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1921

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BY RANDY HOPKINS

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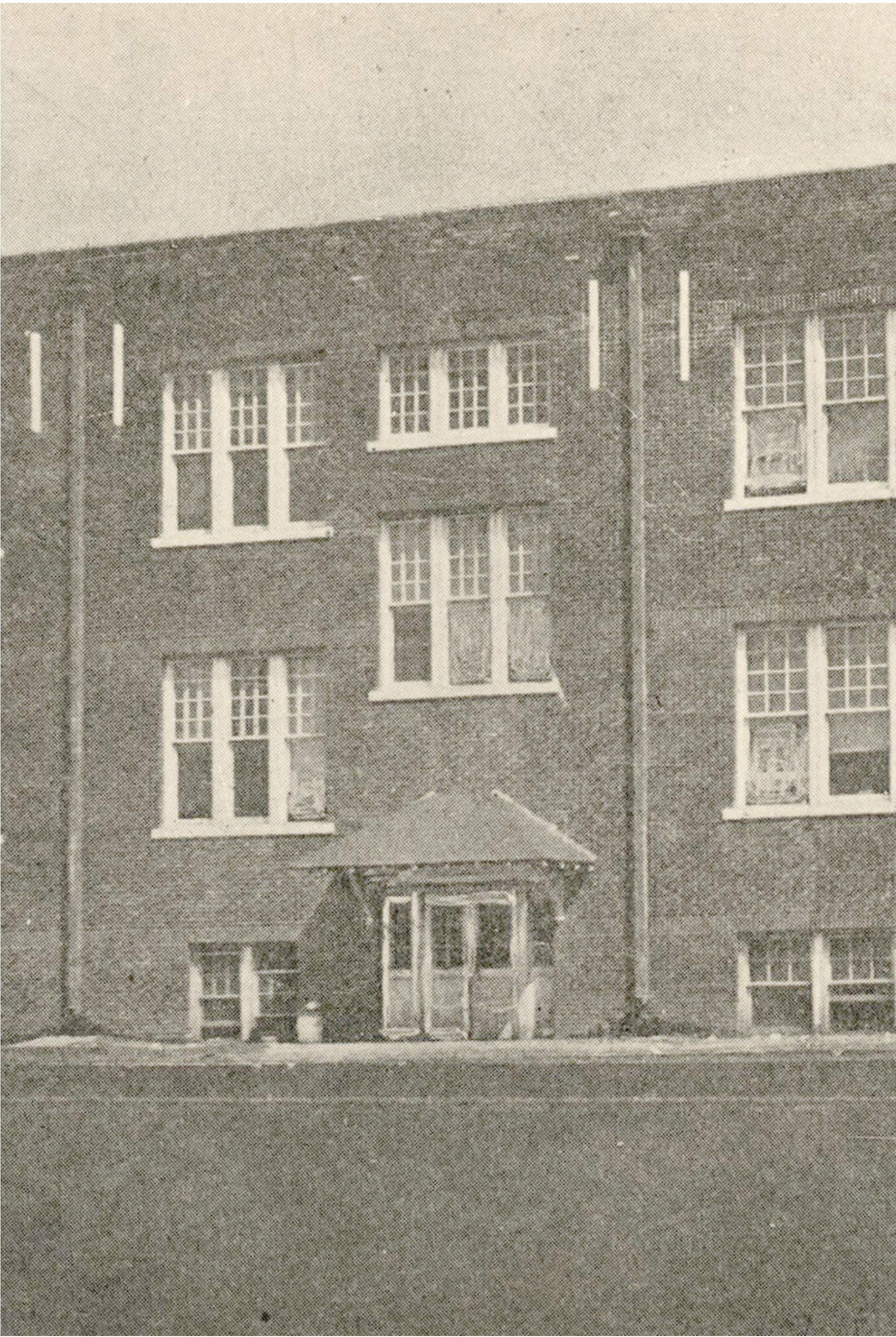


LINDA BERRY RETIRES FROM MORTON

In her 54 years with Morton Comprehensive Health Services, Berry has had a first-row seat to witness northside community health woes. A6

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The Greenwood Women’s Business Center will celebrate its second anniversary in the Greenwood District. A5



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL... PHOTO OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hornets

Randy Hopkins
The Oklahoma Eagle

Unfazed by the 1921 Race Massacre. In the fall of 1921, students began returning to Tulsa, Oklahoma’s Booker T. Washington High School, one of the few Greenwood structures to survive the Tulsa Race Massacre. The arrival of students also meant, then as now, that high school football would soon follow. In honor of Black History Month, this is the story of the 1921 Tulsa Booker T. Washington High School Hornets football season, a season played in the shadow of ruins.

