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PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

# Tulsa's Ignored Black Neighborhoods

**BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS** from A1

**THE CITY OF TULSA** has unveiled a new ranking of neighborhood conditions in the city that fails to include several key Black neighborhoods among those areas pinpointed for top priority for city resources. The new rating system, dubbed the Neighborhood Conditions Index, ranks all north Tulsa in the highest priority except for six predominantly African American neighborhoods – all of which are located in the greater Greenwood residential area.

The city identifies the omitted neighborhoods by name and geographic index numbers as: Gilcrease Hills #2, Chamberlain #3, Walt Whitman #5, Lloyd Park #8, Reservoir Hills/The Heights #9, and Dunbar-Greenwood #10.

North Tulsa advocates familiar with these neighborhoods point out that many of them have had basic needs such as new streetlights and sidewalk repair that the City of Tulsa has not addressed for years.

Yet, a City Planning Department spokesperson told The Oklahoma Eagle that other Tulsa neighborhoods outranked the six Black neighborhoods that were passed over based on the new criteria the city has created.

The new scoring system has 70 “data points” and nine “categories” for measuring neighborhood conditions. The planning tool evaluated 80 distinct Neighborhood Statistical Areas. It designated 20 of the 80 as deserving the “#1 priority” for “equitable distribution of city resources,” according to the City’s Principal Planner, Paulina Baeza, in interviews with The Oklahoma Eagle. They include the following: #33 Garden City, #42 Metcalfe-Magic Circle, and #44 Tower Heights.

Some other neighborhoods designated as requiring top attention are #4 North Ridge, #7 Hawthorne, and #11 Booker T. Washington. Each of the three are predominantly Black.

The six Black neighborhoods omitted from the top priority are clustered with other Greenwood residential areas, all north of I-244 and west of U.S. 75.

These six communities have a population of 23,679, according to the city planning report, making up two-thirds of the population in the 10 predominantly Black neighborhoods in north Tulsa. The city did not carve out the larger Greenwood residential area for independent analysis. But The Oklahoma Eagle grouped them together for comparison because they are contiguous, majority African American, and had similar scores in critical areas of the City’s scoring system.

The 10 neighborhoods are 67% African American. Because of their

omission in the top category, the six will be pooled at most in the next 50% of the city neighborhoods requiring resources, according to the Planning Department report.

The Black neighborhoods cluster are #2 through #11 in north Tulsa (see map). The city uses a scale of 0-5 to rate neighborhoods on data points, categories, and overall scores, with lower scores having worse neighborhood conditions. The lowest scoring, 25% of the neighborhoods, are earmarked by the report as priority #1 for city resource assistance.

## Scoring the conditions

The 10 majority Black neighborhoods, including the six omitted from the highest priority designation, all have challenging economic, housing, and neighborhood conditions, according to the City’s “data points.” In the category of “Economic Development,” the greater Greenwood neighborhoods all scored very low, many of them in the bottom 10%, and two communities had a .1 rating. Lower scores should be given a higher resource priority according to the scoring scheme. The scores in the Economic Development category for the Black neighborhoods were bogged down principally by stagnant population growth, poor employment opportunities, low household income, and greater poverty.

The Black neighborhoods in north Tulsa also fared poorly and thus demonstrated the greatest need in the “Housing and Neighborhood” category.

The greater Greenwood residential cluster again fell to the bottom 25% (worse off) compared to the City’s other neighborhood evaluations.

The city’s analysis for the cluster of Black neighborhoods reflected a disproportionate number of vacant housing units, greater exposure to crime, and cost-burdened renters as well as homeowners. The term “cost-burdened,” as defined by the report, includes all renters or owners spending 30% or more of their household income on housing costs.

The Oklahoma Eagle staff discussed one of the six Black neighborhoods left out of the top priority with city planner Baeza to gain insight into the possible cause that they were not included.

The Chamberlain neighborhood, located in the northwest sector of north Tulsa, was one example discussed. This neighborhood had 34 data point scores in the bottom 25% of all Tulsa neighborhoods. In contrast, Chamberlain had only eight in the top 25%, with all other data point scores in neither extreme. Even the eight data points where the neighborhood scored high were less critical to neighborhood’s well-being.

**BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS** cont. A5



# Frederick Douglass Moon: African American Educator

By WILLIAM D. WELGE, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



African American educator Frederick Moon was born on May 4, 1896, at Fallis, Oklahoma Territory. Son of Henry Clay and Pollie Twiggs Moon, Frederick Moon was educated in the segregated schools of Lincoln County, Oklahoma. Because there was no high school for African Americans near his home, he entered Oklahoma Colored Agricultural and Normal University (now Langston University) in the ninth grade, and he completed high school and two years of college there. In 1929 he earned a Bachelor of Science degree. He earned a Master of Arts degree at the University of Chicago in 1938. During his time at Langston he led an effort to develop a memorial to Inman Page, the college's first president. Moon began his teaching career in 1921 at Crescent, Oklahoma, and he helped the school gain accreditation. In 1929 the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers elected him as president. In

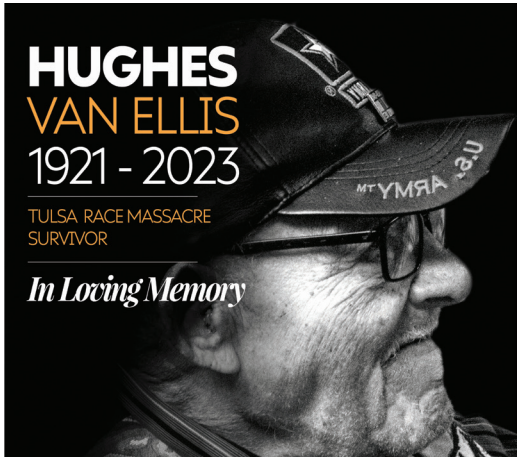
1931 he taught in and was principal of Wewoka Douglass High School, and he again assisted a school in gaining accreditation with the North Central Association. Moon married Leoshia Harris, of Oklahoma City, on August 28, 1935. In 1940 he moved to Oklahoma City and became principal of Douglass High School. He continued in that position until 1961. Considered the “dean” of African American education, he was elected to the Oklahoma City Board of Education in 1972 and served as its first African American president in 1974. He served at a time when federally mandated desegregation occurred within the Oklahoma City Public School System. During this period the school district carried out a program of busing students across town in order to bring racial equality to the schools. Moon was also a civic leader in the community. He served as a director for the YMCA. He was variously president of the Oklahoma City Urban

League, the Langston Alumni Association, and the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers, and he was a member of the National Education Association. He was vice president of the National Association of Secondary Principals and of the American Association of School Administrators and served on the mayor's Human Relations Commission and the Urban Renewal Authority. The Oklahoma School of Religion at Langston awarded him an honorary doctorate in humanities. His publications included Organization and Administration of High School for Negroes in Oklahoma, A Fifth Freedom for the Negro, and Teacher Integration in the Border States. He resigned his position with the board of education due to declining health in December 1974. Frederick Moon died on December 16, 1975, in Oklahoma City.

