents of Tulsa County have been affected, according to the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) statistics provided to The Oklahoma Eagle in a series of interviews and emails. Many of those losing coverage will not know when their benefits have been lost, critics of the purging of the Medicaid program allege.

The elimination of those receiving Medicaid coverage is part of a statewide trend. Since April, over 150,000 Oklahomans have been removed from the state's health insurance plan. That number includes 25,000 in Tulsa County. OHCA has also scheduled the displacement of an additional 122,000 beneficiaries from the program over the next several months.

The cutbacks are a significant blow to many north Tulsans since Medicaid provides crucial access to health care for many in the community who have no other means of receiving essential medical treatment. Research shows that Hispanic and Black people are likely to be disproportionately impacted by this unwinding, according to KFF, formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation. While the Black population of Tulsa County is 11%, the agency estimates 17% of the disenrolled will be African American. Thus, the Black population of Tulsa County is over 50% more likely to be purged from SoonerCare than the rest of the population.

State officials nationwide are sweeping through the ranks of the poor and most vulnerable, stripping millions of government health insurance. As the COVID-19 pandemic officially ended, Oklahoma and all other states must recertify eligibility for all Medicaid health insurance participants. Over 90 million people are being reviewed for potential ejection from the program.

When complete, the agency expects to have removed 272,000 members from SoonerCare rolls, or approximately 20% of its 1.3 million beneficiaries. OHCA estimates that over 46,000 Tulsa County residents will lose SoonerCare, including

Since April, over 150,000 Oklahomans have been removed from the state's health insurance plan. That number includes 25,000 in Tulsa County. OHCA has also scheduled the displacement of an additional 122,000 beneficiaries from the program over the next several months.

8,000 African Americans and thousands of children.

This enrollment purging will hit north Tulsans hard because Medicaid health insurance eligibility includes many low-income households. North Tulsa is home to a concentration of low-income individuals and families. Household income for Blacks and other minorities is a fraction of that for whites in Tulsa, while the poverty rate is multiple times larger. Over half of Blacks live in north Tulsa, where the federal poverty rate - used as an income benchmark (133%) for SoonerCare participation - is over 30%.

### Post Pandemic Disenrollment

Medicaid is a federal insurance program administered by the states that provide health care benefits principally to low-income individuals and the aged, blind, and disabled. Over 90 million individuals are enrolled nationwide. About 1.3 million are "members" of Oklahoma's version of the program, SoonerCare. This includes 165,000 people who are members in Tulsa County participating in one or more SoonerCare aid programs. That constitutes approximately 25% of the population in the county. Over 50% of SoonerCare beneficiaries are children.

During the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment ballooned as states were prohibited from removing participants from their programs because of the public health emergency, regardless of eligibility. Beginning earlier this year, states were required to recertify participants for eligibility. In April, Oklahoma started a nine-month process to "disenroll" or "unwind" membership, terms used by the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. The Oklahoma department has a budget of \$10.5 billion in FY 2024, more than two-thirds funded by the federal government.

Following federal guidelines, OHCA developed a comprehensive and detailed plan to recertify SoonerCare participants. An "Oklahoma Communications Plan" was prepared over a year before the declared public health emergency for the pandemic ended on May 11, 2023, having lasted approximately three years.

Oklahoma was one of the first states to initiate the disenrollment process but is doing it more methodically than other states,

according to OHCA Public Information Officer (PIO) Emily Long in interviews with The Oklahoma Eagle. Long confirmed that the disenrollment strategy was to begin with the "least vulnerable first" and make multiple attempts to contact SoonerCare members through their individual portal at the agency's website, as well as postal "mail, email, phone calls, texts, social media, and media releases."

### Procedural terminations

April Anonsen, a senior director of Enrollment, Eligibility, and Coverage at OHCA, acknowledged some members were unreachable or unresponsive but needed to complete the renewal process. This response failure resulted in what Long said is a "procedural disenrollment or termination." The PIO spokesperson defined procedural termination as a failure by the member to provide "requested information," resulting in "no confirmation of ineligibility."

The KFF, an independent monitor of states' disenrollment process, pegged Oklahoma's "procedural disenrollment" rate at 75% of total terminations through August 2023.

In a written response to The Oklahoma Eagle commenting on this finding, Long emphasized the agency's extensive outreach efforts. "Before their coverage ends, members are reprocessed and compared with data matches to determine if they may be eligible for their current program or another program," she said. Senior Director Anonsen added that Oklahoma "was the only state to have a real-time application process" so members could reenroll promptly, "even at the doctor's office."

Nevertheless, in an official agency website posting in August - the most recent month reported for activity - the agency disenrolled 34,429 members statewide, with "93.4% Procedural Denial Disenrolled." This tally included 5,669 dropped in Tulsa County at a comparable procedural disenrollment rate.

### Political opposition to Medicaid

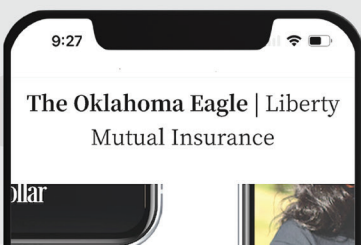
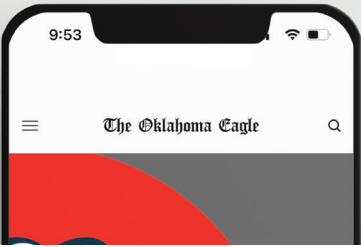
Most Republican state officials have a record of opposing Medicaid participation. Medicaid is a federally mandated program that requires state financial participation

HEALTH CARE cont. A7

The Oklahoma Eagle

### Our Mission

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







THE OKLAHOMA SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS is seen in Oklahoma City. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

ELITE SCHOOL ALLEGATIONS from A1

As a student at the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics, Lawton Blanchard, who is Black and queer, said she was belittled, called stupid and mocked by physics professor Kurt Bachmann.

Once, after berating Blanchard over homework, Bachmann remarked in class that she should spend less time on her hair and more time studying, Blanchard said. Another time, the professor called her an embarrassment to the school, Blanchard said.

When Blanchard reported the professor’s behavior to a counselor, the student was told there wasn’t anything they could do.

“The safeguards literally do not exist except to protect teachers,” Blanchard said.

Another former student, Dene Betz, reported her science professor, Mark Li, to school leaders after a classroom experiment took an uncomfortable turn. While teaching a lesson on nerve receptors, Li had Betz and another female student go into a closet to test the sensitivity of their nipples, Betz said.

Li, who taught reproductive biology, made inappropriate, sexual comments so regularly students nicknamed him Sex Li to differentiate him from another professor with the same last name, said Morgan Johnston, who graduated from OSSM in 2016.

Following an Oklahoma Watch investigation into how the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics ignored female employees’ reports of sexual harassment and discrimination, former students of the school came forward with stories of how the misogynistic and toxic culture permeated their experiences, too.

The school has operated for three decades without an employee handbook or agency rules prohibiting sexual harassment or abuse.

OSSM is a state-funded high school for academically advanced juniors and seniors that regularly ranks as one of the top 10 high schools in the country.

But unlike public schools and many private schools, OSSM doesn’t fall under Title IX, the federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in schools and school activities, according to the attorney general’s office, because the school doesn’t receive any federal funding. It’s a state-appropriated agency that received about \$6.5 million this year.

In the wake of a lawsuit by former employee Keli Pueblo, school leaders are implementing reforms. The school rolled out an anonymous incident reporting system last week and has re-established the board’s personnel subcommittee, which is leading an effort to hire a consultant to review the school’s personnel policies and procedures. That work is to include an employee handbook.

