

The Oklahoma Eagle

"WE MAKE AMERICA BETTER, WHEN WE AID OUR PEOPLE." - E. L. GOODWIN (PUBLISHER, 1936-1978)

SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

LEGACY
5,361
Weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and a denial of justice.

NATION
Could the days of lead in drinking water soon be over? | A13
By WILLY BLACKMORE, WORD IN BLACK

NATION
Featured: Here are the Best Black Books of 2023 | A14
By JORDANNAH ELIZABETH, WORD IN BLACK

SOCIAL
THE OK EAGLE.COM
#THE OK EAGLE
#OKEAGLEPAPER

\$1.00

VOL. 103 NO. 02

JANUARY 12, 2024 - JANUARY 18, 2024

How Would MLK Advise Us To Face Today's Challenges?



/1968

I've Been to the Mountaintop, speech

Somewhere...

Somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right.

INSIDE

'Truly Horrific': DHS Apologizes To Families Of Abused Enid Center Residents
Michael McNutt, NonDoc, A7

The Oklahoma Parole Rate Declines
Keaton Ross, Oklahoma Watch, A9

Rediscovering a Black Pioneer's Overlooked Legacy
Roger House, Word In Black, A5

Poultry companies ask judge to dismiss ruling that they polluted an Oklahoma watershed
Ken Miller, Associated Press, A10

What You Need To Know About Private School Tax Credits
Jennifer Palmer, Oklahoma Watch, A9

Last Week's Headlines
Just in case you missed it. A4

Ralph Waldo Ellison
Novelists and Essayist. A4

Jobs & Classifieds
Discover career opportunities. A11

Faith In Tulsa
The Eagle Church Directory. A12



THE OKLAHOMA PAROLE RATE DECLINES

The Muscogee Nation Attorney General's Office has charged an Okmulgee County Jail officer for felony battery. **A9**

OK DHS: APOLOGIZES FOR 'TRULY HORRIFIC' ABUSE

Dept. of Human Services apologized to families of victims with intellectual disabilities who suffered "systematic caretaker abuse." **A7**



Gary Lee The Oklahoma Eagle

Almost six decades after Martin Luther King Jr.'s passing, his legacy and teachings remain with us.

At times we feel that his presence – strong will, determined gaze and all - marching alongside us. Among MLK's many talents, the most memorable is surely his gift of leadership. He had a way of mobilizing our diverse and often fractured community and guiding us to act in the interests of social justice, civil rights, and political prudence. He might be absent in the person, but we continue to feel his guiding hand and hear his sonorous voice urging us to pull together in our communities to do what is right and to act expeditiously.

Nowhere is MLK's light needed more than in Tulsa. We are navigating turbulent times in the city's Black and BIPOC communities - and nationwide. Issues of social justice, economics, and politics divide us, at times requiring us to check our collective moral compasses for guidance. These are times in which it seems prudent to ask ourselves how MLK would advise us to address the contemporary challenges.

The question is so pressing and cogent that The Oklahoma Eagle decided to take it to our Tulsa village. And so we

asked different members of the Tulsa community how they felt King would tackle today's dilemmas. We thought it was crucial to hear the thoughts of a diverse spectrum. Naturally, the voices of our faith leaders are important. We reached out to several church leaders. We received a response from Bishop Melvin Cooper at World Won for Christ Life Ministries. We also obtained a testimonial from Rev. Carmen White Janak, CEO of InnerView Consulting Group. Janak is an ordained minister and spiritual advisor to various churches. The views of a younger generations are crucial on these issues. Two Kipp University

Prep school students, Kallie Durham and Khalead Marzett, shared their perspectives. The reflections of teachers are also vital. Cory Young, a teacher of journalism and photography at Kipp University Prep School, also provided his views. The voices of community advocates are also crucial. We received poignant thoughts from Premadonna Braddick, executive director at Soaring Eagles Youth and Family Services, and a therapist for marriages, families, and mental health based in north Tulsa.

Finally, Tulsa County Sheriff Vic Regalado also offered his perspective. The statements of this sampling of Tulsa

community members follows.

Beyond canvassing our immediate village, The Oklahoma Eagle felt that having a perspective of a non-Tulsan on the question of what MLK would do was key. We found a strong leader of faith – and in the corporate world in Rev. Kevin Taylor. An activist for social justice and corporate executive, Taylor is a pastor at Israel AME church in Albany, New York. Taylor is also authoring a book on what C-Suite executives can learn from the church and what the church can teach corporate leaders. His opinion editorial, on Page A3, rounds out our MLK package.



Inspired by MLK, We should all stand up for *Democracy*

Rev. Kevin Taylor Israel A.M.E. Church

January is a month that we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. and reflect on his life, legacy, impact, and vision for a “beloved community.” Likewise, we listen with fresh interest to his words, speeches, books, and articles in search of meaning amid our social and political challenges. And we decry the whitewashing of his message for political expediency or bogus proof of a post-racial world.

Had he not been assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis in 1968, on January 15, Dr. King would have turned 95. He would surely be concerned about the wars in Europe and the Middle East and the humanitarian crises abroad in Gaza, Afghanistan, Haiti, Ukraine, and elsewhere. He would most certainly also be worried about the issues facing Americans right here at home, including immigration, homelessness, healthcare inequities, income inequality, among others.

Perhaps most urgently, as a Baptist minister, husband, father, and grandfather, Dr. King would have pressing concerns about the rise of Trumpism, authoritarianism, political violence, evangelical idol worship, and the assault on truth. He was a leader who recognized the need for us all to engage in politics. He would likely be alarmed about the upcoming presidential election.

The January/February 2024 issue of The Atlantic magazine demonstrates why Black Americans – and indeed all Americans – should be alarmed by a second Trump term. Several prominent thinkers use the magazine edition to make the case that a second Trump term would be more detrimental to democracy than the first term was.

For churchgoers and church leaders, there are particular concerns. For instance, not only are parishioners’ autonomy over their bodies on the ballot, but a Trump presidency could also mean that clergypersons are jailed as “enemy combatants” for opposing Trump’s policies and/or supporting our social justice efforts in and out of our pulpits. After all, what good are the rights – free speech, freedom of assembly, the courts, a free press, civil demonstrations, marches, an independent judiciary, among others – we enjoy today if the mechanisms of change Dr. King and other civil rights leaders effectively relied on for generations are no longer tools in our toolboxes?

One of my heavy concerns is that many eligible voters will grow apathetic to the inevitability of a Biden v. Trump rematch and choose not to vote – or to vote for a third-party candidate. Lest we forget that in 2016, more than 10,000 Michiganders left the choice for president blank on their general election ballots, helping cement Trump’s surprise win in that state – and in the presidential race that year. And the record shows that millions of eligible voters, including Black Americans, sat out during the elections altogether. How many of those who stayed home sat on their pew, got their hair done at the local salon or barbershop, or even sang, “We Shall Overcome” at the local King Day celebration?

As Dr. King observed, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” I choose to stand up for our democracy. I invite you to do the same. Here are some steps I encourage taking:

- Resisting the temptation to wait to begin get-out-the-vote efforts until after the party nominating conventions later this summer.
- Making a copy of at least one of the articles in the Atlantic’s special section and sharing it with your friends, colleagues and worshipers.

For my fellow church leaders, some particular recommendations:

- Activating your social action commission/ministry to immediately begin registering congregants to vote. Take no one’s registration status for granted.
- Including a voter registration card in the welcome packet/bag presented to all your visitors.
- Devoting at least one bible study per quarter to addressing the historical and contemporary importance of voting and analyzing the salient campaign issues from a Christian perspective.

- Encouraging congregants to vote in your state’s primary election with announcements on the same in the weekly bulletin and/or ministry highlights from the pulpit.

- Screening “Selma, Eyes of the Prize: The Civil Rights Years,” “Rigged: The Voter Suppression Handbook,” or similar as part of your Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and/or Black History Month observances.

- Using your local Juneteenth celebration, church picnic, organized lay meetings, or other milestone(s) of significance as voter mobilization opportunities and/or demystifying the Electoral College.

- Combatting voter apathy by asking your parishioners to make a list of people they know in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin (i.e., family, social media contacts, etc.) and messaging 3-5 of them each month encouraging them to register, vote, and challenging those 3-5 people to do the same.

Sadly, it took the violence on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., in March 1965 for America to see – and for likeminded persons of faith across the nation to answer the clarion call from Dr. King about – the inherent dangers of denying disenfranchised people the right to vote.

As we gather to celebrate King, let us not allow ourselves to simply say we celebrated MLK Day 2024 and nothing else. Let us not allow the violence and mayhem of Jan. 6, 2021, fade from our memories lest the sacrifices of Dec. 1, 1955; March 7, 1965; April 4, 1968; Nov. 4, 2008; and June 17, 2015, to be in vain.

REV. KEVIN T. TAYLOR is a contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle, community advocate and Pastor of Israel A.M.E. Church, Albany, NY

Ralph Waldo Ellison: Novelist and Essayist

By GORDON O. TAYLOR, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



Born to Lewis Alfred and Ida Millsap Ellison on March 1, 1913, in Oklahoma City, then along with Kansas City a hotbed of musical creativity, Ralph Ellison showed at an early age the interest in jazz and other modern art forms that would be reflected throughout his life in literature. He attended the Frederick Douglass School in Oklahoma City, going on to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1933, pursuing studies in music but also encountering the work of T. S. Eliot and other Modernist writers.

Chafed by racial conditions in the Deep South, and by what he found to be the conservatism of Tuskegee, Ellison left in 1936, without a degree, for New York City. He was drawn there by cultural legacies of the Harlem Renaissance and by opportunities to meet such authors as Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. After an interval in Ohio due to the death of his mother in 1937 (a period during which he read widely and intensively), he returned to New York in 1938 with renewed determination to pursue a literary career. He obtained employment with the Federal Writers' Project, which sustained him from 1938 to 1942 as he worked to establish himself as a writer. Having sailed in the Merchant Marine from 1943 to 1945, an alternative to service in the segregated U.S. military, Ellison married Fanny McConnell in 1946 (his second wife, an earlier marriage having ended

unhappily), and resettled in New York.

His stories, essays, and articles from the later 1930s and early 1940s were partially rooted in materials stemming from his interviews with people in Harlem for the Writers' Project. So too was his work toward a novel, *Invisible Man* (1952), which announced him as a major figure in American letters and won the National Book Award for 1953. This book also took shape, however, in counterpoint to Wright's earlier *Native Son* (1940), which seemed to Ellison too fatalistically absolute in its determinism, and insufficiently representative of African American experience.

Response to *Invisible Man* was mixed; some black critics found the novel lacking in radical political perspectives on problems of race in America. But the book continues to be considered by many the first great novel by an African American writer that both fulfills and transcends its racial theme. It remains a landmark achievement in American, as well as African American, literary tradition, and in the broad movement of modernism. It may also be seen as a precursor to the postmodern, and it remains a highly "contemporary" text.

Ellison went on to publish *Shadow and Act* (1964) and *Going to the Territory* (1986), two influential volumes of essays on literature, music, and American culture. For years there were rumors of another novel in progress, about which little was

publicly revealed. Upon his death in New York on April 16, 1994, an unfinished manuscript was found and, with collaborative assistance, published in 1999 as *Juneteenth*. Its appearance was an important literary event, even if the first-person narrative of the unnamed protagonist in *Invisible Man* will always be the touchstone and cornerstone to his life's work.