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F. D. MOON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL BAND, 1958  
(20699.02.197.1620.7, State Museum Collection, Currie Ballard Collection, OHS).

## Featured Last Week



Hughes Van Ellis: Survivor, Community Advocate, Optimist



Kuma Roberts: Taking The BWS Chamber To A New Level



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PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS *from A3*

After conferring with a city neighborhood scoring analyst, Baeza confirmed that several score unidentified data points were “weighted” more than others. Additionally, Chamberlain’s higher scores on the data points were for fewer auto-related collisions, more “environmental and natural resources,” and greater access to trails, none of which seem crucial. The “Bottom Category Scores,” which should translate into a higher priority for Chamberlain, were in the vital categories of Economic Development, Housing and Neighborhoods, and Land Use.

Undisclosed weighted scores

The scoring system report provides data points in categories comparing neighborhood conditions to the rest of Tulsa’s neighborhoods. But the report adds the “category scores are not an average of the associated data points” because some data points are given additional weight “as priorities in the comprehensive plan.” These weighted data points are not revealed in the report.

Baeza told The Oklahoma Eagle, “[The] Overall Score is based on all the weighted data points under the nine categories.” This phenomenon could explain how six Black neighborhoods, all having poor neighborhood conditions, failed to achieve a priority ranking for city resources.

Additionally, Tulsa’s Principal Planner Baeza provided The Oklahoma Eagle with this written comment on the issue, “The data was selected, analyzed, and scored based on a process that included research,

Neighborhood Conditions Index

Neighborhood Conditions Index is a comprehensive report that provides data-driven insights into the unique characteristics and areas for improvement for each neighborhood in Tulsa. It collects data across nine categories: land use, housing and neighborhoods, parks and recreation, transportation, communities (civic engagement), environment and natural resources, economic development, history, culture, creativity, and public services.

	SIX NEIGHBORHOOD AVERAGES	TULSA
Black	66.6%	14.9%
Under age 18	26.2%	23.4%
Low Income Household	23.8%	17.5%
Single Parent Household	19.4%	12.9%
Neighborhood Groups	40	N/A

our interpretation of its relevance in each chapter of the comprehensive plan, and discussions with subject matter experts and City departments. I do not recall the specific weights by data points and category.”

Social justice scoring

To balance the overall scoring, the city adds what Baeza calls a “social justice” component to the final grade to determine which neighborhoods will have the highest priority in the final scoring evaluation. The written report describes this as “selected equity data from the Area Snapshot.” The Snapshot summarizes “Demographics,

Economy, Public Services and Neighborhood Groups” for each Neighborhood Statistical Area. However, only items “marked with an asterisk (\*) were used to calculate the Overall Score,” the report reads.

Apart from extra credit for neighborhood groups, the neighborhood may receive credit not for conditions in the neighborhood but for the demographic characteristics of its residents. These include credit for populations under 18 or over 65, low-income or single-parent households, less than high school-educated persons, and “Race, Ethnicity [non-white] & Ability” characteristics. These are measured against the City of Tulsa averages.

The report does not disclose the weighting of the social justice data points. But Baeza told

The Oklahoma Eagle in an email, “50% of the Overall Score refers to selected equity data [asterisked items], and each data point was given an equal weight.” The snapshots for the six predominately Black neighborhoods in north Tulsa, which are omitted from priority ranking, would suggest additional credit may have been due. Here are the averages for the six compared to Tulsa for some key asterisked items, which The Oklahoma Eagle compiled from the city’s snapshot reports. In this case, the scoring scheme should provide higher-scoring neighborhoods weighted credit for a priority rating in “social justice.” That component is 50% of the overall score for the neighborhoods.

Senior Planner Paulina Baeza emphasized to The Oklahoma Eagle that this was the city’s first attempt at a comprehensive neighborhood condition rating scheme and that the Planning Department was hopeful for input from the public and neighborhood leaders. Baeza added, “This is a living document, and this is our first set of reports to be released.”

When considering “social justice,” City of Tulsa officials may need to be reminded to include in their thinking several key historical events which have had a lasting impact on the conditions in Black neighborhoods in Tulsa. One is the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, whose scars shadow the community to this day. Another is the construction of I-244, which splintered the Greenwood District, dislocated residences and businesses, and tore at the economic and social fabric of the community.

Family income, a factor whether or not young people enroll

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS *from A1*

Students graduating from a high-poverty high school often feel like they don’t belong at a 4-year university, and professor Paul Ketchum wants to prove them wrong.

Ketchum started working with Crooked Oak High School in 2013 to increase the number of students attending college. Three years later, the University of Oklahoma adopted the program.

Of the approximately 140 students who took Ketchum’s college prep class at Crooked Oak, 80 ultimately enrolled in the University of Oklahoma.

Compared to wealthier high schools,

Ketchum found no difference in the percent of academically inclined students at Crooked Oak, where more than two-thirds are Hispanic and 80% are low-income. The difference was in the expectations.

His students had been encouraged by adults in their lives to dream smaller. Attend vo-tech or community college, instead of a big university. It’s too expensive, they’d warn. Our kids just aren’t those kids, they’d say.

“Parents, teachers, family and friends all treat Title I students as if they don’t belong at a place like OU ... this is the most difficult change,” Ketchum said.

Of those who didn’t go to OU, many went to Oklahoma State University. College-going even increased for students not in the program, Ketchum said, though he’s mainly tracking the OU students.

“Kids who normally hadn’t considered college now considered it a good option,” said Ketchum, who once taught middle and high school in Los Angeles and is now an assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma.

Though the cost of college has skyrocketed and fewer young people are attending, a four-year degree is still the most reliable route to the middle class, researchers said.

Family income makes a big difference in whether or not young people enroll. A recent study by the Brookings Institution found that 89% of students from wealthy families enroll in college, compared to 64% from middle-class families and 51% from low-income families.

Miguel Matancillas Prieto, one of Ketchum’s students, said he didn’t really think about college that much in high school. It’s too expensive, he thought, and joining the military seemed a better path to meet his career goals.

In Ketchum’s class, Matancillas Prieto

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS *cont. A6*





ISIAH CALDWELL, who teaches English at Crooked Oak Middle School, helped a high school senior fill out her application to attend the University of Oklahoma on Oct. 18, 2023. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

# True Mentorship, Guidance & Long-Term Solutions Are Required

DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS from A5

practiced writing and thinking critically, and learned how to find information in academic journals. He applied to OU in his senior year, 2019, and got accepted. So did at least five of his classmates.