President Tony Cornforth said in a written statement to Oklahoma Watch that the school has zero tolerance for harassment or

*OSSM is a state-funded high school for academically advanced juniors and seniors that regularly ranks as one of the top 10 high schools in the country.*

discrimination of any kind. He encouraged anyone with concerns to contact his administration.

Li and Bachmann were placed on administrative leave while the school investigates, according to two employees who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Cornforth, in an email to staff dated Sept. 20, announced the leave without naming them.

Bachmann denied bullying students. “I never said any student is stupid,” Bachmann said. “That’s absolutely false. But I might say students aren’t well prepared or something like that.”

Li, in response to a detailed list of allegations, said the student’s recollection of the nerve receptors lesson is far-fetched and needs clarification and context. Students have 14 body regions to choose from for the experiment, the breast being one. Li said he makes it clear choosing the breast is optional.

“Those students who insisted on doing the test would go to a separate room (not a closet) in a pair by themselves (two males or females) and lock themselves behind,” Li wrote.

Former Students Had Similar Experiences

Oklahoma Watch interviewed nine former students who attended between 2004 and 2018 about their experiences. They

described hazing, bullying and humiliating girls for their perceived sexuality. Some struggled with mental health issues after graduation, which some attributed to the high-pressure academics.

But their top concerns were about Bachmann and Li.

In class, Li once brought out a vibrator and offered to let any of the female students borrow it after class, Morgan Johnston recalled. Li denied that and said it was a muscle massager used for a lab experiment on nerve receptors.

He asked students who they were dating, and offered his office as a space for alone time, despite rules against student relationships, Johnston said.

“Even as teenagers, we thought, ‘We’re pretty sure this is a strange thing for him to be doing,’” Johnston said.

Three female students in April 2022 reported Li had made sexual comments in class, records show. The students told Pueblo, and Pueblo reported it to Frank Wang, then the president, and Brent Richards, vice president for academic services.

Pueblo reported to federal authorities and school administrators that on multiple occasions Li asked female students and colleagues, “You want to watch me jerk them off?” referring to various animals and living organisms in his anatomy courses and laboratories.

Adults, too, complained about Li following a camp for middle school math and science teachers held at OSSM each summer. At least six participants wrote negative comments about Li in their evaluations.

“Dr. Li told way too many dirty jokes that I believe were unprofessional,” one wrote. “They made me feel very uncomfortable and embarrassed and, in my opinion, were completely unnecessary.”

“One issue I did not approve of was Dr. Li would use sexual comments, innuendos, and jokes during every class and during opportunities he had to address the whole group, during the welcome speech, and bus rides,” wrote another.

Pueblo, then the development director for OSSM, reported those concerns to three administrators at the school. Li has been an instructor for the camp for 20 years, and director for the past nine years.

“Those silly jokes were meant to create a relaxed atmosphere for the workshop, and not directed at any person or with any ill intent,” he told Oklahoma Watch in response to the 2019 evaluations.

This year’s evaluations contained no negative remarks, he said.

Betz, who graduated from OSSM in 2013, said Li sometimes asked her if she was masturbating. He brought wine on campus and tried to get her to drink with him, she said. She eventually reported him to Jack Gleason, her dorm supervisor. But it was Betz who was kicked off campus; the school called her parents and claimed she tried to commit suicide, which Betz denied. She had to move out of the dorms, despite being just weeks away from graduation.

“They said no, we can’t let you on campus because you’ve expressed concerns about Mark Li,” Betz recalled. “I said, ‘Well, that doesn’t really make sense. Why wouldn’t he be removed from campus?’”

Rebecca Morris, an OSSM alumna who worked at the school from 2011 to 2019, said she was especially concerned about Li because he lived in the dorms.

“I didn’t know as a student, but as staff, I noticed how he befriended the loneliest girls,” Morris said.

In 2014, Morris heard a disturbing report about Bachmann, the physics professor. A female student, who declined to be interviewed, told Morris that Bachmann made comments that made her uncomfortable on a school trip to China. He used sexual innuendos in front of others on the trip and, at one point, said female students at OSSM give oral sex in the parking lot, Morris said.

Bachmann denied those comments. Morris reported the incident via email to the vice president of academic services, who oversaw teaching faculty, and the dean of students. Two weeks had passed since the student’s report, and in the email, Morris said she regretted not telling someone sooner.

“I have become ‘accustomed’ to his behavior,” she wrote. “I recognize now that





PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

# PARTY-LINE OPPOSITION THREATENS HEALTH

HEALTH CARE *from A5*

and administration and is thus subject to significant state government oversight and control. The OHCA is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Oklahoma Governor (5), the House Speaker (2), and the Senate President (2). This all-Republican-appointed political body establishes policies and adopts rules for SoonerCare, including the disenrollment process underway.

A majority of Oklahoma Republican elected officials opposed the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA), which expanded Medicaid membership. A key provision in the legislation increased the Medicaid income eligibility threshold to 133% of the federal poverty level effective in January 2014. Oklahoma declined the Medicaid expansion even though the federal government funded 100% of the cost through 2016. After that, the federal contribution gradually reduced to 90% but remains today's federal contribution.

And yet, Oklahoma residents approved a ballot measure in June 2020 approving Medicaid (SoonerCare) expansion effective in 2021. Oklahoma was the 37th state to approve the expansion of membership, one of five to do so by referendum, but the only state to accomplish this through a state constitutional amendment. Gov. Kevin Stitt and other Republicans opposed the ballot measure, claiming expansion would strain the state's health care infrastructure and finances.

Following the successful referendum, Stitt made a last-ditch effort to privatize SoonerCare by outsourcing health care for most recipients. The Oklahoma Supreme Court blocked the OCHA from doing so in June 2021, only weeks before the expansion became effective. In the first month of expansion, 145,000 newly eligible Oklahomans enrolled in SoonerCare, and 300,000 expansion participants were registered in the program.

For questions on SoonerCare eligibility or enrollment status, visit MySoonerCare.org or call the SoonerCare helpline: 800-987-7767.

A majority  
of Oklahoma  
Republican  
elected  
officials  
opposed  
the 2010  
Affordable  
Care Act  
(ACA), which  
expanded  
Medicaid  
membership.



# Frustrations among the students bubbled over in 2019

ELITE SCHOOL ALLEGATIONS *from A6*

while it sometimes feels like that is ‘just how Dr. Bachmann is,’ or some of us believe he is not even aware of what he is doing, it is not appropriate in the classroom, at work, or around students.”

At least three other times, Morris asked Bachmann to stop a conversation with her or another dorm staff member because she thought what he was saying was inappropriate or offensive.

She quit in 2019, feeling like the school wasn't safe for students or staff, she said.

“When there's a complaint or concern, it's not addressed appropriately,” Morris said. “The administration has focused on protecting the reputation of the school.”

In the fall of 2021, counselor Amanda Bonnett got an angry phone call from a female student's mother, who said Bachmann was making sexist comments in class and calling students dumb, records reviewed by Oklahoma Watch show. The mother said she heard about Bachmann before her daughter came to OSSM, said she was concerned about student safety, and wanted her daughter out of his class immediately.

Similar complaints go back nearly two decades. Former student Alexis Davis said Bachmann made degrading comments toward girls in class when she attended OSSM from 2004-2005 and would bump into girls' buttocks or breasts and stare down their shirts.

Davis said when she had one-on-one tutoring with Bachmann, she made sure to borrow a large T-shirt from a male student to wear to the session to cover her body. She didn't know how to handle it.

“As a teenage girl, you didn't know the proper procedure to report sexual harassment,” Davis said.