Named for Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ellison reflects throughout his work a lifelong engagement with Emersonian issues of personal and cultural autonomy and self-reliance, and with the problems and prospects of American—and African American—consciousness and identity. Such engagement could be argumentative, even adversarial, with respect to the unfulfillment or betrayal of American ideals (witness the destructive role of a character called "Emerson" in *Invisible Man*). The "double consciousness" famously posited by W. E. B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) is both amplified and intensified, rather than resolved, in Ellison's writing. But like the narrator of *Invisible Man*—particularly as epilogue reconnects with prologue "underground," launching anew the cycle of retelling and rereading a classic American tale of self-discovery—Ellison's example, now as always nourished by his Oklahoma roots, promises powerfully to "emerge."

RALPH ELLISON, (23157.82, Jimmy Stewart Collection, OHS).

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.

Featured Last Week



AP African American Studies Course Set To Roll Out Nationwide



Black History Saturdays: Reclaiming Tulsa's Legacy



History Sets The Context For The Present

The Oklahoma Eagle

Founded in 1921

- James O. Goodwin**
Publisher 1980-Present
- Robert K. Goodwin**
Publisher 1972-1980
- Edward L. Goodwin, Jr.**
Co-Publisher 1980-2014
- Edward L. Goodwin, Sr.**
Publisher 1936-1972
- Theodore B. Baughman**
Publisher 1921-1936

Business

- Jerry Goodwin**
Principal
- M. David Goodwin**
Principal
- Ross D. Johnson**
Principal
- David W. Cole**
General Council
- Marsh Media**
Advertising

News

- Gary Lee**
Managing Editor
- Ray Pearcey**
Sr. Contributor
- Russell LaCour**
Contributor
- Victor Luckerson**
Contributor
- John Neal**
Contributor

Photography

- Cory Young**
Photographer

Print

- Sam Levrault**
Production Director

Circulation

- Kirstein Lynn**
Subscription Manager

Digital

- Web**
TheOKEagle.com
- Facebook**
TheOKEagle
- Twitter**
OKEaglePaper

Contact

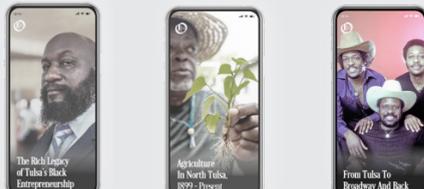
Letters to the Editor
editor@theokeagle.com

Advertise
advertise@theokeagle.com

Circulation
publishers@theokeagle.com

Subscribe
theokeagle.com/subscribe

The Oklahoma Eagle
Enjoy articles, events and featured content online



Online

WEB: www.theokeagle.com
FACEBOOK: #TheOKEagle
TWITTER: #OKEaglePaper

The Oklahoma Eagle | Founded in 1921 | Vol. CIII No. 02

THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE is published weekly on Fridays by The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC, P.O. Box 3267, Tulsa, OK 74101. General office is 624 E. Archer St., Tulsa, OK 74120. Periodical Postage (WSPS 406-580) is paid at Tulsa, OK. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the above address. Delivery subscription rates (Continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). All subscriptions may include Premium Edition issues throughout the year.

Mail Subscriber Rates: Single copy \$1 | Yearly \$52 | 2 Years \$100

©2023 The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC. All rights reserved. No portions of this periodical may be reproduced with expressed written consent.

Delivery

For questions about deliver, billing and our membership program, please contact us at +1 (918) 582-7124, ext. 241.

Submissions

Submitted content may be edited for space, clarity and for considerations of liability. All submissions become the sole property of The Oklahoma Eagle, which reserves the right to run all or part of any submissions due to timeliness or newsworthiness.

Letters to the Editor

Want to write a letter to be published in the paper and online? Email us online to submit.

Advertising

For print and online advertising information, go to theokeagle.com/media-kit/ or call . +1 (918) 582-7124.

The Newsroom

Know something important we should cover? Send an inquiry to theokeagle.com/subscribe.

Rediscovering A *Black Pioneer's* *Overlooked Legacy*

James Pierson Beckwourth is a pioneer of the American West largely erased from history lessons. Recovering his story, however, can help us to better understand current debates over historical revision versus woke education — which is to say that, if he had been white, people likely would have learned about him in school.

Beckwourth was an American original, at times a slave, miner, fur trapper, leader of the Crow Indians, Army scout, and guide to the California gold mines in the 1800s. He opened a vital trading post and hotel in the Sierra Nevada mountains that became Beckwourth, California.

Historians have enshrined white “mountain men” like Kit Carson, Thomas Fitzpatrick, and William Sublette in American folklore, but not so Beckwourth. Because of racism, writers disparaged his feats and ridiculed his name. However, his keen observations of frontier life could spark discussions on colonial ideologies of ethnic displacement like Manifest Destiny, slavery and miscegenation, white settler violence against Indigenous people, and commercial exploitation of the land.

His controversial exploits were investigated by historian Elinor Wilson in 1976 in “Jim Beckwourth: Mountain Man and War Chief of the Crows.” She argued that he “was a figure suited to the making of Western legend” had it not been for his race. She found that “racial prejudice inspired much of what early writers said about his life,” and that he was branded a “gaudy liar” — even in a culture that valued the tall tale — an unfair indictment that has been recycled in contemporary times.

His accomplishments were preserved in a memoir, as well as physical landmarks, on websites, and in documentary treatments. Central is his colorful autobiography, but unlike the frontiersman Davy Crockett, students don’t learn about the “Black King of the Wild Frontier.”

Yet, his story would seem appropriate for educators today. For example, it fits with several of the topic sections in the revamped AP African American history framework issued by the College Board. The “Unit 2” sections on Black identity, freedom, autonomy, and living in Indigenous territory would seem particularly relevant.

And the Beckwourth story could be a vehicle for an action movie or television treatment. In fact, his name is used teasingly for a character in the 2021 Netflix Western, “The Harder They Fall.” And there is a documentary, “Jim Beckwourth: War Chief of the Crow,” in the 2022 Apple TV series, “Into the Wild Frontier.” Surely, his story could be relevant to controversies over racial representation in Hollywood.

Beckwourth's Wild Frontier

Born into slavery in about 1798 in Fredericks County, Virginia, Beckwourth was a product of rape and the legal property of a tobacco plantation owner. The violence shaped his racial identity in conflicting and accommodating ways. His pioneer outlook was fueled by the opportunities of the Louisiana Purchase. About 1805, his master took him to work at a St. Louis fur trading post; he was later hired out for a lead-mining expedition to Illinois on the Mississippi River.

With money earned from the mines, he returned to St. Louis to buy his freedom. His story from that point sheds light on the

incorporation of the wild frontier into Western capitalism. His work as a trapper in the dangerous but lucrative fur trade is a window into the diverse people, places, and cultures of the Old West, and the systems of colonization and slavery that made America an economic power.

For instance, he was hired by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company to supply animal pelts for fashionable wear. At the same time, as he trekked about the frontier, his freedom was subject to challenge under the fugitive slave laws of 1793 and 1850. Like other free Black people, he lived at risk of kidnapping and enslavement; his former master testified to his legal emancipation in courts several times.

Over the years, Beckwourth gained a reputation as a skilled hunter, fur trapper, and courageous mountaineer. His assignments took him to Iowa, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico. He witnessed — and participated in — skirmishes among Indigenous nations and with white settlers. About 1828, he was captured by warriors of the Crow Nation in Montana.

Tribal leaders evidently saw value in his understanding of white culture, fluency in English, and bravery in combat. In the tribe, he rose to the position of a war chief. Today, his observations of their way of life before displacement by white settlers are valued as precious anthropology.

Witness to Continental Expansion

Beckwourth was a rare Black witness to the Seminole Nation and runaway slaves in Florida. He participated in the second of three wars from 1835 to 1842. During the conflicts, he served as a messenger delivering instructions between army forts. He observed the deadly Battle of Okeechobee on Christmas Day 1837, involving about 800 troops under the command of Col. Zachary Taylor.

Though Taylor, who later became president, proclaimed the battle a victory, many historians tend to agree with Beckwourth’s assessment that the Seminoles got the better of the fight. He recounted: “I could not see that Ok-ke-cho-be was much of a victory; indeed, I shrewdly suspected that the enemy had the advantage; but it was called a victory by the soldier, and they were the best qualified to decide.”

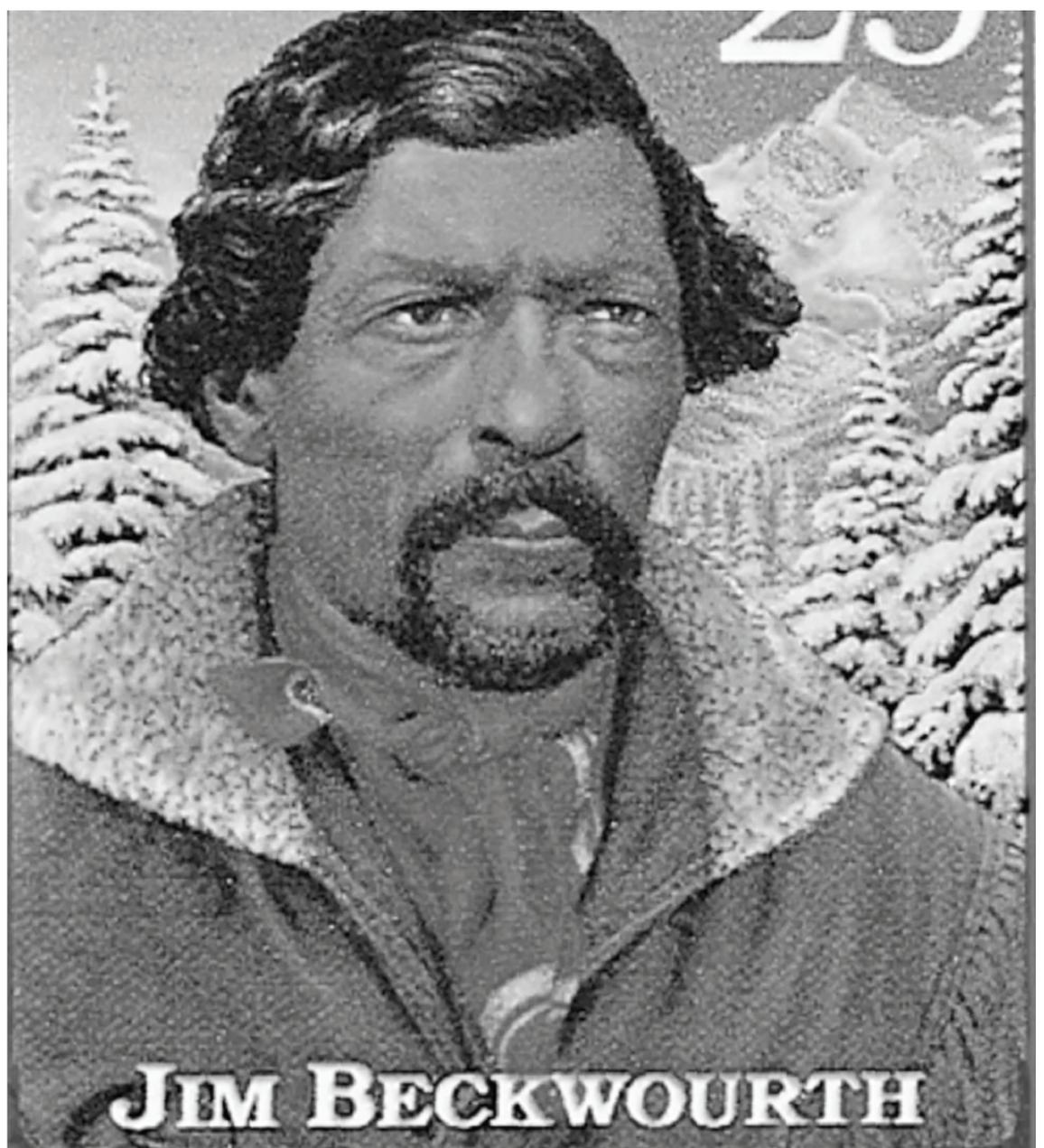
Beckwourth also provided insights into the opening of California during the gold rush. In 1850, he located a passage through the Sierra Nevada mountains known as Beckwourth Pass. Then, he organized a team to prepare a road for wagon trains between Reno and northern California, known as the Beckwourth Trail, which enabled thousands of settlers to reach the fertile central valley in safety — and allowed Beckwourth to achieve a measure of commercial success.