“We just needed somebody who could help teach us how to prepare for college, give us the tools necessary, and the opportunity as well,” he said.

Matancillas Prieto expects to graduate from OU this spring with a bachelor’s degree in sociology. He plans to pursue a master’s degree next — a path he never would have considered if not for Ketchum.

Another of Ketchum’s students, Isiah Caldwell, had always considered college but worried it wasn’t financially feasible. Having someone explain the financial aspect and challenge him with rigorous coursework gave him the confidence to attend.

Caldwell graduated from OU in 2022 with degrees in biology and Japanese. He plans to go to law school. But first, he returned to Crooked Oak High School as a teacher.

In his first-hour class, he helps seniors apply for college. Most want to at least apply and see what happens.

“People around them, specifically family members and people in places they work, oftentimes talk to them and talk them down from college,” Caldwell said.

He tries to be the antidote to that way of thinking, like Ketchum was for him.

The Secret Sauce

The crux of the program was twofold. First, the students needed specific academic

One aspect that helped persuade students was college classroom visits. Instead of a tour around the campus, the students were invited to sit in on classes and encouraged to participate.

skills. Second, they needed to buy into the idea that they belong in college.

For the first piece, Ketchum leaned into the state’s most common college prep strategy: concurrent enrollment, where students take courses that count for both high school and college credit.

More than 13,000 Oklahoma students were enrolled in concurrent courses in the fall of 2022, according to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The state covers the cost of tuition for high school juniors and seniors, up to a certain number of hours, so they not only experience college-level work but can also save money on tuition.

But unlike traditional concurrent enrollment, which has minimum grade point average and standardized test scores to participate, any student who wanted to could take Ketchum’s class. If they didn’t meet the requirements for concurrent enrollment, the class counted as an honors course on their transcript.

To improve their ACT scores, OU students volunteered to help tutor the high schoolers. Crooked Oak’s average composite ACT score was 18.1 in 2021, out of a maximum score of 35. OU doesn’t require a minimum score to apply, but its freshman class averaged 26.1 this year.

That took care of the academic part. But the more difficult part, Ketchum said, was convincing the students they belonged at a university.

One aspect that helped persuade students was college classroom visits. Instead of a tour around the campus, the students were invited to sit in on classes and encouraged to participate.

And he worked to clear financial barriers, helping students apply for Oklahoma’s

Promise, a state-funded program to cover tuition for low-income high school students who meet certain criteria.

He connected the students to work study opportunities at the University of Oklahoma, which covered the cost of room and board in exchange for working a certain number of hours.

In 2022, 36% of Crooked Oak graduates went straight to college in the fall, according to data from the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education — a higher rate than nearby Oklahoma City Public Schools (24%) and Santa Fe South Charter School (26%).

Thirty-six percent is the state average.

The program disbanded in 2021 due to lack of funding, but Ketchum is planning to bring a similar program to Metro Technology Centers this spring. And Crooked Oak has partnered with Oklahoma City Community College to continue giving its students early college classes.

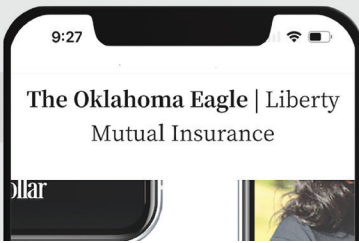
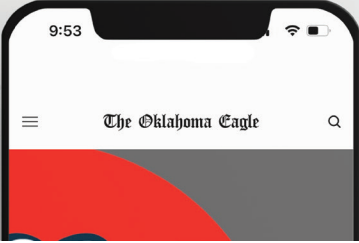
Crooked Oak High School Principal Laura Knight said the effects have outlasted the program. Before the program, in a typical year, three or four graduates would go on to attend a four-year university. For the Class of 2023, 32 of 77 graduates went directly to college, with at least seven going to OU.

“Our kids, who don’t typically see themselves as going to college, now see they can do it,” Knight said.

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.

Our Mission

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





# ASYLUM RELIEF ELUSIVE FOR TWO AFGHAN SCHOLARS-AT-RISK



HOSSAIN AHMADI, 35, AND HIS WIFE ZAHRA EYVAZI, 29, worked in the energy sector of Afghanistan's former government while they studied for graduate degrees at universities in Kabul. PHOTO LIONEL RAMOS/OKLAHOMA WATCH

By LIONEL RAMOS, OKLAHOMA WATCH

## ASYLUM RELIEF

When Hossain Ahmadi and Zahra Eyvazi arrived in Oklahoma in December, they kept hearing from fellow Afghans about the free help available to them. Cash stipends. Housing and food assistance. English lessons. Government health care. Free legal services.

“It all sounded too good to be true,” Eyvazi said.

She was right. The people they’d been hearing from had humanitarian parole.

The parole status applied to Afghans who were brought into the U.S. as part of Operation Allies Welcome, a federally sponsored mass exodus out of Afghanistan following the 2021 Taliban takeover. Ahmadi and Eyvazi didn’t qualify for the same status.

Four times that fall, Ahmadi and Eyvazi joined the thousands of hopeful evacuees crowding in front of Kabul’s international airport, but they couldn’t make it onto the last plane out.

“We could have been on those airplanes,” Ahmadi said. “But everyone wanted that, and the Taliban guarded the streets.”

As Hazaras, a minority ethnicity in Afghanistan, and educated employees of the country’s former government, the couple said they feared persecution from the Taliban and decided to find another way to flee Kabul. They applied to various programs at universities meant to help scholars flee conflict zones while studying abroad.

“We started applying for different programs, anything we could to get out. Finally, in October 2021, Zahra was accepted by Oklahoma University,” Ahmadi said.

A year later, after a long drive to Islamabad, Pakistan, and a few restless nights in a hotel there, they made it to their U.S. embassy appointment, obtained student visas and, as the newest additions to the University of Oklahoma’s Scholars-at-Risk program, were flown by the school’s international studies faculty to Oklahoma. That means they aren’t qualified for the same resettlement benefits, immigration protections and work permissions as their 1,850 Afghan counterparts who landed in the state with humanitarian parole.

While others in Oklahoma’s Afghan community qualify for a two-year extension to their parole status, Ahmadi and Eyvazi are racing to file for asylum before their student visas expire at the end of this year.

They face a long, expensive process. The federal asylum backlog is expected to surpass 1 million claims by 2024. Wait times for approval are nearly a decade. Local immigration lawyers said asylum services can cost between \$8,000 and \$15,000, and legislation meant to provide federal relief for Afghans remains stalled in Congress.