Bachmann denied touching or bumping into girls. He said the school's president surveys students at graduation and they never reported anything like that.

**School Has Few Rules**

OSSM is governed by a 25-member board of trustees. The Legislature gave the board the authority to write rules for the school, but it's done so far less than comparable agencies.

Two pages of rules exist for OSSM in state records. They cover enrolling students who aren't residents of Oklahoma, renting its facilities, and charging fees for summer workshops. There is nothing addressing employee conduct with students.

In comparison, the Office of Juvenile Affairs, a state agency overseeing incarcerated youth, has adopted more than 200 pages of rules. Under the rules, all facilities are required to post the procedure to file a grievance and it's explained to every child at intake. Both staff and youth who report abuse or harassment are protected from retaliation. Complaints of sexual abuse and harassment are forwarded to Department of Human Services.

Oklahoma Watch asked Dan Little, OSSM's longtime board chairman, to explain the lack of rules under his leadership. He said he could not answer questions until late October.

OSSM also doesn't have an employee handbook. A human resources generalist hired after a 2019 audit drafted one with input from the attorney general's office, but the board never approved it.

“We've struggled to get the employee handbook,” said OSSM board of trustees member Geoffrey Simpson, of Tulsa. “It was supposed to be finished years ago and for some reason just hasn't been completed.”

Simpson said he made sure a grievance policy was posted in the employee break room. But he's been frustrated by the delay

in getting out the employee handbook and felt blindsided by some of the issues brought forth in Pueblo's lawsuit, he said.

No grievance policy was posted where students could see it.

Frustrations among the students bubbled over in 2019 after what they described as excessive student expulsions, sexual harassment, and other issues. Together, the students organized and submitted grievances to school administration.

Their complaints, obtained by Oklahoma Watch, included sexual harassment by fellow students. A female student reported a male student for staring, stalking and attempting to touch her for an entire semester. The male student wasn't punished.

In another incident, a female student continued to face sexual harassment after reporting the student to a counselor. When she went back to the counselor to report him again, the counselor promised she wouldn't have a class with him again. The next semester, she had every class with him.

“He continued to harass me in and out of the classroom,” she wrote anonymously in the complaint. “I couldn't escape him unless I was literally in my dorm room. It made a huge impact on my academic success, I stared (sic) to struggle in my classes and was constantly distracted. Not only did the harassment affect my personal life, it wrecked my studies.”

Decisions about discipline were being made unilaterally, the students alleged. The students' main demand was a council of multiple staff members to consider student punishments, safety issues, and handbook changes.

School leaders never created such a council.

Under Title IX, students would know who to direct such complaints to because schools are required to designate a staff member to handle complaints. The law also requires schools to support students who were sexually harassed, even if they don't file a formal complaint. That includes moving the student or harasser to another class or, if the harasser is a teacher, placing them on administrative leave while complaints are investigated.

The school, through the attorney general's office, said it isn't required to follow Title IX because it doesn't receive federal funding. However, nothing prevents the school from implementing those protections.

Like OSSM, the North Carolina School for Science and Mathematics, after which OSSM was modeled, is funded with state appropriations and donations from its foundation. The North Carolina school follows Title IX and staffs each of its two campuses with a compliance officer.

Bryan Gilmer, a spokesman for the North Carolina School for Science and Mathematics, said the school is part of the University of North Carolina system, and because they are under the umbrella of a public university, they follow Title IX.

The Legislature has increased its oversight of the school. Senate Pro Tem Greg Treat met last month with his appointees on the OSSM board of trustees, including Sen. Adam Pugh.

Pugh, R-Edmond, said with Cornforth taking over as president, he expects to see structural changes and a culture shift.

“We don't want any child or any parent or staff or teacher to have a negative experience,” Pugh said. “If the state's going to oversee this, we have to make sure that doesn't happen.”

JENNIFER PALMER has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2016 and covers education. Contact her at (405) 761-0093 or jpalmer@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @jpalmerOKC.



# “There’s some line items we’re not going to continue to request...”

RYAN WALTERS

Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction



STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION RYAN WALTERS leads members of the Oklahoma State Board of Education in prayer before a meeting Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023. PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

BUDGET REQUEST from AI

Members of the State Board of Education approved their annual budget request to the Oklahoma Legislature today, a formal but non-binding snapshot of Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters’ financial priorities for the next fiscal year. Although board members were presented numbers as “net decrease,” several increases in funding were actually part of the request.

Technically, Walters requested about \$47.1 million less for the State Department of Education in Fiscal Year 2025 than the agency received this year following a massive funding hike approved in conjunction with new refundable income tax credits for private school and homeschool families. Confusion ensued Thursday, however, after Walters displayed a slide showing \$112.9 million of new funding requests followed by the \$47.1 million “net decrease” total.

Asked after the meeting where the \$47.1 million decrease came from, Walters said the department eliminated some line items, but he declined to give specifics, saying he did not remember the line items sought for elimination.

“There’s some line items we’re not going to continue to request,” Walters said. “There’s a few in the budget. So we’ll have to go back in and dive down into which ones, but there are several that we left out.”

Later Thursday afternoon, Walters’ new communications director, Dan Isett, distributed a press release reminding reporters that about \$160 million of the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation to OSDE was one-time money for three-year pilot programs. Those programs involve grants to districts for school safety needs (\$50 million per year for three years) and funding for elementary reading specialists (\$3.3 million per year for three years).

“We are being responsive to the fiscal reality in our state and are taking historic action to direct funding toward a singular goal: student outcomes,” Walters was quoted as saying in the press release. “Under my administration, OSDE will be fiscally responsible and maintain a constant eye on the return on investment of taxpayer money. We are maintaining funding levels for classroom instruction and helping to ensure that more money reaches the wallets of teachers around the state.”

‘Move districts to focus on those

ASKED AFTER  
THE MEETING  
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SUPPORTERS AND PROTESTERS of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters line up outside of the State Department of Education before a meeting on Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023. PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

basics’

Every fall, state agencies compile budget requests to send to the Oklahoma Legislature, but lawmakers are not required to adhere to those requests in any way. For instance, Walters’ previous budget request, which he amended when he took over from his predecessor in January, looked much different from what the Legislature eventually appropriated to the department.

With his new request, Walters proposed \$112.9 million of new spending, including \$26 million “to fund maternity leave and off-formula teacher pay raises.” The request includes \$16.6 million for school employees’ flexible benefit allowance, a cost that increases annually and has been funded in recent years by the Legislature. Walters also listed an \$8.25 million increase for “assessments and programs,” as well as a \$1.5 million increase for information technology and infrastructure costs.

Walters’ biggest request is \$60.5 million for a “Back to the Basics” plan that he said would incorporate “free market principles” to help teachers and students focus on reading, math, science and civics.

Walters said he was launching \$8 million of Back to the Basics initiatives Thursday and would be requesting other funding from the Legislature to implement the full plan. Walters did not give details on what was launched today, neither in his remarks to media nor in the subsequent press release.

“When you talk about reading, math, science, history, we have seen indoctrination in our schools, and we’ve also seen programs that have not led to the student outcomes that parents and citizens around the state desire,” Walters said. “We have to do all that we can to move districts to focus on those basics. We have to do all that we

can to incentivize excellence in our schools.”

Walters’ desired Back to Basics plan would include a number of line items focused in those core areas as well as an additional \$10 million to continue to fund a teacher signing bonus program he announced in April.