This fascinating pioneer lived to see the end of slavery; he died around 1866, shortly after the Civil War. But he never had the legal right to become a citizen, even though he was an authentic product of the American experience. As such, the rediscovery of his story can provide an engaging springboard for re-envisioning the wild frontier.

BLACK PIONEERS from A1

ROGER HOUSE

Roger House is associate professor of American Studies at Emerson College and the author of “Blue Smoke: The Recorded Journey of Big Bill Broonzy” and “South End Shout: Boston’s Forgotten Music Scene in the Jazz Age.” His forthcoming book is “Five Hundred Years of Black Self Governance” by Louisiana State University Press. A version of this commentary was published in The Messenger.



JIM BECKWOURTH STAMP, issued October 18, 1994. PHOTO COURTESY ROGER HOUSE

MLK from A2

King was a genius at unifying us

Bishop Melvin Cooper, World Won for Christ Life Ministries

First, it's important to note that we have not taken advantage of some of the opportunities that Martin Luther King Jr. opened the way for. A good example is voting rights. These days if people vote at all they exercise selective voting. They show up to vote for the people they want to vote for. There is little understanding of how crucial it is to use your right to vote all the time. King would certainly want the community to grasp that better. **In some cases,** because we have not taken advantage of the opportunities that King helped bring about, we have lost them. I am thinking of rights like affirmative action. King would lament those losses. **King was a genius** at unifying us, at helping us get focused and stay focused. I think the main thing he would do today is rally us to concertate on subjects like the suppression of the Black vote and the teaching of our history among other challenges. **I believe he would encourage** us to use all available tools - such as social media - to push for a right path in these causes. **Above all, King** would lead us to put the emphasis back on unity. One place he would want to encourage more unity is among churches. He would also want to have more togetherness in our communities. **In King's absence,** we're capable of unifying. It's going to take a lot. It has to start with community leaders coming together and putting their differences aside. That's a first step. We can get there but we have to do better about working together.



Embracing Diversity

Kallie Durham, Senior, KIPP Tulsa University Prep High School



While we have come a long way since the Civil Rights Movement, and we have achieved many things that Martin Luther King Jr. and other activists fought for, we still have a long way to go. I feel like if Dr. King was here today, he would encourage us to tackle these challenges in Tulsa to work toward common goals despite our differences and unify our communities. In facing Tulsa's specific issues, such as equal funding for predominantly black schools or addressing the attempts to gentrify Black neighborhoods, Dr. King would emphasize the importance of having discussions and to have empathy for one another to close the gaps that still exist between us. By embracing Tulsa's diversity and advocating for a positive change within our community, we can honor Dr. King's legacy.

GARY LEE is the managing editor and a key contributor for The Oklahoma Eagle, a stout advocate for the African American community and those that champion equity.

TRUSTING NEWS. As a valued reader, we sincerely believe that your insight and candid feedback will help strengthen our ability to publish news and information that engenders greater trust in the media. We encourage you to share your thoughts about this article by sending an email to trustingnews@theokeagle.com

MLK

King was born **Michael King Jr.** on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, the second of three children to Michael King Sr. and Alberta King. His father, King, Sr., would later change their first names to Martin, inspired by Protestant Reformer Martin Luther.

Speaking Truth To Power

Rev. Carmen White Janak, CEO Innerview Consulting Group



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a far more different man in 1967 speaking at Riverside Church in New York City for the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam than he was when he borrowed the words of Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall for his famous, "I Have a Dream" speech during The March on Washington. Dr. King before his murder in Memphis re-emphasized these words, "a time comes when silence is betrayal." **I believe his mandate for us** today would be to speak truth to power. Speaking truth to power requires courage over comfort. It will not be comfortable. It will cost us to speak loudly concerning the enormity of our community disparities that have often remained unheard. Speaking truth to power requires us to move as a Collective Conscious eradicating the innumerable inequities within systems that do not favor every member of our community, such as Black maternal health, food deserts, or education. **We must challenge policies** that are egregious and further mask harmful systemic issues. I believe King would still want us to "lift every voice" by curating actions that make "The Beloved Community" a reality and not only a dream. **Speaking truth to power** requires that as The Collective we won't be silent anymore. We must speak.

Empathy & Understanding

Khaleah Marzett, Sophomore, KIPP Tulsa University Prep High School



If Martin Luther King Jr. were here today, I think he would want us to approach the challenges in Tulsa with empathy, understanding, and a commitment to justice. He would encourage us to listen to the voice of those affected, acknowledge the historical context, and work toward healing and reconciliation. Martin Luther King Jr. believed in the power of peaceful protest and nonviolent action, so he would likely advocate for peaceful dialogue and community engagement to address the specific challenges faced in Tulsa.

Equality & Fairness

Cory Young, Journalism Teacher, KIPP Tulsa University Prep High School and Photographer



Dr. King was a visionary. Similar to his methods while he was alive, I feel he would attack the problems of today in a public, deliberate, and peaceful manner. He'd preach equality and fairness for all. Though peaceful, I feel some of his heroic battles would threaten offenders and could ultimately land him in jail and targeted, unjustly. I also feel he would use his platform to increase educational literacy and violence among black and brown communities and do so in an encouraging and uplifting manner. Ultimately, today, the world is in a better place than when Dr. King was here, but it's still in a downward spiral. Similar to when Dr. King lived, I feel his goal would be to challenge the minds of people in high places, lower places, and to bring positive change.

Addressing Emotional Pain

Premadonna Braddick, Executive Director, Soaring Eagles Youth and Family Services, Therapist, Marriages, Families, and Mental Health, based in North Tulsa



Members of the Black community are facing a lot of mental stress and emotional pain these days - as much if not more than in King's Day. I think King understood that. And he pushed for changes which opened the space for the community to deal with that pain. The changes he helped bring about led to the beginnings of getting to a place of healing. That is exactly what he would want us to do today. **Part of that is acknowledging** that in being part of that pain, whites were only doing what they were taught to do. **Another big part** would be for people in Black families to take responsibility for the trauma that we may have inflicted on other family members. That, in turn, would help us stop an unhealthy pattern of relationships. This may not be the first thing people think of when they consider King's legacy, but I think it was very much part of his teachings.

Finding Solutions

Vic Regalado, Tulsa County Sheriff



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was uniquely gifted at identifying the most important social problems we as a country and a community are facing and bringing people together to solve them. That is very much what he would want us to do. **What's interesting is that the problems** that were most pressing in King's Day are still very much the problems of today. I mean issues like social injustice, poverty, and public health. I pinpoint poverty as a particularly vital concern. **What King did was to work to bring** together all the available constituencies and resources to find ways of addressing these problems. We should use his inspiration to do that also. **Something else that King brought** was leadership. That meant that people from different walks of life followed him. We don't have that so much these days. And we need it. **By working together,** and using King as a model and inspiration, we can make a lot of progress.



DEB SHROPSHIRE, DHS director, talks to reporters Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, about abuse allegations against employees at the Robert M. Greer Center in Enid. PHOTO MICHAEL MCNUIT

The details emerging about the allegations are *truly horrific*

Enid Center Residents Abuse from A1

Oklahoma Department of Human Services director Deb Shropshire apologized Wednesday to families of victims with intellectual disabilities who suffered what a police officer called “systematic caretaker abuse” at an Enid center.

Law enforcement agencies are continuing to investigate the allegations, which were first reported to DHS back in April. But the incidents could have been ongoing for at least a year before that.

“The details emerging about the allegations are truly horrific to hear and absolutely unacceptable,” Shropshire said.

Six men from Enid were charged last month with caretaker abuse at the Robert M. Greer Center in Enid. Allegations of abuse include using a bedsheet to choke a resident who has the mental capacity of a 4-year-old and bribing one resident with food to beat another resident, according to affidavits filed in Garfield County District Court.

In the affidavits, an Enid detective said investigations by the police and DHS took time because allegations were difficult to substantiate, as Greer Center staff were not cooperating and the victims were either nonverbal, severely developmentally delayed, or both.

said a Greer Center employee reported abuse to a unit program manager, “But he had refused to listen.”

On Wednesday, however, Shropshire said DHS’ Office of Client Advocacy, which investigates reports of abuse and neglect against those being served by the agency in residential and community placements, “did not have difficulty getting staff or other witnesses to be interviewed for their investigation.”

“Part of the ongoing investigation may be to the accuracy of some of the information that was provided, but we had not had any challenge of getting staff to participate in interviews,” she said.

But a former staff member who reported allegations of abuse was granted protective orders against former coworkers after someone posted fliers this summer across Enid that featured her photo, phone number and

2000

Since 2000, the Greer Center has been operated and managed by Liberty of Oklahoma Corporation, which is affiliated with Liberty Healthcare Corporation, a private, for-profit company based in Pennsylvania. Liberty also has contracts with the state to manage two facilities for youth with developmental disabilities and to end the state’s years-long waitlist for developmental disability services.

suggestions that she was available for sexual encounters, according to reporting by Kayla Branch of The Frontier. A Garfield County judge granted all four emergency orders of protection.

Shropshire said investigations into the abuse allegations at the Greer Center are ongoing, a statement echoed Wednesday by an Enid Police Department spokesman, who said more charges are possible.

“In a case like this with these types of victims, it takes a little bit more time,” said Cass Rains, Enid Police Department’s public information coordinator. “I understand that DHS has said that they had suspended some or terminated others, but our burden of proof is quite a bit higher to get those charges levied in a court of law.”

Shropshire met with reporters Wednesday for the first time since charges were filed last month. She said her agency’s focus has been “to secure the safety of everyone at the Greer Center,” a contracted residential treatment facility for adults who are dually diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and co-occurring mental illness and/or severe behavioral challenges.

She said 50 residents live at the 52-bed facility, which is the only one of its kind in the state. New admissions have been halted.