Nonprofits, and their lawyers charged with providing legal support for paroled Afghans in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, recognize there are people such as Ahmadi and Eyvazi, who are falling through immigration assistance

*Local immigration lawyers said asylum services can cost between \$8,000 and \$15,000, and legislation meant to provide federal relief for Afghans remains stalled in Congress.*

and other resource gaps. Strict guidelines limiting who they can serve with federally appropriated money and a lack of capacity to fully engage with everyone who needs their help are barriers to addressing the issue, they said.

### “We Don’t Have That Kind of Money”

Alex Gavern is an attorney and the legal director for the YWCA in Tulsa, one of the nonprofits in the city responsible for the long-term monitoring of Afghan parolee immigration cases. He said Afghan families without humanitarian parole status have slipped through the holes in immigration policy.

“We worry about those families,” Gavern said. “But the money we get from ASA, or the Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act, is restricted to only that parolee group.”

He said the federal money used to resettle refugees under normal circumstances is reserved for people who followed the normal process of applying for refugee status while living in another country, usually in a refugee camp. It is not for those with temporary visas.

People in situations like Ahmadi and Eyvazi, regardless of their nationality, are better off applying for asylum or Temporary Protected Status, if they qualify, Gavern said.

That is the couple’s plan. But there’s one problem: money.

“Our goal is to have a pending asylum application first, then to study, find a job in our fields and save money,” Ahmadi said.

Ahmadi was an English professor and administrative assistant at the energy services authority in Kabul. Eyvazi worked there too as a geographic information officer, and was studying for an advanced degree in urban development. Today, both are studying for higher degrees in their respective fields at OU.

Ideally, they would have a pending asylum case and a steady income before their visas expire and Eyvazi gives birth to their son in the next two months, Ahmadi said. He

knows that isn’t realistic. The couple lives on just more than \$2,000 per month between a stipend Eyvazi gets for the Scholars-at-Risk Program and Ahmadi’s research assistant allowance.

Rent, utilities, internet and groceries cost the couple about \$1,500 per month. Their immigration expenses, however, are significantly greater than their income.

They paid a private attorney \$2,000 in early October to have their asylum claim filed, Ahmadi said.

“That’s just for writing and editing the statement, and filing the application,” Ahmadi said.

He said he expects the cost to be much greater by the time the process is over. Most Afghans who qualified for parole status paid nothing to have their claims filed.

“We don’t have that kind of money,” Ahmadi said. “So we borrowed from friends we’ve made at the university and have been paying them back.”

Gavern said the timing of the couple’s application is crucial.

In order to work with a student visa, Ahmadi obtained a work permit from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. If the asylum claim the couple filed is recognized by the federal agency before their student visas expire, Ahmadi’s work permission will roll over, Gavern said. If not, Ahmadi’s case will have to be pending for 150 days before he can apply for work permissions again.

The couple still hasn’t received a notice of receipt from the federal government or the attorney they paid.

“They don’t get priority processing like parolees do, either,” Gavern said.

In July, federal officials reported a backlog of about 842,000 pending asylum cases and a decade-long processing time.

The couple will also apply for Temporary Protected Status, an immigration designation that safeguards people from select countries, including Afghanistan. But that process is slow. Many parolees who applied starting March 2022, when it became an option for

Afghans, are still waiting for acceptance into that program, Gavern said.

### Can’t Wait For Congress

The bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act, which would enable Afghans who supported the U.S. mission in their country to obtain permanent residency, is pending in Senate and House judiciary committees in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, immigration lawyers working with parolees on the ground in Oklahoma’s major metros said they are jaded by the yet-unfulfilled promises made by Congress.

“It’s too little too late for most of the people we are tasked with helping,” said Tara Jordan De Lara, an immigration attorney and the operations director at the Afghan Legal Network, a temporary nonprofit providing immigration legal services to Afghans resettled in Oklahoma City.

Matt Flynn, the Project 850 fellow at Tulsa University’s Legal Clinic who works with nonprofits and volunteers to provide the same services for Afghans in Tulsa, said the act would be more of a symbolic gesture by Congress if it passes.

“Most of the work has already been done,” Flynn said.

Between Oklahoma City and Tulsa, a network of paid and volunteer immigration attorneys and nonprofit workers helped nearly all Afghans submit applications for humanitarian parole extensions, asylum, special immigrant visas or permanent residency. Most parolees who were not served by the federally funded efforts found private legal help elsewhere, Jordan De Lara said.

Gavern said the Afghan Adjustment Act could still be helpful for families with complicated or weak asylum claims or special immigrant visa applications still pending approval.

“If by the time it passes it only helps one family find relief, then I too will find relief,” Gavern said.

Depending on the final language, the legislation could be a lifeline to Afghans like Ahmadi and Eyvazi — or not. The wording in the act limits eligibility to applicants who were admitted or paroled into the United States only after the act becomes law.

“It’s the ‘or’ word that makes it unclear,” Gavern said. “Language like that is common in immigration law. We will have to wait and see if the act passes, then how it’s interpreted and what guidance we get from USCIS, to know exactly what it means.”

Ahmadi and Eyvazi can’t wait for Congress. They are focused on being able to provide for their baby. Besides, Ahmadi said, they are used to living with uncertainty after a lifetime in Afghanistan.

“As Afghans, and as minorities in our own country, we are not strangers to this kind of pressure and stress,” Ahmadi said. “I don’t know what will happen tomorrow, but today we live free.”

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



# WALTERS, OSDE ALLEGED WRONGFUL TERMINATION SUIT PENDING

WRONGFUL TERMINATION from AI



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

An Oklahoma County District Court judge declined to dismiss a lawsuit Thursday against State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters and the Oklahoma State Department of Education regarding the allegedly wrongful termination of a former employee, but she left one aspect of the requests pending.

The hearing was the first among three wrongful termination lawsuits against Walters and the department in the past five months. The other two cases are pending in federal court and also name Matt Langston, the department's chief political adviser, as a defendant.

Thursday's hearing came after Walters and OSDE filed motions asking Judge Sheila Stinson to dismiss Janessa Bointy's wrongful termination lawsuit against them.

Bointy is an Edmond parent and former school counselor specialist for Project AWARE, a federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant program meant to provide mental health services for students. She was fired in March after she spoke at an Edmond Public Schools board meeting about the mental health services and the grant in the wake of a student suicide that rocked the community. Bointy maintains that she spoke in her personal ca-

capacity and only used publicly available information in her speech to increase awareness about the grant.

Bointy's attorney, Leah Roper, made a similar argument Thursday and also argued that the motion to dismiss should be denied because Bryan Cleveland, OSDE's attorney, was arguing about the validity of facts of the case, which are generally not at issue in dismissal motions.

"Defendant seeks judgement in its favor based upon its argument of the facts contained within and out of the petition. Still, defendant has not identified any legal defect in the pleadings," Roper wrote in her response opposing the motion for dismissal.