According to a document provided to board members, the other items in the plan include:

Reading initiatives

- \$16 million in bonuses for teachers who improve students’ literacy outcomes;
- \$10 million to recruit teachers to tutor students;
- Nearly \$8 million to train teachers and volunteers in reading instruction;
- \$4.5 million to screen and assess student reading ability;

Math and science initiatives

- \$6 million for bonuses for teachers who improve student math outcomes;
- \$5 million to recruit teachers to tutor students in math;
- \$250,000 to train volunteers in math instruction and screening;
- \$150,000 to pay teachers to complete the computer science micro credential;

Civiceducation initiatives

- \$500,000 for civics training;
- \$300,000 for civics training stipends.

Board members approved the request unanimously and largely without comment. Donald Burdick

asked some questions before voting in favor of the budget request.

New emergency rule adopted

Citing a recent decision by a Cleveland County District Court judge he called “radical,” Walters proposed a new emergency agency rule concerning gender identity on districts’ student records.

The rule, which the board unanimously adopted, prohibits districts from changing gender on student records from prior years without state board approval. Additionally, the rule requires districts to inform the board of any future court cases or litigation regarding student records and gender identity.

“Just coming from my own background in education and science, and I can say that I am a biologist with a degree in bachelor’s of science. Sex is not assigned at birth. It is determined by chromosomes and genetic code,” said board member and pharmacist Suzanne Reynolds. “This is just — it goes against objective truth and reality. It is observed and recorded at birth. So to say that it can just be taken out of your record just is not consistent with what we are biologically as a binary species.”

The emergency rule will now head to Gov. Kevin Stitt for approval or disapproval. If approved, the rule would head to the Legislature for consideration as well. If approved by those parties, the board will begin the process of turning the emergency rule into a permanent one.

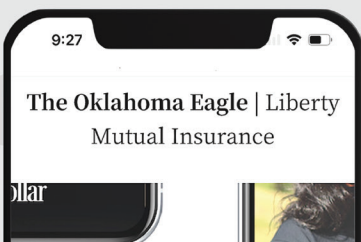
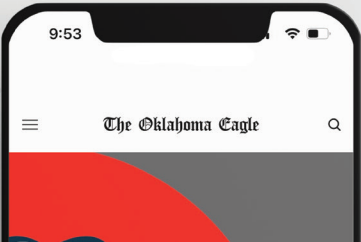
Since he took office, Walters has been vocal about removing what he calls “radical gender ideology” from classrooms. Earlier this year, Walters asked the board to approve another rule change that requires

BUDGET REQUEST cont. A9

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schools to let parents know if a student is using a different name or pronoun at school. But the rule approved today does not contain any provisions for parental involvement in how gender is portrayed on a student’s records. “What we’ve seen is parents want truth and want reality to be affirmed in schools,” Walters said after the meeting. “You can’t change truth, you can’t change reality. So if it says — if you’re a gender, that is the gender that you are. You can’t go back and change your birth certificate. So we’ve got to stand for truth and reality in society.”

Board suspends two teacher certificates

After a 38-minute executive session, board members voted to suspend the teaching certificates of two educators arrested earlier this year. The board’s first suspension came against Raymond Garner, a former Mustang High School teacher who was arrested and charged in May with two counts of second degree rape and sexual battery, one count of rape by instrumentation and one count of forcible sodomy. According to the probable cause affidavit for Garner, he allegedly had a sexual relationship with a student when she attended Mustang High School from 2014 to 2017. Mustang Police Department officer William Carpenter wrote in the affidavit that the former student told him she did not want to be in a relationship with Garner but felt trapped due to the influence he had over her grades and in the school community. The next event scheduled in the Canadian County District Court case against Garner is a preliminary hearing conference scheduled for Nov. 8.

Board members also suspended the teaching certificate of Serena Cator, a former McLoud High School teacher, who was charged in March with three counts of soliciting sexual conduct or communication with a minor by use of technology. In the probable cause affidavit for Cator, McLoud Police Department officer Carolyn Montgomery alleged that Cator used social media with numerous students to groom them into eventually sending her nude photos of themselves. Montgomery said that while three male students admitted to sending Cator photos, she was also in the process of grooming at least seven other students via social media messages. Cator faces an arraignment in Pottawatomie County District Court on Oct. 11.

Board discusses Tulsa Public Schools’ accreditation

Board members also heard a progress report on Tulsa Public Schools from the district’s new interim Superintendent Ebony Johnson. As a condition of the board’s vote to accredit TPS “with deficiencies” last month, TPS will give progress reports to the state board each month. During Thursday’s report, Johnson explained the district’s plan to improve reading scores, struggling schools and internal financial controls. “On my ninth day on the job, I have every intention on moving in an expeditious manner, but I’m also very mindful of the challenges that we have before us,” Johnson told the board. Johnson fielded questions from the board regarding the district’s finances and reading instruction. Board members Kendra Wesson and Donald Burdick both referenced recent visits to the district during their comments and questions. Although Thursday’s agenda offered board members the option to take action on the district’s accreditation status, they declined to do so. But Walters repeated a warning he has given often. “We need to do everything we can to ensure Tulsa Public Schools is the most successful school district possible. I’m willing to do everything within the powers given to me by the state constitution in order to assure that that happens,” Walters said. “I think that that’s where we’ve got to center this focus around — that failure won’t be an option. We will have success in Tulsa. We will do whatever it takes to get there.” After the discussion on Tulsa Public Schools, board members moved into a Walters-requested discussion of how the department accredits school districts. While the board took no action, Walters asked to put an action item on next month’s agenda to add a stronger focus on academics to school district accreditation standards.



EBONY JOHNSON, Tulsa Public Schools interim Superintendent, speaks to the Oklahoma State Board of Education on Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023. PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

BUDGET REQUEST from A8

“MY WHOLE ENTIRE LIFE OF BEING AN INDIGENOUS WOMAN, I’VE FELT SILENCED. I’VE FELT LIKE I WAS TOLD TO BE SUBMISSIVE AND QUIET AND SMALL AND JUST NOT TAKE UP SPACE.”

DakotaRei Frausto, Mescalero Apache and lives in San Antonio, Texas

Currently, school district accreditation standards focus mainly on the business side of school districts, such as financial controls. In his discussion of TPS’ accreditation status, Walters has frequently focused his criticisms on the district’s academic outcomes. “We have a statute that reads ‘accreditation standards must equal or exceed nationally recognized accreditation standards to the extent that the standards are consistent with an academic, results oriented approach,’” Walters said. “Folks, there has been nothing in our accreditation that takes into account academic success, academic results. I believe this is completely unacceptable.”

OPSRC receives grant for charter school expansion

On Wednesday, the Oklahoma Public School Resource Center announced that it received a \$55 million federal grant to support brick-and-mortar charter school expansion in Oklahoma. OPSRC previously won a Charter School Program grant award in 2017. At the time, it was the only non-governmental organization in the country to have received the grant for expanding charter schools, which are public schools governed by a separate board and authorized in Oklahoma by either traditional school districts, higher education establishments, tribal governments or the State Board of Education. “This grant will support new and expanding schools with startup funding, strategic planning assistance, and support with community needs assessment,” OPSRC executive director Brent Bushey said in a statement. “The grant also supports technical assistance on quality practices for charter school authorizers, including districts, universities and the new State Charter School Board.” Reached by phone Wednesday, Bushey said there was “zero involvement whatsoever” from OSDE as his organization sought the grant.