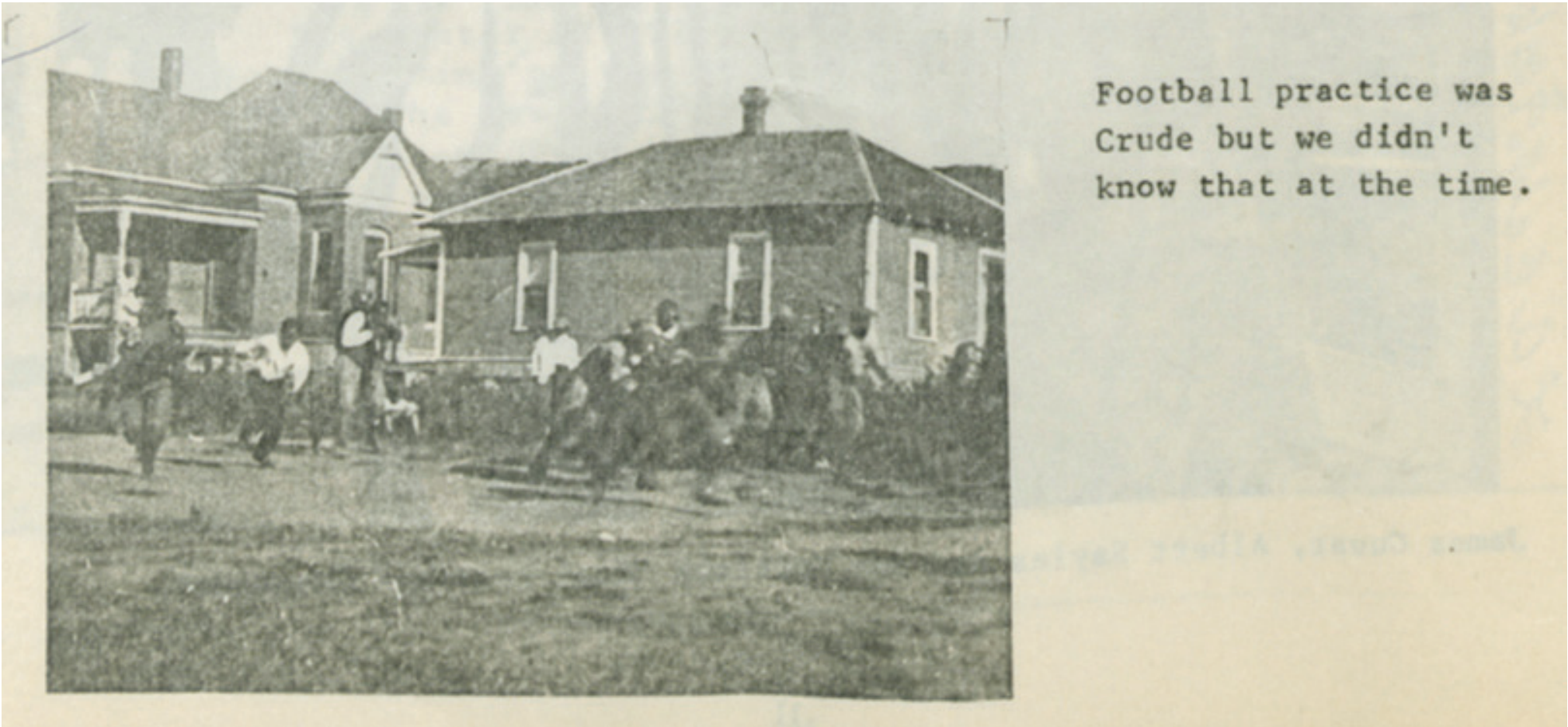


PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN NEAL, THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

Hornets

From A2

The Hornets’ 1921 season marked the birth of “modern” football at the school in that it was the first year that the eligibility requirements of the Oklahoma High School Athletic Association were followed. While teams had been fielded since 1918, non-students, including teachers, had been allowed to play in the less formal games.