Cleveland, for his part, attempted to draw the judge's attention to the video of Bointy's comments to the Edmond school board to demonstrate that she violated OSDE's policies by speaking in an official capacity.

Ultimately, Stinson ruled against OSDE and Walters' motion and denied the dismissal. A second motion to dismiss from Walters in his individual capacity remains pending.

"I'm not surprised by the outcome. The good news on the motion as a whole is that we know a little bit about what the state's position is now," Roper told NonDoc after the hearing. "Nothing there really surprised me

either. But we'll be able to progress through the usual discovery channels and continue pursuing this as far as the state goes."

Approached after the hearing, Cleveland said only, "I'm not authorized to talk to the press." A spokesperson for OSDE did not return an email seeking comment prior to the publication of this article.

The motion to dismiss at the center of Thursday's hearing was not the only motion submitted to Stinson asking her to dismiss the suit. In addition to suing Walters in his official capacity, Bointy is also suing Walters in his individual capacity.

As an individual, Walters is represented by Julia Mann, a Texas-based attorney with the firm Jackson Walker LLP. Mann filed a motion to dismiss on behalf of Walters in his individual capacity Oct. 27, but she did not attend Thursday's hearing, and Stinson declined to issue a ruling on that motion.

Mann did not return a phone call seeking comment prior to publication of this article.

Two other wrongful termination suits pending in federal court

In addition to Bointy's lawsuit, two other former employees have filed separate lawsuits against Walters and Langston in both their official and individual capacities.

Both cases were filed May 30 by Matthew

Colwell and Cheryl McGee in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma. Their claims center on a purported scheme wherein Langston sent different versions of a memo to department staff threatening them with termination if they leaked documents to media. The different versions of the memo contained subtle changes that supposedly allowed OSDE leadership to identify employees who gave the letter to members of the media.

Motions to dismiss both lawsuits have been pending before federal Judge Charles Goodwin since August.

In addition to Cleveland, Scott McElhaney with Jackson Walker LLP is representing Langston and Walters in both lawsuits.

Mark Hammons and Amber Hurst with Hammons Hurst & Associates are representing both Colwell and McGee.

**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](mailto:bennett@nondoc.com).

## Digital op-eds, coordinate national events and appearances for executive staff, write speeches

WALTERS, MEDIA EXPOSURE from AI

The state Education Department is looking to hire someone to manage national media appearances, raising concerns the agency would be boosting Superintendent Ryan Walters' national profile at taxpayer expense.

A firm is being sought to provide print and digital op-eds to national outlets, coordinate national events and appearances for executive staff, write speeches and handle some communications. Records show the department wants a minimum of three op-eds, two speeches and 10 media bookings per month.

Walters, who is less than one year into a four-year term as superintendent, is already a frequent guest on conservative television and radio programs. And on Wednesday, Walters announced he's joining Donald Trump's presidential re-election campaign team, but didn't provide specifics on how it would affect his role as state superintendent.

Critics of the contract said the public shouldn't have to pay for Walters' political ambitions.

"Why would an Oklahoma elected official need a paid staff person to arrange national media appearances in order to do their job in the state of Oklahoma?" said Erin Brewer, communications chair for Oklahoma Parent Legislative Advocacy Coalition, a grassroots education advocacy group. "It sounds like campaigning to me."

Walters' administration already employs Dan Isett as the director of communications and Abby Baerveldt as the deputy communications director, as well as Matt

Langston as chief policy advisor. Langston is also Walters' campaign manager.

There are no payment terms listed in the proposal, which is open through Nov. 9, according to Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services records.

Isett did not answer questions Oklahoma Watch posed Tuesday.

Brewer said she finds the proposal stunning and concerning. She questioned how such a contract would serve Oklahoma schoolchildren.

"You have to think that he (Walters) believes that he is destined for some other office, some higher office, some different role, and it seems like he's using his current position to leverage his own opportunity," Brewer said.

In just the month of October, Walters' posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, eight TV and radio interviews he did with conservative news and talk shows and an op-ed he wrote about Hamas and Israel.

Appearances like those wouldn't violate state ethics rules unless there was overt campaigning, like advocating for or against a specific candidate in a specific election, Ethics Commission Executive Director Ashley Kemp said, speaking in general terms about the commission's work.

James Davenport, associate dean for social sciences at Rose State College, said nobody begrudges a public official who does an interview every now and then to tout the work their administration has accomplished.

The emphasis Walters' administration has placed on those interviews is different, he said.

"His national reputation has become a priority with that department," Davenport said. "People have a right to say, 'Can we justify that?' At some point, is this becoming a distraction to actually doing the work of state superintendent of public instruction?"

The person behind Walters' messaging style is Langston, his campaign manager and chief policy advisor at the department. His dual roles could run afoul of state ethics laws depending on how he splits his time, experts said.

Walters' 2022 superintendent campaign is still fundraising even though he isn't running for anything at the moment.

State ethics rules prohibit using state resources, funds or time for political activities. State officials and employees are required to separate time, money and resources spent on official duties from that used for campaigning.

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



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Gethsemane Baptist Church

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(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

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WHY ARE SO MANY  
BLACK STUDENTS ABSENT?

A new analysis reveals 29% of kids overall were chronically absent in 2022, and minority school districts are doing even worse. **A11**

WHAT TO DO ABOUT  
INFANT MORTALITY

More than 20,500 infants died between 2021 and 2020. Among various races, Black babies died most often year-to-year. **A12**

# Gubernatorial Candidates Quarrel Over Glory for Winning Opioid Settlements

By ANERI PATTANI, WORD IN BLACK  
OPIOID SETTLEMENTS

Some gubernatorial candidates are sparring over bragging rights for their state’s share of \$50 billion in opioid settlement funds. Many of the candidates are attorneys general who pursued the lawsuits that produced the payouts.



SHAMEKA PARRISH-WRIGHT, is director of VOCAL-KY, an advocacy group that wants to see opioid settlement funds invested in housing, health care, and social services. She is also running for a seat on Louisville’s Metro Council this election. PHOTO ANERI PATTANI/KFF HEALTH NEWS

**OPIOID SETTLEMENT CASH** is not inherently political. It’s not the result of a law passed by Congress nor an edit to the state budget. It’s not taxpayer money. Rather, it’s coming from health care companies that were sued for fueling the opioid crisis with prescription painkillers.

But like most dollars meant to address public health crises, settlement cash has nonetheless turned into a political issue.

Gubernatorial candidates in several states are clashing over who gets bragging rights for the funds — which total more than \$50 billion and are being distributed to state and local governments over nearly two decades. Among the candidates are attorneys general who pursued the lawsuits that produced the payouts. And they’re eager to remind the public who brought home the bacon.

“Scoring money for your constituency almost always plays well,” said Stephen Voss, an associate professor of political science at the University of Kentucky. It “is a lot more compelling and unifying a political argument than taking a position on something like abortion,” for which you risk alienating someone no matter what you say.