Since 2000, the Greer Center has been operated and managed by Liberty of Oklahoma Corporation, which is affiliated with Liberty Healthcare Corporation, a private, for-profit company based in Pennsylvania. Liberty also has contracts with the state to manage two facilities for youth with developmental disabilities and to end the state’s years-long waitlist for developmental disability services.

“Our immediate effort has really been around ensuring the safety of those residents and trying to better understand through the course of the investigations of what actually happened,” Shropshire said. “In doing that, we will be working Liberty closely to ensure the terms set out in the contract are followed.”

Families of five residents at the Greer Center have requested to be moved, she said. The Greer Center is not a long-term facility, but rather “a place where they’re going for a period of time to receive treatment.”

“As that treatment helps improve things, then they move on to another setting,” Shropshire said.

She said she wanted victims’ families to know that her agency realizes their trust has been violated.

“I am incredibly sorry this happened, and we are here to walk beside you in this traumatic and heart-wrenching situation. We are working relentlessly with everyone involved to ensure the situation is remediated to protect the Greer Center’s residents,” Shropshire said. “You have my word that Oklahoma Human Services will do everything in its power to ensure that the Oklahomans we serve are safe.”

‘Organized pattern of abuse and deception’

Shropshire said the first reports of abuse at the Greer Center were made in April, claiming that OCA investigated reports of abuse and followed statutory requirements to notify law enforcement of its investigation at the center.

Several investigations by OCA were underway, she said. All were thought to be individual incidents until a Greer Center employee contacted Enid police in late October.

“The investigation then uncovered what appears to be an organized pattern of abuse and deception by a small group of Liberty employees, which led to criminal charges,” Shropshire said.

Liberty employs more than 170 people at the Greer Center, according to the company.

“They have many, many employees providing direct care to clients there who are not involved in this at all,” she said. “It was a small group of employees who were involved.”

Some OCA inquiries remain ongoing and are being conducted in cooperation with the Enid Police Department’s investigations, she said. There are also investigations underway from the Oklahoma State Department of Health and the Oklahoma Disability Law Center. Liberty is also conducting its own investigation.

Asked why DHS did not contact law enforcement after it first received allegations, Shropshire said that question is under review.

Enid Center Residents Abuse cont. A8



DEB SHROPSHIRE, DHS director, talks to reporters Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, about abuse allegations against employees at the Robert M. Greer Center in Enid. PHOTO MICHAEL MCNUTT

Enid Center Residents Abuse from A7

“There are different entities that have different roles in investigating complaints and there are also (...) policies that say a certain entity receives an investigation, here is their approach to notifying law enforcement,” she said. “All of those roles and policies — what has happened as well as what did happen — in the future are part of what we’re trying to understand and also (...) should there be adjustments made.”

Liberty also is working on “a comprehensive remediation plan” to address the problems at the Greer Center, Shropshire said.

She said other actions taken include:

- Eight staff members connected to the allegations have been terminated by Liberty;
- Four staff members have been suspended, and the Greer Center administrator has resigned;
- DHS has placed developmental disabilities services staff at the Greer Center for monitoring 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- Liberty has members of its corporate leadership team on site daily;
- Liberty is sending a daily report to DHS that includes any new allegations of maltreatment as well as information about any new staff members and confirmation of their screening and credentials;
- DHS has provided refresher training about reporting abuse and neglect to Liberty staff at the Greer Center; and
- A licensed professional counselor has been contracted to offer trauma counseling and therapeutic services to residents and their families.

Sue Nayda, chief operating officer of Liberty of Oklahoma Corporation, issued a statement saying the company is working with DHS and OCA on their investigations.

“Liberty of Oklahoma Corporation considers the allegations of abuse of residents by certain former staff at the Greer Center to be intolerable,” Nayda said. “We appreciate the dedication and professionalism of Oklahoma Human Services, Office of Client Advocacy, and the Enid Police Department over the past month. We also appreciate our current dedicated staff members who continue to care for our residents. We continue to evaluate processes and personnel and reinforce our training and reporting procedures.”

Greer center abuse was ‘systematic and coordinated’

The six Enid men charged in connection to Greer Center abuse are Jonathan Martinez, 21; Jonathan Colon Orozco, 28; Edward Russell Webster, 51; Gavin Foster, 26; Jhon Alan Nieto, 24; and Adlai Flores, 21.

Martinez and Nieto are charged with two counts of abuse by caretaker and conspiracy. Webster and Foster are charged with one count of abuse by caretaker and conspiracy. Flores is charged with abuse by caretaker and other crimes against public justice. Nieto also is

“Several of the investigations could not be substantiated due to the staff at the Greer Center not cooperating and the victims being either nonverbal, severely developmentally delayed, or both.”

FRANK BRUNO,
Enid police Detective

charged with a misdemeanor counts of resisting arrest and obstructing an officer.

Bruno, the Enid police detective, said in affidavits filed in Garfield County District Court against five of the men that he was notified in June by a former Greer Center employee about “ongoing, systematic and coordinated caretaker abuse” at the facility. He said he discovered several of the alleged incidents of caretaker abuse had also been investigated by the Office of Client Advocacy and that several listed the same Greer Center staff members as suspects.

“Several of the investigations could not be substantiated due to the staff at the Greer Center not cooperating and the victims being either nonverbal, severely developmentally delayed, or both,” Bruno wrote.

Three months later, in September, Bruno said he was made aware of a new report regarding caretaker abuse at the Greer Center involving several of the same people who were employed at the time as staff members.

In October, Bruno said Anthony Huhman, an intake and placement coordinator at the Greer Center, told him that residents claimed Martinez, Orozco, Nieto and Webster had abused them by taking either bed sheets or wet towels and wrapping them around a resident’s head “to strangle him until he passed out.” After the resident had passed out, they “would then strike his chest and abdomen repeatedly until he would wake up.”

Bruno said a resident told him that, on one occasion, the former staff members worried they may have “actually killed” him because he was “not waking up.” They grabbed the resident by the back of his head or neck and “threw him into a nearby door headfirst, after which he regained consciousness,” Bruno wrote.

The resident said the abuse occurred after 5 or 6 p.m. when “all the important people are gone by then,” according to Bruno’s affidavit.

Bruno said he discovered that the mother of one of the victims removed the resident from the Greer Center “after several instances of (...) being injured while he lived at the facility.”

A resident and an employee at the Greer Center identified the same men as being the primary abusive staff.

The employee said the men used food from outside the facility to bribe a resident into “beating” another resident regularly, Bruno wrote in an affidavit. The resident who was the subject of the beating was targeted because, the employee said, the resident would “cuss them out” and because “he was prejudiced.” In one instance, the resident’s eye was completely red, and a doctor had been worried about permanent damage to the eye.

The resident had lived at the Greer Center for four years until his mother removed him, Bruno said. The resident told Bruno that Flores had “punched me in the face” and pointed to his nose and said Foster had “choked” him several times by grabbing him from behind as he sat in a chair. He said Nieto and Webster had verbally abused him and had also “destroyed” various items of his items that were in his room at the facility.

Lawsuit filed against Liberty, Greer Center administrators

Attorneys representing a resident at the Greer Center and his mother, identified only as John and Jane Doe, filed a lawsuit Thursday in Oklahoma County District Court against Liberty of Oklahoma and its parent company along with three administrators at the Greer Center during the time the caretaker abuse allegedly occurred.

“The depths of the Greer Center staff’s depravity and the failures of those responsible for overseeing them, including Liberty and the Greer Center administrators, are not yet fully known. But what is known, and is described below, is tragic and can never be allowed to happen again,” the petition states.

Filed by the Nix Patterson law firm and Cameron Spradling, the lawsuit seeks actual, compensatory and punitive damages for a series of allegations.

Named in the suit are:

- Liberty of Oklahoma Corporation and its parent, Liberty Healthcare Corporation,
- Huhman, the intake/placement coordinator at the Greer Center interviewed by police,
- Marc Tatro, identified as a unit program manager at the Greer Center, and
- Hugh Sage, identified as CEO of Liberty of Oklahoma and an executive director of Liberty Healthcare. The lawsuit also identifies Sage as the official administrator of the Greer Center at the time of the allegations.

The lawsuit states John Doe has been a Greer Center resident since May 2020. When he was a child, he was diagnosed with an intellectual disability and he has since been diagnosed with epilepsy, antisocial personality disorder and persistent depressive disorder. When he was admitted to the Greer Center, Huhman allegedly told his mother, who lives in Oklahoma City, that he would likely be at the facility forever, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit lists allegations included in the affidavits filed in Garfield County District Court and states that John Doe was a target of waterboarding and being beaten in the facility’s showers.

“The abuse John Doe endured at the Greer Center was so extreme and outrageous as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency, would be considered atrocious and utterly intolerable in a civilized society, and caused severe pain, suffering and emotional distress to John Doe beyond that which a reasonable person could be expected to endure,” the lawsuit states.

MICHAEL MCNUTT became NonDoc’s managing editor in January 2023. He has been a journalist for nearly 40 years, working at The Oklahoman for 30 years, heading up its Enid bureau and serving as night city editor, assistant news editor and State Capitol reporter. An inductee of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, he served as communications director for former Gov. Mary Fallin and then for the Office of Juvenile Affairs. Send tips and story ideas to mcnutta@nondoc.com.



STACKS OF FILES lined the Pardon and Parole Board office in Oklahoma City on March 17, 2021. Executive Director Tom Bates said digital filing is difficult due to security concerns in prisons where most petitioners are housed, making hard copies the easier option. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

By the numbers

In 2021, 36% of prisoners who appeared before the board received a favorable recommendation. That percentage dropped to 24% in 2023, with 323 fewer nonviolent prisoners granted parole compared to 2021



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Oklahoma's parole rate *has plummeted over the past three years*

Parole Rates from A1

Trisha Fox was optimistic when her husband, Richard Fox, appeared on the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board docket in early September.

Trisha Fox was optimistic when her husband, Richard Fox, appeared on the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board docket in early September.

The 63-year-old prisoner, incarcerated since 1980 on a first-degree murder conviction in Caddo County, had not received a misconduct violation since 1995. Letters of support poured in from family, friends and prison ministry volunteers assuring board members he would have stable housing and employment if granted parole.

"He never meant to kill anybody, but he also never denied doing it," Trisha Fox said, adding that her husband was 19 at the time of the crime. "He's just someone who deserves a second chance."

In a 4-1 decision that took a few minutes, the board denied Richard Fox's application. Trisha Fox said her husband would have progressed through the parole process if board members had more time to consider his case and the opportunity to interview him in person.

"It's really easy to say no to a piece of paper or a computer," she said.

Oklahoma's parole rate has plummeted over the past three years, an Oklahoma Watch analysis of docket results found. Prisoners convicted of violent offenses must progress through a two-stage process with gubernatorial approval required. The board has the authority to release nonviolent offenders to the street.

In 2021, 36% of prisoners who appeared before the board received a favorable recommendation. That percentage dropped to 24% in 2023, with 323 fewer nonviolent prisoners granted parole compared to 2021. At least three of five board members must vote favorably for parole to be granted or recommended to the governor in violent cases.

The decline correlates with a recent uptick in Oklahoma's prison population. A Bureau of Justice Statistics report released last month found the state's prison population rose 2.3% from late 2021 to 2022.