Booker T’s 1921 season was also notable for the return of J. W. (James) Jones. Jones is pictured in the middle of the front row on the team photo holding a football. Jones is commonly believed to have been none other than the historical character “Diamond Dick” Rowland, whose arrest created a trigger for the Massacre. Rowland resided in the Tulsa County Jail until Sept. 28, when charges against him were dropped, just in time to get back to school for his junior year.

Surviving news coverage of the Hornets’ 1921 season is sparse, with little focus on individual players. The Tulsa Star was no longer around and the copies of The Oklahoma Eagle from 1921 have not survived. White newspapers did not report on the “colored” high school football teams, save for the Claremore Progress, which covered the Claremore Lincoln Giants.

Hornets Tight Budget

According to Heywood W. James, sports editor of Oklahoma City’s The Black Dispatch, it cost \$750 to equip a team for the season, not counting balls, advertising, and injury supplies. The money was hard to come by and the teams relied on financing by school teachers. Even a big city team like Oklahoma City Douglass lacked adequate practice grounds. In the case of the Hornets, the school provided only jerseys and pants. There were no shoulder pads and a cobbler tacked cleats onto ankle-boots for the shoes. Only three Tulsa players could afford helmets, one of whom was Jones.

In contrast, Tulsa’s other high school, located south of the railroad tracks, funded five football teams. In addition to the Tulsa Central High varsity, there was a team for each of the school’s classes, freshmen to senior. All five traveled and played away games. The goal was to funnel experienced players into future varsity teams. The plan soon paid dividends, as the Central High Braves claimed the 1922 White state football championship.

Back then, Black high schools were only permitted to compete against other Black schools. The same segregation, however, did not exist in the crowds that attended games. The Claremore Progress reported that, “many white people attended in addition to the colored population.”

Armed with an undefeated record, the Hornets prepared for the final game of the season — a Thanksgiving Day trip to face the Muskogee Manual Bulldogs. The teams had last played on Thanksgiving Day 1920, when the Bulldogs broke a late scoreless tie with a blocked punt in the Hornets’ end zone, winning 7-0.

The Black Dispatch made a point of inviting “all Oklahoma City” to the opening game of the season between the Oklahoma City Douglass Trojans and Tulsa Booker T. Washington. The game was played on Thurs., Oct. 20 at Oklahoma City’s minor league baseball stadium, Western League Park. Douglass High School was permitted to play its games at the baseball field “when the whites don’t want it.” The Hornets won 24-0, “outplaying Douglas in every stage of the game.”

Hornets Punish Okmulgee Team

The following Thurs., Oct. 27, brought the return of organized football to Greenwood. The Hornets celebrated the occasion by drubbing the visiting Okmulgee Dunbar Tigers 96-0. The Hornets’ B-team took over early and “Little Mitchell,” Tulsa’s one hundred pound back-up quarterback, plunged through the line for the final score. The most spectacular play of the day was an 85-yard kickoff return by Elmer Pitts. It must have been an exciting day for a community that had suffered so much.

The Hornets played a second home game on Thurs., Nov. 4 against the more formidable Giants of Claremore Lincoln. The 1963 Booker T. yearbook claims a 14-0 Hornets victory, but The Black Dispatch and the Claremore Progress reported the Hornets prevailing by 14-7. Tulsa scored the winning touchdown in the last three minutes of play, having been set up on the Claremore 10-yard line by a 30-yard pass interference penalty.

The defending state champions, the Red Devils of Nowata Lincoln, fell to the Hornets 7-6, though the date, location, and details of the game are presently unknown.

Armed with an undefeated record, the Hornets prepared for the final game of the season — a Thanksgiving Day trip to face the Muskogee Manual Bulldogs. The teams had last played on Thanksgiving Day 1920, when the Bulldogs broke a late scoreless tie with a blocked punt in the Hornets’ end zone, winning 7-0.