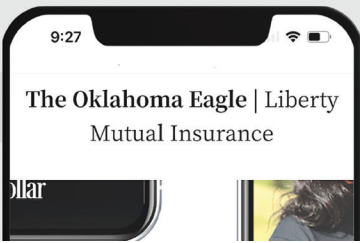
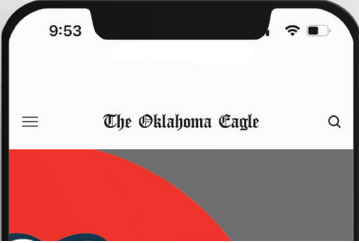
BENNETT BRINKMAN became NonDoc’s education reporter in August 2022 after completing a reporting internship. He holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Oklahoma and is originally from Edmond. Email story tips and ideas to bennett@nondoc.com.

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FILE **DELEGATES** hold up their ballots at the Southern Baptist Convention at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Tuesday, June 13, 2023. On Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2023 in Nashville, Tennessee, Southern Baptist leaders ousted an Oklahoma church whose pastor defended his blackface performance at one church event and his impersonation of a Native American woman at another. PHOTO **SCOTT CLAUSE/THE DAILY ADVERTISER VIA AP, FILE**

# The church’s pastor, Sherman Jaquess, dressed in blackface for a 2017 church Valentine’s Day event

**PASTOR EXPELLED** *from A1*

The Southern Baptist Convention has ousted an Oklahoma church whose pastor defended his blackface performance at one church event and his impersonation of a Native American woman at another.

The Executive Committee of the nation’s largest Protestant denomination voted Tuesday that Matoaka Baptist Church of Ochelata “be deemed not in friendly cooperation with the convention” — the official terminology for an expulsion.

The church’s pastor, Sherman Jaquess, dressed in blackface for a 2017 church Valentine’s Day event, in which he claimed to be impersonating the late soul singer Ray Charles. Jaquess wore dark facial makeup, a large Afro wig and dark glasses and smiled broadly as he sang a duet. Some in the crowd can be heard laughing during the video of the performance.

The video was brought to light earlier this year by a Tulsa community activist, Marq Lewis.

Another Facebook photo, published by the Examiner-Enterprise of Bartlesville, also surfaced, showing Jaquess dressed as a Native American woman at a “Cowboys and Indians” night at a church camp. The photo shows a man dressed as a cowboy, holding an apparently fake gun to Jaquess in jest while a boy dressed as a cowboy is poised with raised fists next to him.

In a Facebook post earlier this year, Lewis wrote: “He didn’t just mimic Ray Charles, he distorted the features and culture of African Americans and also Indigenous Americans with his offensive Pocahontas caricature. He is promoting the hatred that sees African Americans and Indigenous Americans as not only different but less than.”

Jaquess said in an interview that it’s “repugnant to have people think you’re a racist,” especially when he said he was paying tribute to Charles.

“If it had been done in a derogatory or hateful manner, that would be one thing, but the church was full of people. Nobody took it as a racial slur,” he said, contending that people dredged up the years-old posts after he spoke against drag shows in Bartlesville.

Jaquess, who became a Christian in a Southern Baptist church at age 13, also said that he’s part Cherokee and he wasn’t attempting to caricature Native people.

He said the denomination reached out a few months ago about how they would send a packet “where I would have to prove I wasn’t a racist.” Jaquess said he never received anything until Friday when notice of the pending vote and his lack of cooperation arrived. He said he called but couldn’t reach anyone.

His church, he said, may appeal the ouster to the SBC’s full annual meeting next year, as is its right.

Now, “I don’t know if I want to be a part of a denomination that would make a judgment about you without even talking to you,” said Jaquess, who said he committed his life to ministry in Southern Baptist churches. “The only thing I see that they do well is cash my check.”

But Lewis praised the Executive Committee’s action.

“For him (Jaquess) to not apologize, and double down on it, to me I felt this is a pastor that needed to be exposed,” Lewis said in an interview. “I’m grateful that the Southern Baptist organization said, ‘We don’t want to have anything to do with this.’”

Blackface performances date back to minstrel shows of the 1800s, in which performers darkened their faces to create bigoted caricatures of Black people.

Since Southern Baptist churches are independent, the convention can’t tell a church what to do or whom to have as a pastor, but it can oust a church from its membership.

The SBC’s constitution says a church can only be deemed in friendly cooperation if, among other things, it “does not act to affirm, approve, or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity.”

The conservative denomination has in recent years expelled churches for various reasons — most prominently Saddleback Church, the California megachurch ousted earlier this year for having women pastors.

In 2018 and 2022, the Executive Committee ousted a Georgia church and a New Jersey congregation amid concerns over alleged discriminatory behavior.

Other reasons for ouster include a failure to address sexual abuse and for acting to “endorse homosexual behavior.”

Separately, the committee faced its third leadership setback in a matter of months when its anticipated appointment of an interim president fell through.

Retired Kentucky pastor Dan Summerlin, who had been recommended by the committee’s officers, withdrew his candidacy, saying Tuesday that he wouldn’t have time for the job while caring for his wife during cancer treatment.

The committee was meeting for the first time since its interim president, Tennessee pastor Willie McLaurin, resigned in August after it came

to light that he had falsified his educational credentials on his resume. McLaurin had been the leading candidate to become the permanent president after the committee failed to approve the nomination of its former chairman, Jared Wellman, as president in May.

The committee said in a statement Tuesday that based on an internal investigation, it concluded that “McLaurin engaged in both academic and professional fraud.” But it said no evidence was found “of wrongdoing or direct financial harm to the Executive Committee.” It did not elaborate.

“While the Executive Committee acknowledges the collateral, reputational harm and indirect financial impact resulting from McLaurin’s misrepresentations, the Executive Committee does not plan to proceed with taking any legal action against McLaurin at this time,” it said.

Jonathan Howe, who as vice president had been serving in the interim role, will continue that role, according to the committee.

The job of the chief executive involves leading the day-to-day business of the committee, which acts on behalf of the convention when its annual meeting is not in session. The previous permanent president, Ronnie Floyd, resigned amid turmoil over the Executive Committee’s handling of a third-party investigation into how the committee addressed sexual abuse reports.

Amid tight finances, the committee recently cut five full-time staff positions and two contractor positions.

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The Oklahoma Eagle



# A \$61 million proposal to entice new teachers and reward teachers and tutors with bonuses

EDUCATION BUDGET *from A1*

The Board of Education approved the request for fiscal year 2025 totaling \$3.92 billion at its regular meeting Thursday.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters pitched the proposal as fiscally responsible because they're asking for \$47 million less than this year's record appropriation.

But funding for this year included one-time payments of \$150 million for a three-year pilot program to fund school police officers and \$10 million for literacy resources. Excluding those one-time expenses, the new budget is \$112.9 million larger.

"We are requesting a budget that is no higher than last year," Walters said. "When we see President Biden pushing this rampant inflation across the country and our state, I don't believe it would be responsible for us to come in after a record investment from the legislature last year and ask for additional money on what they've already sent to us."

The Legislature infused \$785 million in new funding for education this year for teacher raises, paid maternity leave, and other programs.

Walters said his goals for the agency are to eliminate indoctrination and refocus on the basics of reading, science, math and civics, and he proposed using a slate of bonuses to address it. The \$60.5 million Back to Basics plan includes \$10 million for signing bonuses to recruit math and science teachers, enough to provide \$25,000 to 350 teachers who commit to teaching for 5 years.

It also includes \$15 million for bonuses for teachers whose students demonstrate growth in literacy, \$5 million for bonuses for teachers whose students demonstrate growth in math, and additional programs to train and pay tutors in reading and math.