The trend isn't unique to Oklahoma. An October analysis from the Prison Policy Initiative, a Massachusetts-based think tank that advocates for criminal justice reform, found that parole rates declined in all but six states from 2019 to 2022. The analysis concluded that political pressures and attitudes often influence board decisions.

The makeup of Oklahoma's parole board has shifted considerably over the past two years. Noting that his beliefs on capital punishment differed from Gov. Kevin Stitt, former board chairman Adam Luck resigned in January 2022. Luck, the chief executive officer of an Oklahoma City nonprofit that supports people facing poverty and homelessness, faced criticism from some district attorneys over his propensity to recommend clemency for death row prisoners.

"It is time that we do better," Grady County District Attorney Jason Hicks said during a March 2021 news conference held weeks after commutation recipient Lawrence Paul Anderson murdered three people in Chickasha. "We don't want these people on our street."

Kelly Doyle, a trained social worker and leader of a Tulsa-based nonprofit, resigned unexpectedly in March 2022. Similar to Luck, district attorneys criticized Doyle over a perceived leniency in recommending clemency for death row inmates and parole for prisoners convicted of violent offenses.

Of the board's five current members, four have a background as a district attorney, judge or police officer. The longest-tenured member is Richard Konieczny, a retired Episcopalian priest and police officer whom Gov. Stitt appointed to replace Luck in January 2022.

Sue Hinton, a retired English professor at Oklahoma City Community College, became interested in criminal justice reform when she started teaching classes at state prisons in the 1980s. After retirement, she began attending Pardon and Parole Board meetings, compiling unofficial data on the board's decisions.

She said the board is much more likely to consider early release if a prisoner personally appears before the parole board. But because the board functions in a part-time capacity and Oklahoma's prison population has soared since the body was formed in 1944, that's not feasible in most cases.

"Depression is the prevailing state of mind," Hinton said of parole applicants. "They're not gang members, not trouble makers, and have a heart of good citizenship, but they don't feel like there's a reward."

Hinton said board members face extraordinary outside pressure and are often predisposed to reject an application if they do not have enough information. Making the board full-time could allow members more time to review cases, she said. Oklahoma parole board members are classified as part-time state employees and expected to work about 10 hours per week.

Parole board members in neighboring Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Texas and Arkansas are classified as full-time state employees. In Texas, whose state prison population is about five times greater than Oklahoma, board members earn an average salary of well over \$100,000.

Richard Fox won't be eligible to reapply for parole until September 2026. Trisha Fox said she's hopeful a proposed overhaul of the state's criminal sentencing code will take effect and make her husband eligible for early release before then, but in that scenario his fate would again rest with the parole board.

"When you listen to them and how fast they go, it's just no, no, no, on to the next one," she said. "It's like they already made up their mind when they got there."

Pardon and Parole Board guidelines advise members to consider the nature of a parole applicant's crime, criminal history, participation in prison programs and misconduct history. District attorneys are also allowed to oppose or protest a parole application ahead of a board hearing.

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

An uncertain path towards public and private funding

School Tax Credits from A1

What are the private school tax credits?

The Parental Choice Tax Credit offers Oklahoma families a refundable tax credit of \$5,000 to \$7,500 for private school tuition and fees. If you will pay, or expect to pay, for a child's private school this year, you can apply for the credit.

Though it's called a refundable tax credit, it functions like a voucher because families can advance the funds from the Oklahoma Tax Commission in a process that's separate from income tax filing.

The program was a major initiative for the Legislature and Governor Kevin Stitt in 2023.

Proponents say the program is needed to help low-income families afford private schools if it's the right fit for their children.

"I think it's going to be a tremendous blessing for our families," said Barbara Ohsfeldt, founder and principal of Community Christian School in Norman.

While the program could make private schools

“

It was always sold as: for a parent who wants to send their kids to private school but for the cost, we're going to provide this option.

DAVID BLATT, director of research and strategic impact at Oklahoma Appleseed Center for Law & Justice.

feasible for a few new families, critics say it will mostly cover the costs parents could already afford on their own.

"It was always sold as: for a parent who wants to send their kids to private school but for the cost, we're going to provide this option," said David Blatt, director of research and strategic impact at Oklahoma Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, a nonprofit organization that advocates for public education.

The application cycle, which opens in December of each year for the next calendar year, favors parents whose children already attend private school, not those the program was intended to serve, he said.

Folks on both sides of the issue say they will try to work with the Legislature to align the program with the school year.

School Tax Credits cont. A10

Families of all incomes can qualify for a credit

School Tax Credits from A9

Who is eligible, and will every family receive the credit?

Any student in pre-K through 12th grade is eligible. Previous public school enrollment isn't required.

Proponents say the tax credit program will be able to serve about 23,000 in its first year, but there are already 33,000 students attending private schools in Oklahoma, so the funds are likely to run out. Families must reapply each year, and receiving the credit one year doesn't guarantee they'll receive it the following year.

Families of all income levels can qualify for a credit, but those that earn less than \$150,000 per year (based on adjusted gross income) will be prioritized if they apply by Feb. 1. The application deadline is Dec. 31 of each year, or when the cap is met.

Credit amounts are \$7,500 for families with an adjusted gross income of less than \$75,000; \$7,000 for income between \$75,001 and \$150,000; \$6,500 for income between \$150,001 and \$225,000; \$6,000 for income between \$225,001 and \$250,000; \$5,000 for income of \$250,001 and above.

The credits can't be split (say between divorced parents) and only one taxpayer can claim a child, though that person could be a grandparent or other relative if they pay for tuition.

Does the credit cover the cost of tuition at private schools?

For many, it will not cover the full cost.

Private school tuition costs slightly less than \$7,000 per year, on average, in Oklahoma, according to the Education Data Initiative. But there's a wide range within that: as low as \$500 at Cristo Rey Oklahoma City, where a corporate work-study program picks up most of the cost, to more than \$23,000 annually at a few schools such as Holland Hall in Tulsa and Casady School and Heritage Hall in Oklahoma City.

Families can apply for the credit even if they receive other types of assistance paying for a private school, including the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship Fund or through the Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Education Scholarships.

Do the tax credits guarantee admission to a private school?

To apply, families must already be enrolled in the school their child is attending or planning to attend. An enrollment verification form from the school is required for application, and the school has to be accredited (a list of participating schools will be available at parentalchoice.ok.gov).

Private schools do not have to accept all students. Some reject students with behavioral issues or disabilities, or who don't conform to the school's religious tenets, such as students who are LGBTQ+ (or whose parents are).

If a student has an individualized education program for a disability, does the private school have to provide services?

While private schools can offer disability services to students, they aren't required to. To accept the Parental Choice Tax Credit, parents give up their child's right to disability services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, according to the new law. Disability services include physical, occupational and speech therapy and paraprofessional aides.



PARENTS with income below \$150,000 annually have until February 1 to apply for priority consideration for the private school tuition tax credits. PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK

“

I think it's going to be a tremendous blessing for our families.

Barbara Ohsfeldt, founder and principal of Community Christian School in Norman

Are there guardrails around how the tax credits are used by parents?

A family can't claim more than its actual spending on tuition and fees, and uniforms purchased directly from the school.

To reduce fraud, the Oklahoma Tax Commission will mail taxpayers' payments to the school in two installments, half in the spring and half in the fall. Parents will need to go to the school in person and either sign the check over to the school or collect the check if tuition and fees have already been paid.

The Tax Commission said it will audit questionable claims and recapture credits that were awarded on behalf of a student no longer attending a private school or enrolled in a public school.

How does the funding for these tax credits affect local schools?

As a tax credit, the program reduces overall tax collections to the state, but lawmakers capped that each year so it's limited to \$150 million in 2024, \$200 million in 2025 and \$250 million in

2026 and beyond. Funding for the tax credits does not come from educational appropriations or out of the school funding formula.

If the state experiences a revenue failure, the credits will be reduced proportionately.

What about home-school parents? Can they also qualify?

Yes, home-schooling parents can claim up to \$1,000 per student for curriculum, textbooks, tutoring, testing fees, and other qualified expenses. Taxpayers may claim that credit on their income tax return starting in 2025. The Legislature capped this program at \$5 million per year.

How will the tax credits work and what do parents need to know to apply for this program?

The application and more information are available at parentalchoice.ok.gov.

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

Poultry companies ask judge to dismiss ruling that they polluted an Oklahoma watershed

KEN MILLER Associated Press



A TYSON FOOD PRODUCT is seen in Montpelier, Vt., Nov. 18, 2011. The world's largest poultry producer and other poultry companies are asking a federal judge to dismiss his ruling that they polluted an Oklahoma watershed. Arkansas-based Tyson Foods, Minnesota-based Cargill Inc. and the others say in a motion filed Thursday, Oct. 26, 2023, that the case is "constitutionally moot" because the evidence is now more than 13 years old. PHOTO AP PHOTO/TOBY TALBOT, FILE

A group of poultry producers, including the world's largest, have asked a federal judge to dismiss his ruling that they polluted an Oklahoma watershed.

Arkansas-based Tyson Foods, Minnesota-based Cargill Inc. and the others say in a motion filed Thursday that evidence in the case is now more than 13 years old.

"This case is constitutionally moot because the Court can no longer grant any effectual relief," the companies argued in a filing with U.S. District Judge Gregory Frizzell in Tulsa.

The filing said Oklahoma conservation officials have noted a steady decline in pollution. It credited improved wastewater treatment plants, state laws requiring poultry-litter management plans and fewer poultry farms as a result of growing metropolitan areas in northwest Arkansas.

A spokesperson for Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond did not immediately return a phone call for comment Saturday.

The attorney general's office told the Tulsa World that "a resolution of this matter that is in the best interests of Oklahoma" is being sought.

Frizzell ruled in January that the companies were responsible for pollution of the Illinois River Watershed by disposing of chicken litter, or manure, that leached into the river.

The trial in the lawsuit that was filed in 2005 by the state of Oklahoma had ended in 2013 with no ruling for 10 years. In January, Frizzell issued his decision without addressing the reason for the decade-long delay.

"The Court's findings and conclusions rest upon a record compiled in 2005-2009," the poultry companies' motion stated. "When this Court issued its findings and conclusions ... much of the record dated from the 1990s and early 2000s."

Frizzell had ordered the poultry companies and the state to reach an agreement on how to remedy the effects of the pollution.

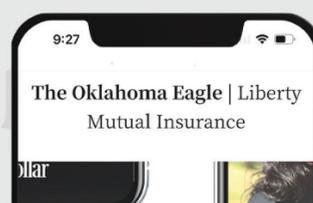
Attorneys for the companies and the state attorney general each said in Thursday filings that mediation had failed.

The other defendants named in the lawsuit are Cal-Maine Foods Inc., Tyson Poultry Inc., Tyson Chicken Inc., Cobb-Vantress Inc., Cargill Turkey Production L.L.C., George's Inc., George's Farms Inc., Peterson Farms Inc. and Simmons Foods Inc.

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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



CLASSIFIEDS

OKLAHOMA CLASSIFIED AD NETWORK

FOR MORE INFO CALL
1-888-815-2672

WANT TO BUY

OLD GUITARS WANTED! LARRY BRINGS CASH for vintage USA guitars, tube amps, banjos, mandolins, etc. Fender, Gibson, Martin, Gretsch, others. Call or text 918-288-2222. www.stringswest.com

ADVERTISE STATEWIDE

Put your message where it matters most – **IN OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPERS.** We can place your ad in 144 newspapers. For more information or to place an ad, contact Landon Cobb at (405) 499-0022 or toll-free in OK at 1-888-815-2672.