In Kentucky, Attorney General Daniel Cameron, the Republican candidate for governor, wants sole credit for the hundreds of millions of dollars his state is receiving to fight the opioid epidemic. In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, he wrote that his opponent, former attorney general and current Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear, “filed a lot of lawsuits during his time [in] office, but in this race, there is only one person who has actually delivered dollars to fight the opioid epidemic, and it’s not him.”

However, Beshear filed nine opioid lawsuits during his tenure as attorney general, several of which led to the current payouts. At a January news conference, Beshear defended his role: “That’s where these dollars are coming from — cases that I filed, and I personally argued many of them in court.”

Polls indicate that Beshear leads Cameron ahead of the Nov. 7 election.

Christine Minhee, founder of OpioidSettlementTracker.com, who is closely following how attorneys general handle the money nationwide, said voters likely don’t know that the opioid settlements are national deals crafted by a coalition of attorneys general and private lawyers. So when one candidate claims credit for the money, his constituents may believe “he’s the sole hero in all of this.”

Candidates in other states are touting their settlement credentials, too. North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein, a Democrat, lists securing opioid settlement funds at the top of the “accomplishments” section of his 2024 gubernatorial campaign website. West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, a Republican gubernatorial candidate for 2024, has repeatedly boasted of securing the “highest per capita settlements in the nation” in news conferences and on social media and his campaign website.

In Louisiana, Attorney General Jeff Landry, a Republican who was recently elected governor, ran on a tough-on-crime platform, with endorsements from sheriffs and prosecutors. As attorney general, he led negotiations on dividing opioid settlement funds within the state, resulting in an agreement to send 80% to parish governments and 20% to sheriffs’ departments—the largest direct allocation to law enforcement in the nation.

It’s a common joke that AG stands for “aspiring governor,” and officials in that role often use big legal cases to advance their political careers. Research shows that attorneys general who participate in multistate litigation — like that which led to the opioid settlements and the tobacco settlement before it — are more likely to run for governor or senator.

But for some advocates and people personally affected

by the opioid epidemic, this injection of politics raises concerns about how settlement dollars are being spent, who is making the decisions, and whether the money will truly address the public health crisis. Last year, more than 100,000 Americans died of drug overdoses.

Average people “don’t really care about the bragging rights as much as they care about the ability to use that funding to improve and save lives,” said Shameka Parrish-Wright, director of VOCAL-KY, an advocacy group that champions investments in housing and health care.

“What I see in my state is a lot of press conferences and news pieces,” said Parrish-Wright, a Democrat who is active in local politics. “But what plays out doesn’t get to the people” — especially those deeply affected by addiction.

For example, when Beshear celebrated a decrease in the state’s overdose deaths, his announcement overlooked the increasing deaths among Black Kentuckians, Parrish-Wright said. And when Cameron’s appointee to the state’s opioid abatement advisory commission announced that \$42 million of settlement funds were being considered to research ibogaine — a psychedelic drug that has shown potential to treat addiction — Parrish-Wright’s first thought was “most poor people can’t afford that.” To obtain it, people often have to travel out of the country.

The ibogaine announcement caused additional controversy. It’s an experimental drug, and, if approved, the \$42 million allocation would be the single-largest investment from the commission, which is housed in Cameron’s agency. The Daily Beast reported that a billionaire Republican donor backing Cameron’s gubernatorial campaign stands to reap massive profits from the drug’s development.

Neither Cameron’s office nor his campaign responded to requests for comment.

Beshear’s office declined an interview request but referred KFF Health News to his previous public statements, in which he criticized the potential investment in ibogaine. He has suggested Cameron — whose campaign has emphasized support for police — is not putting his money where his mouth is.

“If you only provide \$1 million to law enforcement and 42 to pharma, it doesn’t seem like you’re backing the blue. It seems like you’re backing Big Pharma,” Beshear said at a May news conference.

He also said his two appointees to the commission were caught off guard by the public announcement on ibogaine, despite their role overseeing settlement funds.

Minhee, founder of OpioidSettlementTracker.com, said she’s concerned that mixing politics with settlement funds could result in ineffective investments nationwide.

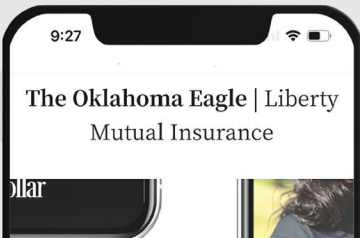
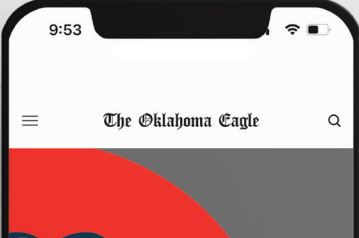
“If some of this money is going to be politicized to advance careers of attorneys general who support the war on drugs, then that is literally using monies won by death to feed into more death,” she said.

Parrish-Wright, of VOCAL-KY, said she worries that candidates — and some voters — will forget about the significance of the money once ballots are cast.

“We cannot let it fade after the election cycle,” she said.

Her solution depends in part on politics. She’s on the ballot herself Nov. 7, for a seat on Louisville’s Metro Council. If she wins, she said, she intends to keep the settlement in the public conversation.

KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.





# Why Are So Many Black Students Absent?

BLACK STUDENT ABSENTEEISM from B1



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Are America’s children showing up for school? According to an analysis by Return 2 Learn, a project from the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute, many are not.

The project’s researchers analyzed national data on mask-wearing, remote learning, student enrollment, and absenteeism from the U.S. Department of Education, individual school districts and state education agencies, and other sources, like the Stanford Education Data Archive. It then compiled it into a constantly updating and sortable data tracker.

What’s of particular concern is that the data reveals districts with the highest population of Black and Brown students had the largest increase in chronic absenteeism.

Nationwide, chronic absenteeism, or “the percentage of students missing at least 10% of a school year,” surged from 15% in 2018 — before the pandemic and remote learning changed the schooling experience of an entire generation.

In 2022, chronic absenteeism soared to 29% nationwide, and the numbers were elevated in communities of color. In high-minority districts, chronic absenteeism grew 15 points — from 17% in 2018 to 32% in 2022. Meanwhile, in low-minority (majority white) districts, the increase was 10 points — from 13% to 23%.

If you enter the name of your local school district in the tracker, it tells you what the chronic absenteeism rate has been for the past several years. You can find out that, for example, in New York City, the largest public school district in the United States, 25% of students were chronically absent in 2018. In 2022, the most recent data year available, 40% were chronically absent.

Having a quarter of students be chronically absent in 2018 is certainly worrisome — you can’t learn if you’re not in class — but 40% of kids being missing for at least 10% of the school year is a pandemic in and of itself.