Other notable changes in the budget proposal:

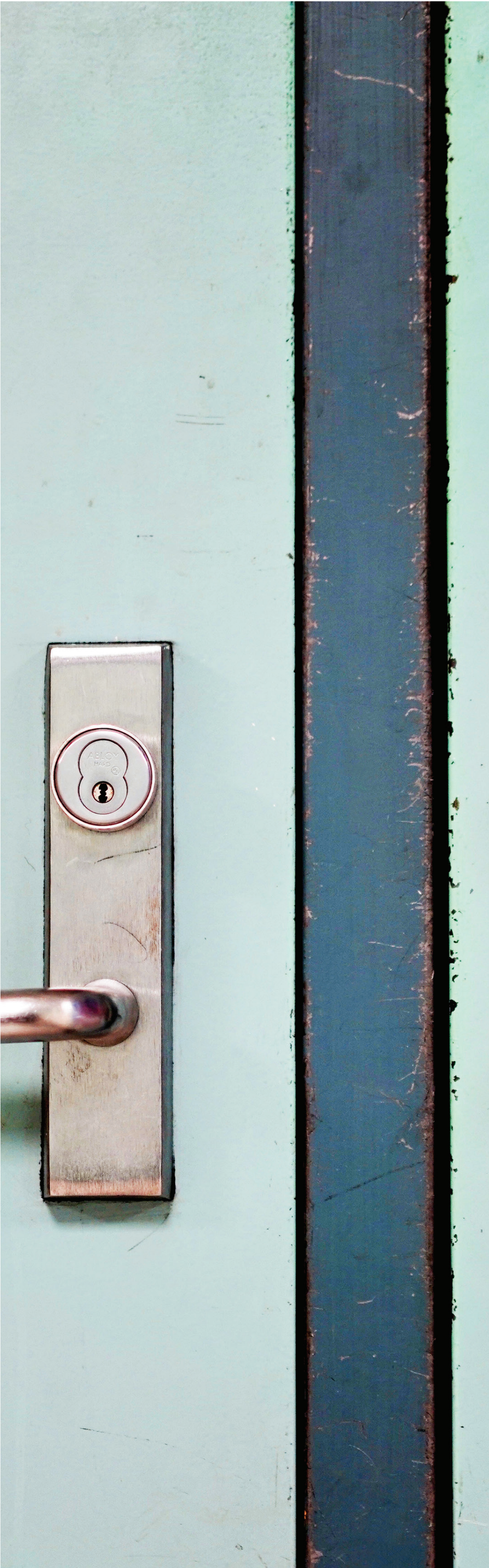
- A \$4.8 million increase in the cost of required student assessments
- \$2.4 million for Imagination Library, a program to mail books to children under 5 years old started by country singer Dolly Parton
- Elimination of state funding for Imagine Math and Imagine Language & Literacy, supplemental online curricula programs, a \$2 million savings
- Elimination of funding for Teach for America, a program to place young college graduates and professionals into classrooms with a 2-year commitment, a \$2 million savings.

Board members unanimously approved the budget proposal. Only one member asked any questions.

The request moves to the Legislature, which has the final say on state education funding. Last session, lawmakers gave Walters' \$150 million performance-based teacher pay plan an icy reception and instead gave all teachers raises based on years of experience.

Walters implemented a smaller bonus program using \$16 million in federal funds. He touted the success of that program on Thursday but details have yet to be released.

JENNIFER PALMER has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2016 and covers education. Contact her at (405) 761-0093 or [jpalmmer@oklahomawatch.org](mailto:jpalmmer@oklahomawatch.org). Follow her on Twitter @jpalmmerOKC.





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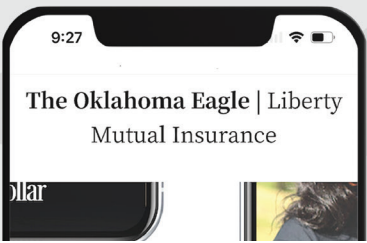
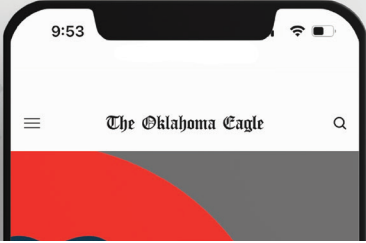
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# THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY



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

## Church Of The Living God

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

Minister RJ Smith

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

## 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 Marriot 3340 S 79th E Ave Tulsa OK  
(918) 230-3022



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

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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  
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Worship Service  
10:00 am

Wednesday Bible Study  
6:00 pm



Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

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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.  
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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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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Bixby, 74008

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Rev. Robert Givens

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Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

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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.

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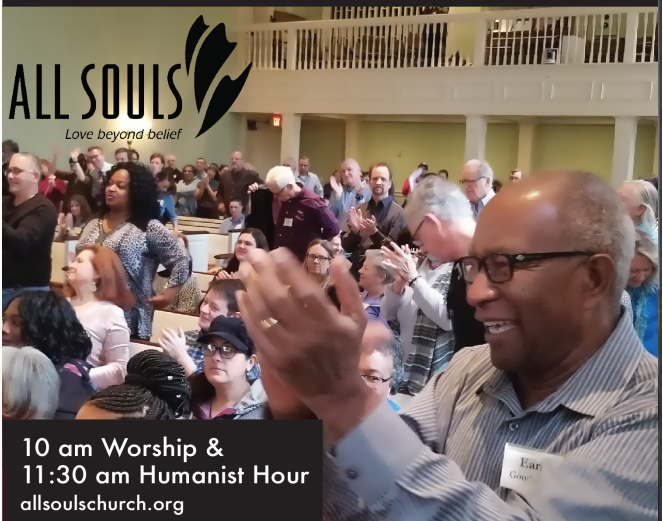
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918-584-1958

Prayer Line:

918-584-PRAY

Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

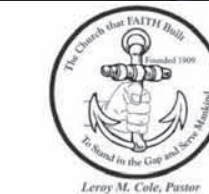
Morning

Worship 10:45

Wednesday

Bible Study

Noon and 7:00



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**YOUTH ACTIVIST PICKS UP THE TORCH OF RACIAL JUSTICE**  
The activist and founder of Youth Advocates for Change says awakening your “consciousness is stepping into healing work in itself.” **A15**



# Teaching Black Teens the Signs of Dating Violence



By MAYA POTTIGER, WORD IN BLACK

Officially, about 1 in 3 teens in the United States experiences teen dating violence. But those are only the reported numbers.

Back in the 1990s, everyone was jealous of their classmate who had a phone in their room — doubly so if it was a private line. Otherwise, your parents could pick up in another room and listen in to your conversations, or at least know who you were talking to and when.

But with the dominance of cell phones, teens can live entire lives their parents don’t know about.

And that makes it harder to see, let alone identify, teen dating violence. It also means that teen dating violence has changed.

## Identifying Teen Dating Violence

While teen dating violence bears similarities to intimate partner violence among adults, there are some key differences. A teen still has a developing brain, says Dr. Ashlee Murray, the director of STOP IPV at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “This is often teens’ first exploration into new relationships and what’s romantic and concerning, what is okay and what is not,” Murray says. “They’re trying to explore these boundaries.”

So, yes, teen dating violence does show up as physical and sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression. But it also manifests in more subtle forms, like peer pressure, threatening to expose someone’s weaknesses or sexual orientation, spreading rumors, gaslighting, convincing someone to skip class or work, or isolating someone from friends and family.

Adolescence is also a time when people are struggling with low self-esteem and body image issues, says Dr. Carletta S. Hurt, a certified school counselor in Washington, D.C. It’s a good breeding ground for manipulation.

“We have this person who says they love you, they care about you, they just want nice things for you,” Hurt says. “And then it turns into abuse.”