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 Eagle

“We Make America Better When We Aid Our People.”

SUBSCRIBE

LARGE ABSOLUTE AUCTION & REAL ESTATE AUCTION

CITRO'S CARPET COPS
THURS. JAN. 18TH AT 10:00 AM

ITEMS LOCATED AT: 2401 N. JANEWAY AVE, MOORE, OKC

INSPECTION: WED. JAN. 17 FROM 8:00 AM TO 5:00 PM AND STARTING AT 8:00 AM DAY OF AUCTION

AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC
200 NW 114TH ST, OKC

CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE AUCTION, BID LIVE ON-LINE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY AT **WWW.DAKIL.COM**

REAL ESTATE TO BE SOLD FIRST AT 10:00AM
OPEN HOUSES: SAT. JAN. 6 & 13 FROM 10:00 AM TO 4:00 PM

Approx. 2,700 SF Building. Setting on Approx. 0.3581 Acres MOL. Approx. 1,000 SF of Office Area and Approx. 1,700 SF of Warehouse. 3-Overhead Doors, 1-Car Lift, 80 gal. Snap-On Air Compressor, Solar Paneling, 2-Storage Rooms in Warehouse, Light Fixtures in Bathrooms from Scirvin Hotel before renovation.

TERMS ON REAL ESTATE: Must be in person to bid on real estate. 5% down, 30 days to close. Closing cost and title insurance split 50/50. 10% Buyers premium.

COMPLETE CARPET CLEANING CO.

2002 GMC 14' box van w/ bane clean truck mounter carpet cleaning machine, 1989 International 26' Diesel Box Van. Buyers premium will apply PLEASE SEE WEB SITE FOR DETAILED LISTING & PICTURES.

Dakil AUCTIONEERS • 405-751-6179
www.dakil.com

LARGE ABSOLUTE AUCTION

BOXWOOD CABINETRY

Business Expanding, Moving to New Location

TUES. JAN. 16TH AT 10 AM

Items Located at: 220 Alliance Ct., Okla. City, OK

Inspection: Mon., Jan. 15 from 8 am to 5 pm and starting at 8 am day of auction

AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC
200 NW 114TH ST, OKC

Can't make to the auction, BID LIVE online at **WWW.DAKIL.COM**

2014 Multicam 5000 CNC, Multicam Vacuum Pump, Nissan 50 Forklift, Rotary Screw Air Compressors, Air Tan, Air Dryers, Planers, Saws, Cope Machine, Sanders, Edge Bander, Pocket Hole Machines, Hinge Machines, Dust Collectors, Transformers, Spare Motors, Refinished Cabinets, Office Furniture & Much More. Buyers premium will apply. PLEASE SEE WEB SITE FOR DETAILED LISTING & PICTURES

Dakil AUCTIONEERS • 405-751-6179
www.dakil.com

DO YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR MINERAL RIGHTS?

Please send a recent check stub or copy of lease to:

Mark Oates

405-365-7515 (Cell)

Email: Mark@star46energy.com

Our mission,
“ **To amplify our core value of Equity..**”

- Fairness**
- Justice**
- Honesty**
- Integrity**
- Righteousness**
- Decency**
- Objectivity**
- Impartiality**
- Honor**
- Fair-mindedness**
- Truth**

Subscribe today
@ theoklahomaeagle.net

The Oklahoma Eagle



The Oklahoma Eagle

People. Narratives. News.

THEOKEAGLE.COM

The Oklahoma Eagle

Amplifying our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial

Learn More >





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



GTOMi
Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.
Traveling Outreach Ministries

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

ALL ARE WELCOME



Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

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

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons
Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

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

SOLID ROCK 7th DAY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Sabbath School (Saturday)
9:30-10:45 a.m.
Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal
Wednesday 6:00 p.m.
"The Seventh Day Is Still God's Sabbath"

Northside Christ Gospel Church

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

Sunday School - 10 am

Sunday Morning Worship - 10:45

Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm
Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm
Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm
Wednesday worship - 8pm
Rev. John W. Anderson

VERNON AME CHURCH

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

Sunday Church School 8:30 am

Worship Service 10:00 am

Wednesday Bible Study 6:00 pm

Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

Place your church directory with us today! Advertising your church in *The Oklahoma Eagle* will get you results! Call (918) 582-7124

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participation in the Directory allows free church announcements and church news. Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

BOSTON AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

Sunday Worship 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

Sunday School 9:40 a.m.

Sunday TV Worship 11:00 a.m.

KTUL Channel 8



TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021

REV. TWAN T. JONES

Sunday School

9:45 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship

11:00 a.m.

"We've come this far by faith"

NORTH PEORIA CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

Warren Blakney, Minister

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

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

Pettie Chapel CME



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

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA

THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

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

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.

Tulsa, OK 74103
918-582-5129

www.fbcnt.org

Find us on Facebook

WATCH US ON YouTube

"Teaching Minds

Changing Hearts

Touching the World"

Church In Power

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

Service times: 9am Sundays, 7pm Wed, and Special Supernatural Breakthrough Services every last Friday and Saturday of every month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am
Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

Church Ministries:
Children's Church, CIP Praise Dancers, and CIP Praise Tem.



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22

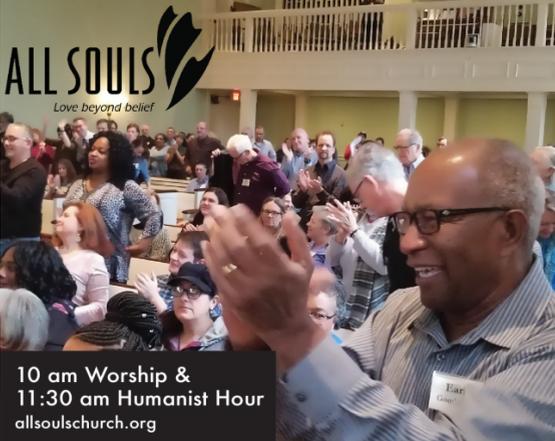
List Your Church Today!

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participate in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

- Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
- Priority over non-listed churches for news.

Two service styles to meet your spiritual & community-building needs.
2952 S. Peoria Ave. Tulsa, OK | allsoulschurch.org



10 am Worship & 11:30 am Humanist Hour
allsoulschurch.org



Mount Zion Baptist Church
419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma

Office:

918-584-0510

Fax:

918-584-1958

Prayer Line:

918-584-PRAY

Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

Morning

Worship 10:45

Wednesday

Bible Study

Noon and 7:00



List Your Church Today!

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

Participate in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

- Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
- Priority over non-listed churches for news.

In The Spirit Christian Church

"Come And Experience The Spirit"

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



Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis,

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.

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

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

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



SMILING HEARTS The NICK BLAKELY Foundation

Our vision is to turn every potential tragedy of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) into a story of survival.

www.nickblakelyfoundation.org

**THE KIDS SUING THE EPA,
BLACK AND BROWN**

Just like climate change writ large in this country, it's Black and Brown kids who are bearing the early brunt of the negative effects. **A14**

**FEATURED: HERE ARE THE
BEST BLACK BOOKS, 2023**

In 2023, Black authors broadened our community's contributions to the global culture and made Black culture an unstoppable creative force. **A14**

Could the Days of Lead in Drinking Water Soon Be Over?

The Biden administration proposed a rule change that would require all remaining lead pipes to be removed over the next decade.

Willy Blackmore, Word In Black



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

In April, it will have been 10 years since the administration of Governor Rick Scott changed the water source for Flint, Michigan, from the Detroit Water and Sewage Department to the Flint River.

The cost-cutting measure was devastating for the city, which not only ended up with high levels of lead in its drinking water after the corrosive river flows leached it out of pipes, but also suffered from an outbreak of Legionnaires disease too.

In the decade since, the city has been working to replace all of the lead pipes in its municipal water system, with a court-ordered deadline to finish this work by August. But despite seemingly endless digging and \$97 million spent on the undertaking, there are still lead pipes remaining — and many residents in the predominantly Black city still do not trust the water system.

The drama of the water crisis has made Flint a kind of byword not only for lead contamination in drinking water but also for the disregard governments have for Black Americans writ large.

But even at its worst, Flint's lead contamination was not as high as the levels found in some other American cities, including Baltimore, Chicago, and Newark, New Jersey — all of which have significant Black populations as well. But now, the problem of lead may finally be addressed not only in Flint but also across the U.S., as the Biden Administration's Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a far stronger Lead and Copper Rule that would

require all lead service lines to be removed from water systems across the country within the next decade.

There is no safe amount of lead to consume in water (despite the current federal limit of 15 parts per billion, which the EPA wants to reduce to 10 parts as part of this rule change), and children are particularly susceptible to the effects of lead poisoning because their bodies and brains are still developing. As such, removing the some nine million lead service lines across the country (at an estimated cost of \$30 billion, about half of which would be covered by funds from the 2021 infrastructure bill) would be an overall boon for public health. But it would have a disproportionately positive effect on Black communities.

Because not only do lead pipes tend to be found in older, urban areas where more Black people tend to live (see: Flint, Baltimore, et al.), but the long-term problems caused by lead poisoning are compounded by socioeconomic issues — like, say, living in poverty. So if you had two Flint teenagers who were exposed to the same levels of lead when they were young kids, one Black and one white — and one more likely to be poor than the other—the Black kid would be more likely to suffer from, say, long term cognitive issues.

According to the EPA, the lead removal undertaking would generate between \$9.8 billion and \$34.8 billion in economic

benefits annually due in large part to the reduction in cognitive issues and other health problems caused by lead exposure.

The Biden Administration is well aware that lead exposure does not affect all Americans equally. In the announcement of the new rule proposal the EPA noted, "Due to decades of inequitable infrastructure development and underinvestment, lead exposure disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color."

The proposal (which is just over halfway through a 60-day public comment period, and may be further revised before being finalized) is yet another example of Biden's EPA being uniquely active on environmental issues that disproportionately affect Black and brown Americans.

The one major loophole in the rule, as it is currently written, however, is that it only applies to service lines — that is, the utility-owned pipes that distribute water to houses and other private residences. While those pipes do comprise the bulk of public water, they can be connected to privately owned lead pipes that connect the utility line to a house. But aside from those last bits of lead, the proposed rule could result in the impressive feat of getting nearly all of heavy metal out of our drinking-water systems.

The Kids Suing the EPA Over Climate Change Are Black and Brown Too



RESIDENTIAL HOUSES next to oil refinery at Wilmington. Wilmington has one of the highest risks of cancer due to its proximity to the Port of Long Beach, and the several oil refineries in the vicinity. Los Angeles, California, USA. PHOTO CITIZEN OF THE PLANET/EDUCATION IMAGES/ UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Alexa Spencer Word In Black

Genesis B. doesn't have air conditioning. That used to be the norm in Long Beach, California, where the 17-year-old was born and raised. A beach city in southern Los Angeles County, it's the kind of place that never gets too hot, thanks to the breeze coming off of the water — or it used to be, at least.