In 2020, the year the pandemic struck, chronic absenteeism nationwide fell to 14%, but experts say data from that year in particular is questionable

because the pandemic disrupted routine recordkeeping. Chronic absenteeism rose to 19% in 2021, the first full pandemic school year, but data remained questionable given pandemic disruptions.

## An Ongoing Pattern of Chronic Absenteeism

This isn’t the first time that the chronic absenteeism of Black students has been put in the spotlight. Over the years, plenty of educators and other researchers have tried to get to the root causes of what keeps kids from showing up to class.

“Chronic absenteeism has been a challenge for years in inner-city schools,” Clara M. McCullough, educator and filmmaker, wrote in an op-ed for the Hechinger Report in February.

“When schools closed their doors and went to remote learning, many students, especially those without reliable internet access, disappeared. When school doors reopened, many students simply did not return, or came back on an inconsistent basis.”

A 2021 post by the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education about data on Black absenteeism in California, the most populous state in the nation, revealed that Black students tend to have more “unexcused” absences than their white peers. Nearly 53% of Black student absences were unexcused, and the researchers noted that they’re typically due to “transportation issues, family concerns such as providing care for younger children so parents can work, safety concerns, truancy, etc.”

They also “often result in disciplinary actions such as in-school suspensions, which further removes these students from classroom instruction.”

Indeed, as Attendance Works, a national and state initiative that pushes for better attendance policy, previously noted, “often absences are tied to health problems, such as asthma, diabetes, and oral and mental health issues. Other barriers, including lack of a nearby school bus, a safe route to school, or food insecurity, make it difficult to go to school every day.”

Attendance Works also points out that Kids “living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent—and face the most harm because their community lacks the resources to make up for the lost learning in school.”

This latest is latest analysis from Return 2 Learn also puts poverty in the spotlight. For example, in 2018, 19% of students living in high poverty were chronically absent. By 2022, that had nearly doubled to 36%.

The data also shows that although low-, middle-, and high-achieving school districts — which are typically designated as such according to results on state standardized test scores — all saw an uptick in chronic absenteeism, low-performing school districts were hit the hardest. They saw a 17.2 percentage point increase in chronic absenteeism, compared to the high-performing schools, which only saw a 10.1 percentage point increase.

## How Do We End Chronic Absenteeism?

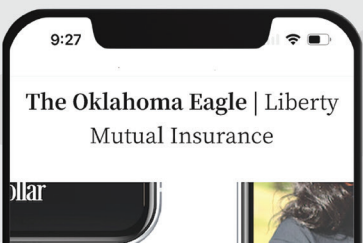
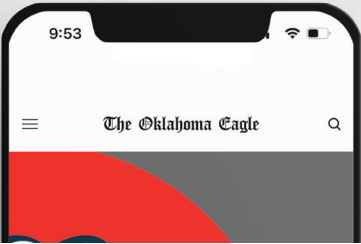
To fix the problem of chronic absenteeism, Attendance Works suggests “a comprehensive approach that begins with engaging students and families as well as preventing absences from adding up before they fall behind academically.”

The organization also says data — such as what Return 2 Learn has compiled — should be used as “a diagnostic tool to identify where prevention and early intervention are needed.” Attendance Works cautions, however, that folks should “avoid making the incorrect assumption that chronically absent students or their parents simply do not care.”

The good news is for 2023, chronic absenteeism numbers are down in 19 of 21 states reporting data, but this latest analysis is yet another warning bell on the epidemic of chronic absenteeism, especially amongst Black youth.

*“When schools closed their doors and went to remote learning, many students, especially those without reliable internet access, disappeared.”*

Clara M. McCullough, educator, filmmaker





# What to Do About Infant Mortality

More than 20,500 infants died between 2021 and 2020. Among various races, Black babies died most often year-to-year.

INFANT MORTALITY from A10



PHOTOS ADOBE IMAGES

**A NEW REPORT REVEALS** fewer American babies are living until their first birthday. The data, released on Nov. 1 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), revealed a 3% rise in infant death rates — the largest year-to-year increase in two decades, according to the agency.

A total of 20,538 infants were lost between 2021 and 2022, the CDC’s “Vital Statistics” provisional report notes.

Black infants remained at the highest risk of death of all races and ethnicities at 10.86 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2022, compared to a rate of 10.55 in 2021. Despite the increase, the CDC said the change was “not statistically significant.”

American Indian and Alaska Native infants saw the greatest uptick in deaths, rising from 7.46 infant deaths per 1,000 live births to 9.06. Numbers for Pacific Islanders increased from 7.76 to 8.50, Hispanic infants from 4.79 to 4.88, and white infants from 4.36 to 4.52.

Dr. Elizabeth Cherot, President and CEO of March of Dimes — a family health nonprofit — said her organization is disheartened by the report.

“It’s disappointing to see such a significant increase in infant deaths after the country has witnessed a steady decline over the last 10 years,” she said in a statement.

Asian infants were reportedly the only group to experience a decrease during the 2021-2022 period, dipping from 3.69 to 3.50 deaths per 1,000 live births.

## Leading Causes of Infant Death

The researchers gathered data by reviewing infant birth and death records. Among the leading causes of death, they found an increase in newborn bacterial sepsis — a body-wide infection spread through the bloodstream — and pregnancy complications.

Black women are three times more likely than white women to die from a pregnancy-related cause and nearly four times more likely to birth low-weight or preterm babies, a common cause of infant death,

according to the CDC.

“Multiple factors contribute to these disparities, such as variation in quality healthcare, underlying chronic conditions, structural racism, and implicit bias,” the CDC wrote. “Social determinants of health prevent many people from racial and ethnic minority groups from having fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health.”

Dr. Sandy Chung, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, called the rise in infant deaths “disturbing and disappointing.” Despite spending more on health care than any other high-income country, the United States has the highest infant and maternal mortality rate.

“We live in a country with abundant resources. Yet the infant mortality rate in the United States is shockingly high. There are many different reasons for this,” Chung said in a statement. “We do know that families in poverty face many challenges including access to nutritious food and affordable health care. Racial and ethnic disparities related to accessible health care — including prenatal health services — are just one of the many possible reasons for lower birth weights of babies and sometimes, infant deaths.”

## Resources for Black Families

- **Black Love:** A docu-series with six seasons of love stories on Black couples. The film project features interviews with a husband and wife who search for healing after the loss of an infant. Watch the original episode on Oprah.com and the after-show on YouTube.
- **Black Moms in Loss Support Group:** A free virtual support group for Black mothers grieving the loss of a pregnancy or infant. The group meets on Thursdays at 8 p.m. EST and is a partnership of Sisters in Loss and Postpartum Support International. Sign-up here.