In her work as a school counselor, as well as with the American School Counselor Association, Hurt advocates for giving students vocabulary and knowledge, helping raise their awareness of abuse and manipulation.

Teens, of course, deal with cyberbullying. Particularly on Snapchat, where messages and photos delete almost instantly, cyberbullying is “dangerous because those images all disappear,” Murray says.

And teens are particularly susceptible to digital violence. They can be pressured to share passwords or targeted with mountains of texts. Everybody has a threshold, says Brian O’Connor, the vice president of public education at Futures Without Violence. And, due to their comfort with technology and the prevalence of it in their lives compared to trusted adults, they might not be able to recognize alarming behavior.

“Somebody texted you 12 or 13 times to ask you what you’re doing, where you’re going, who you’re with — it’s just not even a big deal. That can be alarming behavior,” O’Connor says. “Context really matters. It comes down to when you start to feel uncomfortable, or you feel threatened, you feel pressured, then something’s not okay.”

Another factor unique to teens is mutual violence. More than 40% of teens experience reciprocal violence, Murray says. While there isn’t concrete evidence to explain this, there are some hypotheses, Murray says, and it comes down to culture and media.

“Teenagers don’t quite grasp or understand all the aspects of violence yet at this age, so there is much more vulnerability toward it, much more acceptance of it,” Murray says. “Teens don’t quite know what is violence or what is acceptable, and they need us to teach them that.”

## What the Official Numbers Show — and What They Don’t

Officially, about 1 in 3 teens in the United States experiences teen dating violence, according to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. And about 14% of students who dated in 2021 experienced some sort of teen dating violence — physical, sexual, or both.

The CDC found that teen dating violence — physical, sexual, or both — decreased from 2013 to 2021, and few differences were seen during COVID-19.

Female students experienced all types of teen dating violence at higher rates than male students, according to a 2021 CDC study.

“It’s unfortunate, being both Black and identifying as female increases the risk of teen dating violence,” says Angela Lee, director of love is respect, part of the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

And teen dating violence is particularly high among LGBTQ+ youth.

Between October 2022 and September 2023, love is respect logged 424,400 interactions. About half of those interactions provided demographic information, and a quarter of them were Black.

Rates varied across racial and ethnic groups. No matter the type of teen dating violence, Black students reported among the lowest levels.

But those are only the reported numbers.

“The statistics are really based on the disclosure rates, so youth may not feel as comfortable disclosing,” Murray says. “We anticipate those rates are way higher. And we do think that there is a disparity in Black youth that are impacted.”

Survivors of color, particularly in the Black community, face increased barriers to accessing support services, Lee says.

“Black youth are less likely to seek support, such as school counselors, due to concerns about confidentiality or a preference for seeking a more trusted support,” Lee says. “Even though Title IX is in place, [a lot of schools] have so many students and only one representative. We’ve heard their needs haven’t been met.”

## The Roles of Pop Culture and Social Media

We’ve actually been fed examples of unhealthy relationships since childhood.

Take “Beauty and the Beast” — we’re taught that, if you keep someone locked away in your home, they will eventually fall in love with you. Or “The Little Mermaid” — Ariel had to literally give up her voice for the prince to fall in love with her. More recently, Netflix’s “13 Reasons Why” received widespread backlash about the ways it depicted and romanticized suicide.

Gender violence is also glorified in the United States, Murray says, specifically citing the stereotype of the strong Black woman. What does that mean for a Black woman who is in a dating violence relationship? She might be looked down on for seeking help and going against what’s expected.

These media stereotypes lead audiences “to believe that unhealthy power dynamics are okay,” Lee says. And it gives them “a false sense of reality” that healthy relationships don’t exist in real life.

Murray referenced a study of movies and TV shows, which found two-thirds of all youth-based materials have violence of some sort.

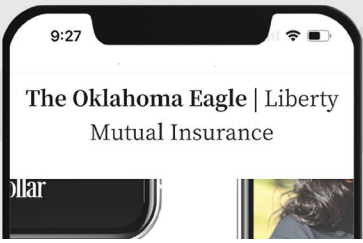
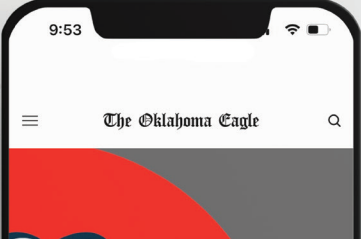
As children’s brains develop, it’s hard for them to know what is and isn’t OK.

“What they see in front of them is what they accept as normal,” Murray says. “If you’re growing up watching TV shows without a conversation about it, you think being possessive of a partner and keeping them captive is romanticized and beautiful and normal.”

The Role of School Officials — and Trusted Adults

Schools have mandatory reporting laws, which require certain employees to report known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. But the laws vary by state, and most states don’t mandate healthy relationship training

**DATING VIOLENCE** *cont.* **A15**





# Youth Activist Tiana Day Picks Up the Torch of Racial Justice and Healing

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS, WORD IN BLACK



Tiana Day is a young woman in a hurry. She was 17 when she organized and led her first protest march after the murder of George Floyd — one of the largest in the San Francisco Bay Area. Not long afterward, she founded her own nonprofit and raised \$10,000 in college scholarships. A University of Southern California undergrad herself, Day is CEO of her own diversity consulting firm and works with the USC Race and Equity Center.

It’s a turbocharged transformation for a young woman who, not long ago, was a frustrated Black cheerleader at a mostly-white, suburban high school. For Day, however, her meteoric rise to award-winning activist nonprofit executive and budding philanthropist is simply about the future. And the future is now.

“I think that my biggest fear when it comes to this work is that I don’t necessarily have a choice,” says Day, 20, mindful of her siblings and the kids she might parent someday. “If I’m not doing something to advance equity for them, (my children) aren’t going to have it, and my younger sisters aren’t going to have it.”

That mission — advancing equity for people not much younger than her — involves learning about the past and dealing with racial trauma, including her own.

Growing up in the affluent Bay Area suburbs, the daughter of a Black man and Filipina woman, Day didn’t know much about her heritage, and struggled with identity issues. Microaggressions at mostly-white schools, from teachers as well as classmates, were routine.

“My lived experiences have, at times, made me hate my Blackness,” she says.

That changed when Floyd died, pinned beneath the knee of a Minneapolis police officer. Angry and frustrated, Day signed up for a protest march across the Golden Gate Bridge — until one of the organizers revealed a big problem: 24 hours ahead of the march, they had permits but no leader. Acting on impulse, Day agreed to do it, even though she had no organizing experience.

Against all odds, and with a little help from her father, a former protest organizer, the march was a success, drawing thousands of people. Day had unlocked her purpose.

“I got a lot of inspiration from other organizers, other young people who are so aware of the issues that we’re facing today and how systemic they are,” she says. But “for me, really, this work is so generationally healing. My father was organizing during the Rodney King (protests). My grandfather was a founding member of the Black Panther Party in Oakland.”

The success of the Golden Gate Bridge protest motivated Day to dive full-speed into advocacy and activism, starting with founding Youth

Advocates for Change.

“Our mission is to amplify youth voices and their intersectional social justice issues through creative arts,” Day says. “We use creative arts as a healing modality to reach young people. I think it’s really important that when you’re doing work in social justice and advocacy, that you’re representing your own passions and your own natural talents in the work.”

Youth Advocating For Change holds workshops and assemblies at high schools around the area, using a “critical consciousness” framework, Day says. The framework educates young people on systemic problems around race, gender, and sexuality, then encourages them to take action through advocacy, self-expression, or both, with support from the organization.