As temperatures increase, air conditioning has become more common there — but it's too expensive for Genesis' family.

The heat can take its toll outside, too: This summer, the hottest ever, Genesis (who, as a minor, is only identified by the first initial of her last name) suffered from heat exhaustion.

Along with 17 other California kids between the ages of 8 and 17, Genesis is suing the Environmental Protection Agency, arguing that the federal agency has violated what lawyers representing the kids say is a constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment by permitting excessive amounts of pollution that has led to and continues to exacerbate the climate crisis.

"As extreme heat days become more common in Long Beach, Genesis is unable to cool off in her home during the day," the suit, which was filed on Sunday, explains. "On many days, Genesis must wait until the evening to do schoolwork when temperatures cool down enough for her to be able to focus."

As an Afro-Latina with an Indigenous background, Genesis is at a particular disadvantage when it comes to climate change — as are all Black and Brown kids in the U.S. If climate change presents particular health challenges to children, as the suit argues, many of those problems are found at disproportionately higher rates in Black communities.

A number of the plaintiffs (but not Genesis) have asthma, for example; nationally, 5.5% of white children have asthma, compared to 12% of Black children. The higher rates of asthma are largely attributed to where Black Americans tend to live — which, thanks to redlining and the decades of housing discrimination that followed, tend to be neighborhoods that are less desirable for a host of reasons — like being flood-prone, or routinely blanketed with pollution.

Consider Genesis' hometown: an incredibly diverse city, Long Beach is 12% Black, and the majority of the community lives in North Long Beach, right alongside the 710 freeway — a major trucking route for goods leaving the Port of Long Beach, which sits just west of the city.

What was long known as the east side of Long Beach (which referred to the east side of the Los Angeles River), familiar to anyone who listened to Snoop Dogg in the 1990s, sits near both the freeway and the port. Parts of those neighborhoods have been labeled as so-called Diesel Death Zones.

The plaintiffs in the suit are a diverse group of kids from across California, including rural parts of Northern California and elsewhere in the greater Los Angeles area. As the organization Our Children's Trust, which filed the suit on their behalf (and is the driving force behind the new legal strategy of having kids sue states and local governments over climate issues), said in a statement, "The climate system that is vital to ordered liberty and has fostered and supported all human life for thousands of years no longer exists because it has been destabilized by pollution from burning fossil fuels."

And that is very much true for all kids. But just like climate change writ large in this country, it's Black and Brown kids who are bearing the early brunt of the negative effects.

If the lawsuit is successful, however, and forces real, historic change from the EPA, it will be fitting that the history books will note it by the official name, the name of an Afro-Latina girl from Long Beach: Genesis B. v. EPA.

BEST BLACK BOOKS 2023

In 2023, Black authors broadened our community's contributions to the global culture and made Black culture an unstoppable creative force.

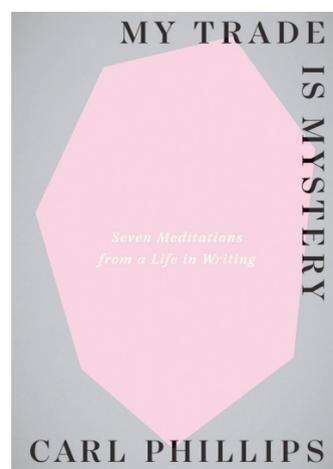
Life can move so quickly that we can overlook the pleasurable and enlightening moments that informed and supported the evolution of our personal perspectives. Books have the ability to reveal facets of the world, points of view, and artistic utterings that can quickly become pieces of ourselves.

Books can open a portal of understanding, eye-opening revelations, and historical journeys that lend to the very make up of who we are. I am honored to have covered the releases of a number of books this past year, and took care to select some of the standout Black books of the year. I, again, am thankful for every book written by Black authors in 2023 that broadened our community's contributions to the local, domestic, and global culture and made Black culture an unstoppable force of creative and intellectual benevolence, powerful intellect, and talent.



Living Colour's Time's Up (33 1/3 book series) by Kimberly Mack

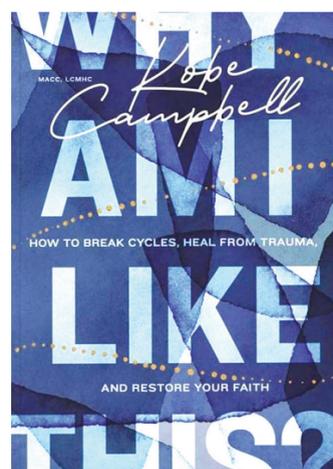
"Through interviews with members of Living Colour and others involved in the making of Time's Up, Kimberly Mack explores the creation and reception of this artistically challenging album, while examining the legacy of this culturally important and groundbreaking American rock band," writes Bloomsbury. Black music history written by Black experts in music criticism like Mack brings a richness, enthusiasm, and—no pun intended—color to the storytelling of icons such as "Living Color." This book was certainly a welcomed and exciting release of 2023.



My Trade Is Mystery: Seven Meditations from a Life in Writing by Carl Phillips

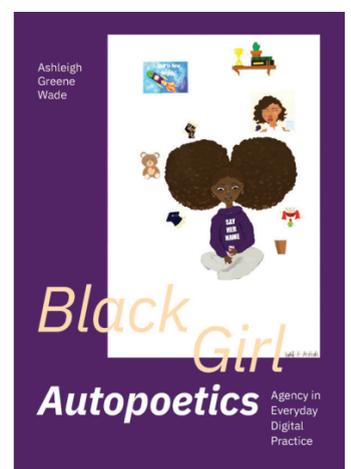
"My Trade Is Mystery" is a lovely collection of what are described as meditations on Phillips's four decades of living the "writer's life," as he gives thoughts on his longevity as a writer, and his wealth of knowledge as a mentor to several emerging poets. The book is calming, healing and full of intelligent, elegant writing and wisdom.

This book is special because it gives readers a master class on the construction of great writing, as well as the endless depth of wisdom only available from the mind of a seasoned, experienced writer like Phillips.



Why Am I Like This?: How to Break Cycles, Heal from Trauma, and Restore Your Faith by Kobe Campbell

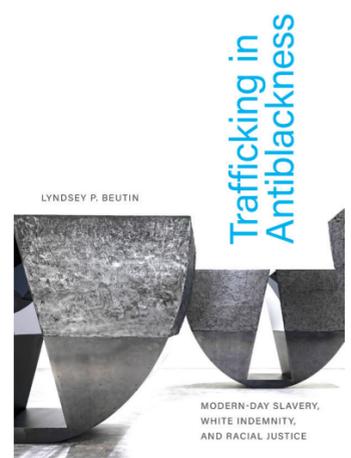
"A lot of what I do is experiential therapy. I primarily serve Black women, and the therapy includes body and movement that help process the emotions that you become aware of. Black women are so intelligent...I was just giving them the language for what they already knew or what they were already feeling." "Why Am I Like This?" chronicles the pain and trauma of a young Kobe, who found healing through a mysterious text message from a friend that led her to seek solace in God and Christianity. This book is not just faith-based; it is a testament to the work Campbell currently does in her therapy practice, which is centered on Black women's healing.



Black Girl Autopoetics by Ashleigh Greene Wade, Ph.D.

Ashleigh Greene Wade, Ph.D., assistant professor of Digital Studies, Media Studies, and African American Studies at University of Virginia, writes a fascinating book examining the intersection of Black girlhood and digital arts. She argues that Black girls who express themselves creatively in the digital sphere are exposed to the trauma of cyberbullying and harassment as they become hyper-visible, yet at the same time, seldom receive credit for their digital intellectual property and are rendered invisible.

In "Autopoetics," Black girls in STEM are given a voice, their experiences are revealed dimensionally, and their presence in the field of digital science and media are examined seriously through empathy and advocacy.



Trafficking in Antiblackness: Modern-Day Slavery, White Indemnity, and Racial Justice by Lyndsey P. Beutin

Beutin unfolds the modern reformation of the history of transatlantic slavery by examining ways that the history's narrative has been written to benefit the privilege of elite racial justice organizations. This examination enlightens readers with specifics of how history is translated to benefit the white upper class, which creates a pathway to dismantling centuries of misinformation and revealing the truth of the systemic injustice of trafficking and slavery of Black bodies.

The *Lingering Legacies* Of Urban Renewal To Be Highlighted

Program to cover chapters in 'Built from the Fire: The Epic Story of Tulsa's Greenwood District, America's Black Wall Street'

DR. JERRY GOODWIN THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

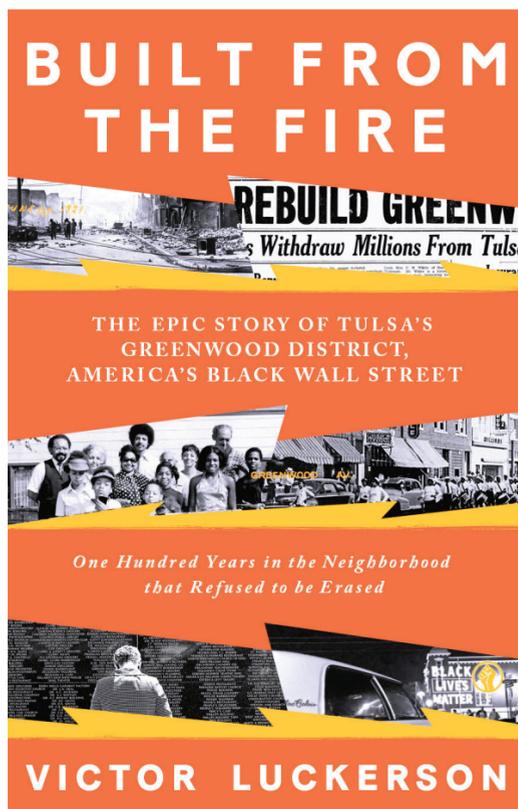
The third program in a five-part series on the chapters of **“Built from the Fire: The Epic Story of Tulsa’s Greenwood District, America’s Black Wall Street”** will be held at Oklahoma State University-Tulsa auditorium, 700 N. Greenwood Ave., on Feb. 1 at 7 p.m. The free series will cover Chapters 16-20 of the award-winning book. **Author and National Magazine Award nominee Victor Luckerson** will discuss the personal and political impacts of urban renewal with nationally recognized photographer **Don Thompson**.

PUBLISHED
MAY 23, 2023

PUBLISHED BY
RANDOM HOUSE

PAGES
672 PP

ISBN
9780593134375



Doing Urban Renewal

“As I traveled around the country..., I met so many people in places like Atlanta, Seattle, and Birmingham who had stories about urban renewal that mirrored Greenwood’s. By diving deep on how highway construction and urban renewal decimated our local community, I wanted to shine a brighter light on a national phenomenon...,” said Luckerson.

Federal policies, including the Federal-Aid Highway Act, disproportionately and discriminatorily affected Black communities. To build an interstate highway system, Pres. Dwight Eisenhower signed legislation to aid in the construction of highway projects in metropolitan areas across the country. One of the goals was to increase traffic mobility in cities and reduce automobile congestion on the roads.

Unfortunately, with the building of the highway system, it impacted minority communities because the routings of the roadways were directed to divide and dissect predominantly Black communities. As in Tulsa, I-244 was built through the middle of North Greenwood Avenue. The Greenwood district is historically known as “Black Wall Street,” where the successes of Black businesses were used as a model for the country.