Reports from The Black Dispatch

Muskogee’s 1921 record is unknown, but the Bulldogs had beaten Claremore by a much wider margin than had Tulsa.² The Black Dispatch described the Tulsa-Muskogee tilt as a “classic for the supremacy of the Negro high schools of Oklahoma.”

The Black Dispatch also provided a scintillating description of the game and its controversial outcome. Leaving no doubt as to its opinion of the affair, the Dispatch titled its article “Muskogee Attempts to Beat Tulsa Through Newspapers, But It Was Tulsa’s Game All The Way.” The Dispatch decried the “effort of certain individuals in Muskogee to obtain the championship by means fair or

foul,” an effort “surpassed in crookedness only by a like attempt to twist newspaper reports so as conceal the facts from the public.” The reference to the Muskogee Cimater newspaper was clear. Unfortunately, the pertinent issue of the Muskogee Cimater has not surfaced.

There was no attendance reported, but the game must have been packed, with fans crowding up against the playing field. Muskogee won the toss, but their offense stalled. The Bulldogs made no first downs in the first quarter. On Tulsa’s opening possession, the Hornets sliced through the Muskogee defense, only to be foiled by a fumble inside Muskogee’s 10-yard line. The Bulldogs punted out of danger and Tulsa took over on the 50-yard line. The first quarter ended 0-0.

Fake plays and end runs carried Tulsa to Muskogee’s eight-yard line, when the first controversial call occurred. The head referee, a man named Kenyon, halted the game to warn fans to leave the end zone. He then inexplicably moved the ball back to the Muskogee 10-yard line. The Hornets could only gain eight and a half yards before turning the ball over on downs. The referee had “clearly robbed Tulsa of a touchdown” in the words of The Black Dispatch.

Disaster struck the Hornets’ next possession, when a Bulldog defender returned an interception for 56 yards for a touchdown. The extra point failed and the half ended Tulsa 0, Muskogee 6. During the second quarter the head linesman, a man named White, was reported to have “became active” and penalized Tulsa three times for off-sides.

The Hornets “came back in the third quarter with a vengeance,” marching down the field for a touchdown. The successful extra point made it Tulsa 7, Muskogee 6.

The Bulldogs appeared to turn the ball over on downs on their next possession, only to be saved by another off-sides call by White. Muskogee “seemed to take on new life” from this favorable turn and the third quarter ended with the home team on the Hornets’ 40-yard line.

Four more plays by the Bulldogs failed to gain a first down, but White assessed another off-sides, placing the ball at the Tulsa 27. Muskogee could only gain seven yards on the next four plays, but White threw yet another fourth-down off-sides flag. The ball was now at the Hornets’ 15-yard line, first down. This is how The Black Dispatch described White’s behavior:

Head linesman White MAY HAVE meant to be fair but his fairness was terribly one-sided or his eyesight very poor. When an official waits until a play has been completed, then walks back to the line and compares the distance gained with the distance required, and then

Cont. A5

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Rentiesville: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

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



Rentiesville, founded in 1903 and developed on twenty acres owned by William Rentie and twenty acres owned by Phoebe McIntosh, is located in McIntosh County five miles north of Checotah. The community is one of more than fifty All-Black towns in Oklahoma and one of thirteen still existing. Rev. N. A. Robinson, I. J. Foster, W. D. Robinson, and Rentie organized the townsite company with Robinson serving as president. J. J. Hudson opened the first mercantile business and became the first postmaster when the post office opened on May 11, 1904. B. C. Franklin followed Hudson as postmaster. By this time, as a flag stop on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway, the town had five businesses

along Main Street, and eighty-one children were enrolled in the school. In 1905 the community elected F. P. Brinson as the first mayor, and Robinson succeeded Brinson in 1909. William Rentie, the town’s only lawman, arrested Garfield Walker for drunkenness and disorderly conduct in 1908. Walker later shot and killed Rentie for revenge, taking away not only the marshal but also a principal founder and namesake. The town recovered and prospered for a time, boasting a lumber store, cotton gin, and many thriving businesses. The Great Depression and lure of opportunities in urban centers caused an exodus of citizens from Rentiesville. By the late 1930s the population

dwindled to 154, and the 1990 census reported 66 residents. A population boom occurred, with 102 residents by 2000 and 128 by 2010. The site of the Civil War Battle of Honey Springs is only a half-mile east of town. A noted attraction is the Down Home Blues Club of nationally famed Blues artist D. C. Minner. Every Labor Day weekend Minner hosts the Dusk ‘til Dawn Blues Festival in the town. Rentiesville is also the birthplace of Dr. John Hope Franklin, dean of African American historians and author of the award-winning book From Slavery to Freedom.