Tackling intersectional issues is important because “we not only learn about ourselves but each other,” Day says. “But it’s very hard to tell the story in a space that is not welcome. So for me, creating a space was about making it known that we are all so different from each other.”

Though she’s been honored as a changemaker, Day says self-care is important when dealing with heavy topics like racism, homophobia, and violence. That’s why she’s becoming a certified yoga teacher and incorporating the discipline into the Youth Advocating for Change curriculum.

“Dealing with all of these very heavy emotions is very depressing, and when you don’t see the outcomes that you’re working for, sometimes it is enough to push you out of the work,” she says. “You start to understand how these systemic issues have come to be, and that awakening that consciousness is stepping into healing work in itself, but it’s also uprooting so much generational trauma. My history was not told to me because my dad was afraid that I would grow up thinking

that I had no choice but to do this work.”

Still, “If I can pull people in, help them realize their power, and how they can use their power for good in the world, and also projected out in a creative way,” she says, “I feel like I’ve achieved my mission.”

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

JOSEPH WILLIAMS, a veteran journalist, political analyst, and essayist, has been published in a wide range of publications, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Politico, The Boston Globe, The Atlantic, and US News & World Report. A California native, Williams is a graduate of the University Of Richmond and a former Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. He lives and works in metro Washington, D.C.

## DATING VIOLENCE *from A14*

for public schools.

But, as children spend most of their lives in schools, adults and counselors should have “some foundational knowledge” about how to recognize, intervene, and refer students to appropriate sources, Murray says.

This comes in many forms, like knowing the current dating language and developing comfortable relationships with students. This allows trusted adults to ask questions without limiting it to one conversation.

“Forcing adolescents to disclose” in one conversation “is actually causing more harm,” Murray says. “We encourage having these

ongoing conversations and partnering with a trusted adult.”

And, when a student does come to you, it’s important to be culturally responsive, take them seriously, and not dismiss the complaint, Lee says. Make them feel safe and comfortable.

From middle school through high school, there are “training wheels,” O’Connor says. It’s the responsibility of trusted adults to be guiding students to what safe and healthy relationships look like so they can go forward confidently.

Although no one situation is the same, teenagers look up to the adults in their lives, Lee says. Hurt echoed this, saying that families play a critical role in teen dating violence. It’s important to have honest conversations with teens about violence and where to draw the line.

“Some people suffer in silence. It’s not okay,” Hurt says. “Find someone you can trust, if nothing else, just to talk about it.”

If you or someone you know is being affected by intimate partner violence, please consider making an anonymous, confidential call to the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Chat at <http://thehotline.org> | Text “START” to 88788. There are people waiting to help you heal 24/7/365.

MAYA POTTIGER is a data journalist for Word in Black. She was previously a data journalist for the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism at the University of Maryland, where she earned both her BA and Master of Journalism. Her work has been featured in publications across the country.





# DR. MAE JEMISON, Former Astronaut, Meets With STEM Students

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

*Entrepreneur, engineer, physician, dancer, social scientist, former NASA astronaut, educator, and humanitarian visits Tulsa. Mae Jemison, M.D., has another designation. She is the first woman of color to travel into space.*

Jemison was in Tulsa to attend the Tulsa Innovation Labs conference. The theme for Tram Summit 2023 was “Mobility’s Next Frontier.” The conference was held Oct. 2-3.

She was the opening session speaker. Her topic was “Exploring the Frontiers of Science and Human Potential.” During her session, she met with local students interested in pursuing careers in STEM.

Seventh grader Lillian Conley, a member of Urban Coders Guild, attended the program. She was one of 15 UCG students to sign up to attend. UCG ([www.urbancoderguild.org](http://www.urbancoderguild.org)) is a pre-college STEM-STEAM program that teaches computer science courses to youth, especially in historically underserved, underrepresented, and other under-resourced

communities.

Meeting Dr. Jemison, Conley said, “I feel inspired... I feel like she is now persuading me to become an engineer just like she is!” Additionally, she said, “The most memorable part of meeting Dr. Jemison was her autograph on a painting of mine. (Jemison) wrote her favorite word, “Purpose” on it and signed her name. That gave me inspiration.”

Regarding UCG, Conley said, “I enjoy meeting new friends and other kids that have similar interests.” A musician, an artist, and a recipient of many STEAM honors, Conley is a student at Enhanced Learning Cooperative Center, an affiliate of Tulsa Public Schools. She is a member of Vernon A.M.E. Church.



LEFT DR. MAE JEMISON (r), former astronaut and first African American woman in space, is with Lillian Conley, a seventh grader at Enhanced Learning Cooperative Center of Tulsa Public Schools. Jemison was a guest speaker in Tulsa for a STEM conference. PHOTO PROVIDED

RIGHT DR. MAE JEMISON AND LILLIAN CONLEY. PHOTO PROVIDED

Black Flower Society

OCT 28TH 12PM - 4PM

BLOCKTOBER HARVEST FESTIVAL ON GREENWOOD

GAMES, PRIZES, & FUN

100 NORTH GREENWOOD TULSA, OK 74120

BLACK FLOWER SOCIETY

## Blocktober Harvest Festival on Greenwood, Oct. 28

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

The eighth Blocktober Harvest Festival is planned for Oct. 28, 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. The annual event is hosted in the Greenwood Business District. The program is sponsored by the Black Flower Society.

The Halloween-inspired activity includes individuals who line up their cars along Greenwood in the business district and pass out candy from their trunks and open-bed trucks for the children. The children are dressed in their Halloween costumes.

Heather Nash said she developed the idea eight years ago to serve North Tulsa children. It is considered a safe alternative to Halloween.

She said parents did not feel safe trick-or-treating in the community. She learned that many residents were reluctant to open their doors late at night to strangers, even if they were children.

“Black Flower Society decided to create an event that changes the perception of our community to create a safe, fun event that celebrates the changing of seasons,” said Nash.

For more information, contact [theblackflowersociety@gmail.com](mailto:theblackflowersociety@gmail.com), send a text to (918) 779-2702, or use CashApp, @BlackFlowerSociety, for donations to cover the cost for candy, portable restrooms, and security.

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SAVE THE DATE

## Black Towns To Host Weekend Activities, Nov. 10-13

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

Oklahoma has the largest number of incorporated Black towns. The 10 historic all-Black towns are sponsoring a four-day event, Nov. 10-13, to raise awareness and inform the public about efforts to revitalize the towns. The program is sponsored by Black Towns Municipal Management.

Cymone Davis, CEO of BTMM and former city manager of Tullahassee, said, “...the main...goals are to bring awareness of Oklahoma and national Black townships, to network with individuals interested in revitalizing spaces for Black communities, and to create a future planning blueprint for not only Tullahassee but for other townships seeking to rebuild.”

According to a press release, the weekend event will include a tour of Tullahassee, breakfast in Boley, a viewing of a community redevelopment documentary film, “It Takes a Village,” in Tulsa, and workshops. Tullahassee is the oldest surviving Black town in the state. Boley is home to the nation’s oldest community-based rodeo.

All-Black towns were formed after the Civil War in Indian Territory. The towns were inhabited by former slaves from the Five Civilized Tribes. According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, “Nowhere else, neither in the Deep South nor in the Far West, did so many African American men and women come together to create, occupy, and govern their own communities.”

Additional sponsors of the weekend are United Church of Christ Church Building and Loan Fund; Bois & Peters, LLC; and the Congressional Black Caucus for New Urbanism.

For more information, contact [info@btrevival.com](mailto:info@btrevival.com), or visit [btrevival.com](http://btrevival.com) and [blacktownsmm.com](http://blacktownsmm.com).

TALK OF GREENWOOD