With the construction of the interstate, it divided and destroyed a storied Tulsa community that was an American example of entrepreneurship and capitalism.

Thompson said, “As a photojournalist, I wanted to document what I was witnessing, the deliberate and complete destruction of an American Black community. I wanted to document for present and future generations the destruction that was carried out without any thought to the lives and livelihood of those men and women being affected.”

According to sponsors of the program, in addition to the lecture segment, visuals from official sources (i.e. redlining and urban maps, land seizure letters to residents, and urban renewal reports) and Thompson’s collection will pictorially present what happened in Tulsa related to urban renewal.

“I was fortunate to work on Greenwood Avenue during the 1960s. I saw the vibrancy, the entrepreneurial spirit of the men and women as they operated their businesses up and down Greenwood Avenue. It was exciting to see them going about their tasks to make a living for themselves and others,” said Thompson.

“In the 1970s, Urban Renewal and Eminent Domain assaulted the Greenwood district soon after the city of Tulsa declared Greenwood a “Ghetto.” Urban Renewal (Black and Brown removal) undermined liberty and human dignity. It was a human tragedy that I call the “Second Massacre” of Greenwood Avenue.”

Undoing Urban Renewal

In Luckerson’s research, he learned that “Rochester, New York is probably the best example of a city that’s been able to undo some of the damage of urban renewal.” He continues saying in the late 2010s the city began removing a section of the Interstate that had taken out 250 homes when it was originally built. Now that space is being used for businesses and apartments, and community members are advocating reparations for the Black families whose homes were originally destroyed.”

“I hope through this event we are able to give people the tools they need to find out more about how their own families were impacted by these policies.”

Lecturers

Luckerson, a journalist who has written for The New Yorker, The New York Times, Wired, and Smithsonian magazine, tells the story of Greenwood from the perspective of race massacre survivors and descendants, and includes information from primary-source documents in his book, “Built from the Fire.” The book was selected as a winner in the Business Reporting category by the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. He was nominated for a National Magazine Award for his reporting in Time on the 1923 Rosewood Massacre.

Noted photographer Thompson has adroitly collected the life and vibrancy of a celebrated community through his work. His camerawork appears in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture and Philbrook Museum of Art. He describes himself as a “social justice documentary photographer.” Currently, his exhibit, “Black Settlers in Tulsa: The Search for the Promised Land,” is on display at the OSU-Tulsa campus.

The five-part community read of Luckerson’s book is sponsored by the University of Tulsa’s Oklahoma Center for the Humanities, OSU-Tulsa Library, and the Tulsa City-County Library. Additional sponsors include All Souls Unitarian Church, the Historic Big 10 Ballroom, Fulton Street Books and Coffee, Magic City Books, The Black Wall Street Times, The Oklahoma Eagle and the North Tulsa Unity Book Club.

For more information about the series, see <https://humanities.utulsa.edu/deep-greenwood/>



TANYA BLADES (c) is congratulated as the 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year for Glenpool Middle School by (l-r) Assistant Principal Ginnie Ishmael and Principal Blaine Wise. PHOTO PROVIDED

Blades Named Glenpool Middle School Teacher Of The Year

Dr. Jerry Goodwin The Oklahoma Eagle

Tanya Blades was recognized as the 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year for Glenpool Middle School at a faculty meeting earlier this month. She was recognized as being representative of the school's motto of "Gratitude, Model, and Support" for its students and their families in addition to her service to the school.

Blades has spent 26 years as an educator. She began her career at Greeley Elementary, where she taught for seven years. While at Greeley, she served as assistant coach of the Girls Varsity Basketball team and assistant coach for track at Booker T. Washington High School.

After Greeley and BTW, she continued her teaching duties at Glenpool Public Schools. Serving for 17 years there, she began initially as an English Language Arts teacher at the district's middle school. For the last eight years, Blades has been a teacher in health and nutrition courses and drives an afternoon bus route.

At Glenpool, in addition to teaching, she is currently head track coach for Girls Middle School and assistant track coach for the Girls High School, and is former head basketball coach for the high school.

"I put a lot of work in (what I do for my students). I love my job. I love working with kids," said Blades.

Not to be confined to the classroom and the athletic field, she has supported her students in developing a video, "Walk, Bike, Or Roll to School Day," addressing crosswalk safety and the upgrading and installing of sidewalks and

flashing lights for her students to safely come and leave from school. Additionally, she hosts an annual health fair with the students on the topics of exercise and healthy eating.

"The district is growing so fast..." said Blades. The school district has been challenged with keeping up with the student population, where there is a greater demand for sidewalk installation, maintenance, and upkeep so the students can walk to and from school safely.

With her recognition, Blades is eligible for District Teacher of the Year. The district-wide teacher award will be selected from the elementary, middle school, and high school teachers of the year. The winner will be announced in April.

She is a graduate of Northeastern State University (Tahlequah) and Sapulpa High School. Blades has a master's degree in health and human performance and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from NSU. After completing her collegiate career as a basketball player, she was a graduate basketball assistant coach at NSU.

Made in Heaven: Joneses Celebrate 60th Wedding Anniversary With Family And Friends

Dr. Jerry Goodwin The Oklahoma Eagle



HARRY AND GEORGIA JONES recognize 60th anniversary of marriage on Dec. 30, 2023. PHOTO PROVIDED

Harry and Georgia Jones joined family and friends to observe their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 30. Nearly 150 people were in attendance to commemorate the occasion.

The dinner program included remarks from the couple's daughters: Janetha Jones Edwards and Jenice Jones. Pastor Debbie McIntosh of Transformation Church delivered the invocation.

Joining in the celebration in addition to the couple's two children were their six grandchildren. Pictured with the Joneses at the program were (standing, l-r) Zachary Edwards

(grandson); Jenice Jones (daughter); Nylah Edwards (granddaughter) and her husband, Kandro Brown; Raina Brown (granddaughter); Cierra Edwards (granddaughter); Kalaya Clark (granddaughter) and her husband, Christopher Clark; Janetha Jones-Edwards (daughter) and her husband, Robert Edwards.

One would ask what the secret to their marital success is. "I believe it is because of their sacrifice and unconditional love," said Jenice Jones.

The Joneses have been enjoying their life after retiring. Harry worked at the City of Tulsa for 30 years and Georgia ended her career at the former Sun Oil Refinery after 26 years.

He is a graduate of the Class of 1959 at Booker T. Washington High School. She is a member of the Class of 1960 at Okmulgee Dunbar High School, where she graduated as valedictorian. She later attended Langston University and is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Daughter Janetha, who resides in Fort Worth, Texas, is working on her doctoral degree in higher education from Grand Canyon University. Her sister, Jenice, who is founder and president of Just the Beginning, Inc. in Tulsa, is studying for a Ph.D. in public policy and administration with an emphasis in law from Walden University.

The married couple has been members of Transformation Church for nearly 20 years.

Made in Heaven: Micah Reed and Andre Parker

Dr. Jerry Goodwin The Oklahoma Eagle

Former Tulsan Micah Reed married Andre Parker on Dec. 31, 2023 on the Princess Yacht in San Diego, Calif. Reed is the daughter of Michael (and Frances) Reed and the late Anita Reed Carlin. She is a former Ebony Fashion Fair runway model and currently is director of Girls Rock The Runway. In addition to her non-profit, Reed is a fashion designer and photographer. Her designs are available at MQ Designs in Ft. Gibson, Okla.

Parker is the son of Earl Parker and the late Dorothy Parker. He was born in Myrtle Beach, S. C. He recently retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs after 20 years and after serving

earlier as a former staff sergeant and Iraq combat veteran for the U. S. Army.

During his military service, he was a highly decorated combat veteran. He is currently serving as a member of the Honoring America's Warriors program. The volunteer staff offers programs to support the physical, mental health, and wellness services for veterans and helps them to return to full active lives after their military duty. He is a former student at Northeastern State University (Tahlequah) and Conner State College (Warner).

Their children are Dreylon Parker, Jaden Sparks, Nadia Parker, and Ramone Sparks.

The couple will reside in Muskogee.



MICAH REED AND ANDRE PARKER united in matrimony aboard Princess Yacht in San Diego, Calif. PHOTO PROVIDED

Events

January

Jan. 13

Annual Speak Eyes Vision for All Cocktails for a Cause at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. The event is sponsored by Da Shade Room Eyewear and MzRene Thatme. For more information, see social media or contact info@dashadroom.com.

Jan. 15

Martin Luther King Holiday

Jan. 15

MLK Parade Merchant Marketplace is planned at 122 N. Greenwood Ave. on Jan. 15 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Vendors are invited to participate. The event is sponsored by the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce. See The Original Black Wall Street Merchant Marketplace - MLK Market Sign Up on signupdate.com for more information.

Jan. 19

Watoto Children's Choir is to perform at In The Spirit Christian Church, 1020 S. Garnett Rd. on Jan. 19 at 6:30 p.m. Doors will open at 5:45 p.m. The choir is described as presenting "a message of God's unflinching love" through music. For more information, call (918) 836-6823 or www.inthespirit-choir.org and https://www.watoto.com/

Jan. 22

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is hosting its monthly support group for family members, significant others, and friends of people with mental health conditions at St. Augustine Catholic Church, Education Center, 1720 E. Apache St., 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. The meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month. For more information, call (918) 587-2965 or contact staugustineparishtulsaok@yahoo.com.

February

Black History Month

Feb. 1

"The Lingering Legacies of Urban Renewal" is the third part of a five-part series of a community read of the award-winning book "Built from the Fire: The Epic Story of Tulsa's Greenwood District, America's Black Wall Street" at Oklahoma State University – Tulsa, 700 N. Greenwood Ave. at 7 p.m. Author Victor Luckerson and photographer Don Thompson share their research and collection of photography to tell the story of Greenwood. The free community program will cover Chapters 16-20 in the book. For more information, visit https://humanities.utulsa.edu/deep-greenwood/.

Feb. 3

11th Annual Black Wall Street Heritage and History Festival for Black History Month to be held at Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences, 1202 W. Easton St., from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. This year's theme is "Black Towns Matter." For vendor or more information, call (918) 770-6020.

Feb. 10

Tulsa Alumni Chapter Kappa Alpha Psi presents its Annual Scholarship Sweetheart Ball 2024 on Feb. 10 at the Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Tulsa – Warren Place, 6110 S. Yale Ave. For ticket information, visit its Facebook page or call (918) 833-4300.

Feb. 16

20th Anniversary of the Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services "Out of Africa Healthy Brain Strategies Gala at Hyatt Regency Tulsa Downtown, 100 E. 2nd St., VIP Experience: 6 p.m.-7p.m., Dinner: 7:30 p.m. For more information, contact beverly-baul@alzoutreach.org.

Feb. 17

Education for Scholars, Inc. to sponsor United to Fulfill the Dream Annual Fundraiser on Feb. 17 from 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. at Northeastern State University (Administrative Office Building), 3100 E. New Orleans St., in Broken Arrow. This year's theme is "Sowing Seeds for Our Future." The program is to commemorate the non-violent work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For sponsorships, tickets, or more information, visit www.educationforscholars.org/events.

Our Mission

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