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN’S OLD HOME in Rentiesville (21446.TO.M184.51.1.9, Larry O’Dell Collection, OHS).

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Featured Last Week



Nat. Guard Deployment To Texas, Paid For By Disaster Funds



What is going on here?': Concerns, new OK County Jail site selection



Teachers Received a Raise in 2023. A Proposal Would Provide Another

The Oklahoma Eagle

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Summit

A Testament To Resilience. The Greenwood Women’s Business Center will use its second annual women’s summit to celebrate its second anniversary in the Greenwood District, Women’s History Month and the achievements of local women business owners. The Summit, known as GBC InnovateHER is free of charge, includes a catered dinner and will be held on March 13, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at DoubleTree Hotel at Warren Place, 6110 S. Yale Ave.

Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle

From A1

Complimentary tickets are available for reserving and more information is available at www.gbcbwomensummit.com.
As part of the Summit, five awards also will be given to outstanding women in the community, including the Maxine Horner Lifetime Achievement Award, named in honor of the late Oklahoma senator and awarded to Wanda J. Armstrong in 2023. The four other awards and the 2023 recipients were Sheen Agyare, Innovator of the Year; Tina Pena, Community Champion; Taryn Schell, Entrepreneur of the Year; and Ebony Jones, Woman Under 30.
Nominations for each of the five awards are open and can be submitted online on the

gbcbwomensummit.com site until Feb. 16.
Program Director Donna Jackson said InnovatHER Summit participants may expect to hear from inspiring local and national keynote speakers, who along with local honorees will represent the diverse and dynamic facets of Tulsa’s community. Like-minded women will have a chance to connect with each other, receive business coaching, and pitch their game changing ideas to a live audience.
Outreach Specialist LeRinda Pfister said they are still accepting applications from vendors to host exhibits at the Summit, and they have several tiers of sponsorship opportunities to support the day’s activities. Anyone interested in sponsoring the Summit may contact info@greenwoodwbc.com or call

(539) 867-4127 for more information on what is needed.
“There will also be live pitch competition in which the top three winners will be awarded a monetary prize,” Pfister said. “It’s an exciting day, and something that we truly enjoy being able to share with the community.”
The Greenwood Business Center, still new to the community, has a slate of programs they offer free to area entrepreneurs. The Summit provides a great opportunity to get the word out on all the Greenwood Business Center has to offer, including a computer lab to open this spring.
Pfister shares, “We aspire to leverage the computer lab as a dynamic space to serve the community by offering a wide range of educational opportunities. Our vision

encompasses providing entrepreneurial training, facilitating professional development workshops, and hosting partner-sponsored sessions. Through these initiatives, individuals from diverse backgrounds will have access to resources and guidance to foster their entrepreneurial spirit, enhance their professional skills, and engage in collaborative learning experiences.”
The Greenwood Women’s Business Center’s mission revolves around providing essential training and access to capital, fostering growth, and success for women in business. Jackson said the annual Summit is a testament to the strength, resilience, and brilliance of women in business who are shaping the community and the future.

Hornets

From A3

assesses a penalty, something is wrong. Why Mr. White failed to call off-sides plays on Muskogee is unknown—especially when we remember that they were constantly off-side on one of their shift plays—but rather than contribute it to unfairness we will say he is subject to fits of blindness. (emphasis in the original).
At this point, Hornet head coach Seymour Williams “attempted to report to the head linesman so that he might take the matter up with the referee. This could not be done and he was warned to leave the field.”
Unrest on the field
Pandemonium suddenly broke loose, as the crowd stormed onto the playing field. The field was said to be “so thick with people that bees could not have swarmed thicker.” The bees left no room for the Hornets. In response to the

Tulsa Booker T. Washington only had to wait one year to gain its first undisputed state football championship.