- **The Mourning After: A Black Infant Mortality Anthology:** A new book by Black maternal advocacy non-profit Zeal of Xander, Inc. that highlights the experiences of Black women who have lost their children to miscarriage, preterm labor, terminal medical diagnosis, and stillbirth. The anthology features essays from providers and aims to raise awareness about the Black infant mortality crisis.

- **Sisters in Loss Podcast:** A podcast dedicated to “replacing silence with storytelling around pregnancy and infant loss and infertility of Black women.” Founded by Erica M. Freeman, a grief specialist who experienced a stillbirth and a miscarriage, the episodes cover contributing factors for infant loss, healing and overcoming grief, finding refuge in spirituality and community, and more.





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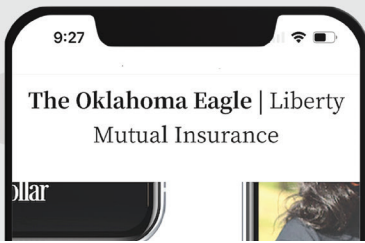
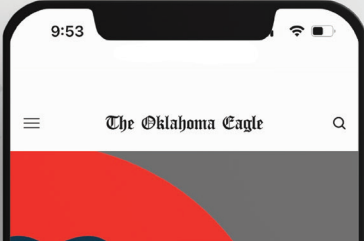
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The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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







LEONELLE THOMPSON, manager of Early Career Development for Williams, has been appointed to serve on the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. PHOTO PROVIDED



DR. MELISSA WOOLRIDGE, principal at Booker T. Washington High School, is a new board member of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence. PHOTO PROVIDED

# Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence names Board of Trustees

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, a nonprofit that recognizes and encourages excellence in Oklahoma’s public schools, has added five members to its Board of Trustees, including three from Tulsa.

Appointed to serve three-year terms are Leonelle E. Thompson, manager of Early Career Development at Williams, and Dr. Melissa Woolridge, principal of Booker T. Washington High School.

Additional appointees for three-year terms are Shoney Blake, counsel at Pipestem Law, Tulsa; Patsy Mann, retired educator, Checotah;

and Laura Reed, retired educator, Foraker. “The foundation is truly honored to welcome this group of incredible community leaders to our board,” said Elizabeth Inbody, executive director of the foundation. “Their knowledge and enthusiasm will be invaluable to us, and we look forward to collaborating with them.” One of the keys to the foundation’s success is the leadership of its 140 trustees. These leaders in business, education, and public service represent every region of the state and help promote the foundation’s mission and its programs.

The Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence was founded in 1985 by then U.S. Sen. David L. Boren to strengthen support for public education in Oklahoma. Through its flagship Academic Awards Program, the foundation presents \$175,000 annually to honor outstanding public school students and educators. The foundation’s Oklahoma School Foundations Network provides free training, resources, and networking opportunities to new and established school foundations. Among its other initiatives, the foundation coordinates a summer fellowship program to

send Oklahoma fifth- and eighth-grade teachers to the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute. Through its statewide mentoring initiative, the foundation promotes quality youth mentoring as a positive step toward academic success. For more information about the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, visit <https://ofe.org/> or call (405) 236-0006.




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## Addressing Mental Health in Our Community, Nov. 11

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

Gilcrease Hills Homeowners Association is hosting “Addressing Mental Health in Our Community” at the Clubhouse office at 1919 W. Seminole St. on Nov. 11 at 5 p.m. The speakers will be Carolyn Ingram, MS, LPC, and Yvonne Lewis, M. Div., MS, and LPC. For more information, call (918) 584-2541.

PHOTO PROVIDED

## Upcoming Events

### 2023

#### Nov. 6-7

Theatre North’s Open Call for actors for “Topdog/Underdog” play on Nov. 6 and 7 from 6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Rudisill Regional Library, 1520 N. Hartford Ave. The available roles are the following: two African American males: Lincoln (the topdog) and Booth (the underdog), ages 18 and older. For more information, contact Maybelle Wallace, executive director of Theatre North, at [theatrenorthmw@hotmail.com](mailto:theatrenorthmw@hotmail.com).

#### Nov. 10-13

Black Town Revival Weekend. For more information, contact [info@btrevival.com](mailto:info@btrevival.com), or visit [btrevival.com](http://btrevival.com) and [blacktownsimm.com](http://blacktownsimm.com). (See Sept. 29 edition.)

#### Nov. 11

“Addressing Mental Health in Our Community” workshop will be held on Nov. 11 at 5 p.m. at the Gilcrease Clubhouse, 1919 W. Seminole St. For more information, contact (918) 584-2541.

#### Nov. 21-26

“Beetlejuice,” at Tulsa Performing Arts Center – Chapman Music Hall, 110 E. 2nd St. For tickets, call (918) 596-7111.

#### Nov. 25

Holiday Concert and Lighting Event on Historic Greenwood Avenue, on Nov. 25, 6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. For more information, visit [shineongreenwood.org](http://shineongreenwood.org).

#### Dec. 7

American Red Cross to host Disaster Preparation class at Greenwood Women’s Business Center, 102 N. Greenwood Ave., Suite 201 (Second floor) on Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. For more information, contact (539) 867-4127 or [info@greenwoodwbc.com](mailto:info@greenwoodwbc.com).

#### Dec. 8 and 9

National Association of Black Journalists – Tulsa Chapter Salute to Excellence Awards Gala (Dec. 8) and Professional and Community Workshops (Dec. 9), Tulsa Community College – Center for Creativity, 910 S. Boston Ave. For more information, contact [nabjtulsagala23@gmail.com](mailto:nabjtulsagala23@gmail.com).

#### Dec. 9

Greenwood Chamber of Commerce Third Annual World Class Winter Gala, Doubletree Hotel by Hilton – Warren Place, 6110 S. Yale Ave. on Dec. 9 at 5 p.m. For more information, visit <https://historictulsagreenwoodchamber.com/>.

### 2024

#### Feb. 17, 18, and 24

Theatre North’s “Topdog/Underdog” performance at Tulsa Performing Arts Center, 110 E. 2nd St. For ticket information, call (918) 596-7111.

## Davis Appointed As Moderator For The Canaan District Baptist Association, Nov. 5

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

REV. EDDIE DAVIS was installed as the moderator for the Canaan District Baptist Association on Nov. 5.

Davis is pastor of Greater Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 1046 E. Pine. The program at Mt. Olive will begin at 5 p.m. with a message from Dr. Leroy Cole, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church., Tulsa. Cole serves as the moderator for the First United Creek District Association. The theme for the program will be “Mission-Ministry-Message.” For more information, contact (918) 582-7799.



REV. EDDIE DAVIS of Greater Mt. Olive Baptist Church is to be installed as the moderator for the Canaan District Baptist Association on Nov. 5 PHOTO PROVIDED