chaos, Williams withdrew his players from the field, rather than let them be engulfed in another mob. The officials ordered the Hornets to return, but made no attempt to clear the field of play. Instead, head referee Kenyon focused on his watch and, after exactly three minutes, declared the game forfeit to Muskogee, 1-0.
The Black Dispatch quoted the offending Muskogee Cimeter article as reporting only that “the Tulsa bunch became incensed at a penalty...and took their team from the game.” The Dispatch castigated the paper for failing to mention the pitch invasion, which had driven the visiting team from the field and which created “the utter impossibility of playing football.”
Protests and petitions to replay the game with different officials ensued, but Muskogee was unmoved. The Hornets claimed a 7-6 victory and Muskogee no doubt claimed it 1-0. According to The Oklahoman, the 1921 Black High School football championship was instead bestowed

on defending champion Nowata Lincoln, the Red Devils’ defeat at the Hornets’ hands notwithstanding.
Tulsa Booker T. Washington only had to wait one year to gain its first undisputed state football championship. Fulfilling Seymour Williams’ promise to take on all high school competitors, the Hornets’ season expanded to 12 games. The 1922 Hornets won them all.3 Twenty-seven more state football titles followed, nine of those after the integration of Oklahoma high school football in 1955.
No team roster for the 1922 state championship season has yet surfaced, but it would have been James W. Jones’ senior year.

RANDY HOPKINS, an historian and Oklahoma native, is a contributor to the Oklahoma Eagle. This article originally appeared on the website of the Center For Public Secrets (centerforpublicsecrets.org), a Tulsa-based nonprofit.

Community Health Care Advocate

A life of service: Linda Berry

From A1

In her 54 years with Morton Comprehensive Health Services, Linda Berry has had a first-row seat to witness all of the health woes of the northside community, including health disparities along income and racial lines. Other than Morton, north Tulsa had been void of health facilities until recent years. Technology has improved service, data retention, and access.

As she retired on Jan. 31 from her lifelong career with Morton as a health information management specialist, Berry said in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle that the disparities are real. But she also noted that it is up to individuals to strive to improve their health and take advantage of the primary care and urgent care system that is growing in the Greenwood District, north of Admiral Boulevard in the north Tulsa zip codes.

The Door to Morton Is Open

“For preventative health care, the door (of Morton) is open for them to walk in,” Berry said. She also acknowledged that there are more health facilities around north Tulsa now. “We were the only health facility on this side of Tulsa, and now there’s not only us but many others around,” noting the additions of Warren, Crossover, Westview, and University of Oklahoma Tisdale clinics, Tulsa County Health Department and the first family Urgent Care. “As my mom always said, I can take you to water but can’t make you drink.”

Berry was a beloved and reliable colleague for her fellow team members at Morton. Morton Comprehensive Health Services CEO Susan Savage said of her, “I speak for the organization when I say that knowing and working with Linda Berry is a privilege. She is part of Morton’s history and legacy, with more than half a century of service to Morton and its patients. We continue to learn through Linda’s example that one individual’s impact



LINDA BERRY. PHOTO COURTESY OF KIMBERLY MARSH

can be far-reaching and sustainable.”

Berry Observed Big Changes

During Berry’s long tenure, Morton experienced some significant growth spurts. For one, the facility transitioned from paper charts to online technology, digital record keeping, and learning computers. Keeping the charts was part of Berry’s job. She went from taking dictation as a transcriptionist, adding written notes to patients’ paper

charts, to inputting information into digital charts doctors pull up on electronic tablets. That same technology made it possible for Morton to continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many employees who were not hands-on with patients could do their jobs from home and minimize their risk of exposure.

Another big change Berry saw was the movement of Morton from state funding under the Health Department to federal funding. The shift lengthened the time she had

until she could reach retirement. She was just five years shy of being able to retire, not that she would have at that point. If longevity were the measure, Berry would have the most seniority of employees at Morton today.

Berry also worked in the old, now closed, Morton Health Center (and former Moton Hospital) at Pine and Greenwood. That building was shut down and declared an environmental hazard because of asbestos. It has been put into plans for revitalization for the Tulsa Economic Development

Corporation to move its offices to north Tulsa. In 2006, Morton moved to a new building constructed with Vision 2025 funding in Lansing Business Park at Pine and Lansing. The 59,000-square-foot center expanded Morton’s capacity to care for patients, and it expanded its assistance to help patients navigate the insurance system and SoonerCare.

Life story

A native of Okmulgee, Berry was raised among nine siblings on a small farm, where her parents planted crops and cooked meals with ingredients straight from the vegetable garden. “My mom didn’t buy anything. We ate off the land. We didn’t know what bologna was.”

Now 73, Berry raised four children at Morton, enjoying the convenience and proximity of picking them up from school and taking them to where they needed to go. Berry said the camaraderie between the doctors and staff worked well. That happy, supportive workplace also contributed to a fully furnished nursery when she had twins.

“We were a family. Everybody kind of looked out for one another. We would just have each other’s back. And that really was a blessing to me,” she said.

Berry still questions if she is making the right decision to retire now. She has ensured the staff knows she will be just around the corner. She has also promised to be available to Morton if she is needed.

One pursuit Berry is looking forward to in her new life is increasing her own physical activity, after so many years at a desk job. She also plans to garden, and travel around the U.S. to visit family and see American states she has not yet seen.

“It’s been a pleasure working in this community, in this facility, and working with these people. Everybody’s kind of new to me now. Well, you know, because I think I’m probably the longest serving person who has been here.”



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SCHOOL EDUCATOR
observing a student
completing a classroom
assignment.
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Teacher Bonuses Repayment

Oklahoma’s Education Department awarded teachers life-changing bonuses — and created a nightmare for some by demanding it back.

Jennifer Palmer and Beth Wallis
Oklahoma Watch

Kristina Stadelman sat at her dining room table, cradling her 3-day-old son. She said she was trying to focus on enjoying this moment with her baby instead of the demand letter from the Oklahoma State Department of Education laid in front of her.

Stadelman teaches special education to kindergarten through fourth-grade students in the Oklahoma City metro area. This is her fifth year in the classroom, so the department said she qualified for a \$50,000 bonus, the maximum under State Superintendent Ryan Walters’ new Teacher Signing Bonus program. After taxes, about \$29,000 hit her bank account in November.

With the money, her family was able to make some home improvements, place a down payment on a bigger car for their now-seven-member family and support the household while she takes time off with the baby. Then the department demanded it all back.

“I got an email . . . it was like the second week of January, saying I have to pay it back by the end of February,” Stadelman said. “I’m like, how am I supposed to do that?”

The state department notified Stadelman she was not eligible for the bonus after all because she taught in an Oklahoma school district last year. According to program rules, eligible teachers cannot have taught in an Oklahoma public school during the last school year. Stadelman thought she would be eligible for it by moving to a new school in Oklahoma City. She said she misunderstood the

requirements.

Stadelman listed her employment history on her application, records show. If the department had that information from the start — information that disqualified her — she said she wondered why they sent her the money in the first place.

“I don’t think it’s my mistake,” Stadelman said. “And I think that they need to take the brunt of it because they made the error.”

The department is demanding the entire \$50,000 back, including what had been taken out for taxes. She has only until the end of February to pay it all back before it goes to a collection agency.

“It felt really surreal,” Stadelman said through tears. “I just broke down that day, and I just came home and sat in silence. It was hard.”

Stadelman is one of at least nine teachers facing a similar scenario.

The Department of Education overpaid at least \$290,000 in teacher bonuses and is working to claw back the money mere months after it was distributed.

Nine teachers have been issued demands for repayment. Those interviewed by StateImpact and Oklahoma Watch say they were blindsided by orders to return the money, and doing so will be financially devastating.

The overpayments occurred because the department did not verify teachers’ information before disbursement.

The department said \$185,000 was awarded to teachers who did not qualify at all for the program, and \$105,000 was overpaid to teachers the department said were qualified for lower bonus amounts than what they received.

Department spokesperson Dan Isett said those errors should not diminish the overall success of the program,

which the department is now auditing. Asked why the department went ahead with bonus payments to teachers whose information it had yet to verify, Isett said verification is ongoing.

“Your questions have emerged in the middle of our ongoing process of rolling out, administering and ensuring accountability in this program,” Isett wrote in an email. “When we are completed with this project, there will be a final report highlighting all the applicable data and results from the program — including the steps taken to protect taxpayers.”

Rolling out a \$16 million program

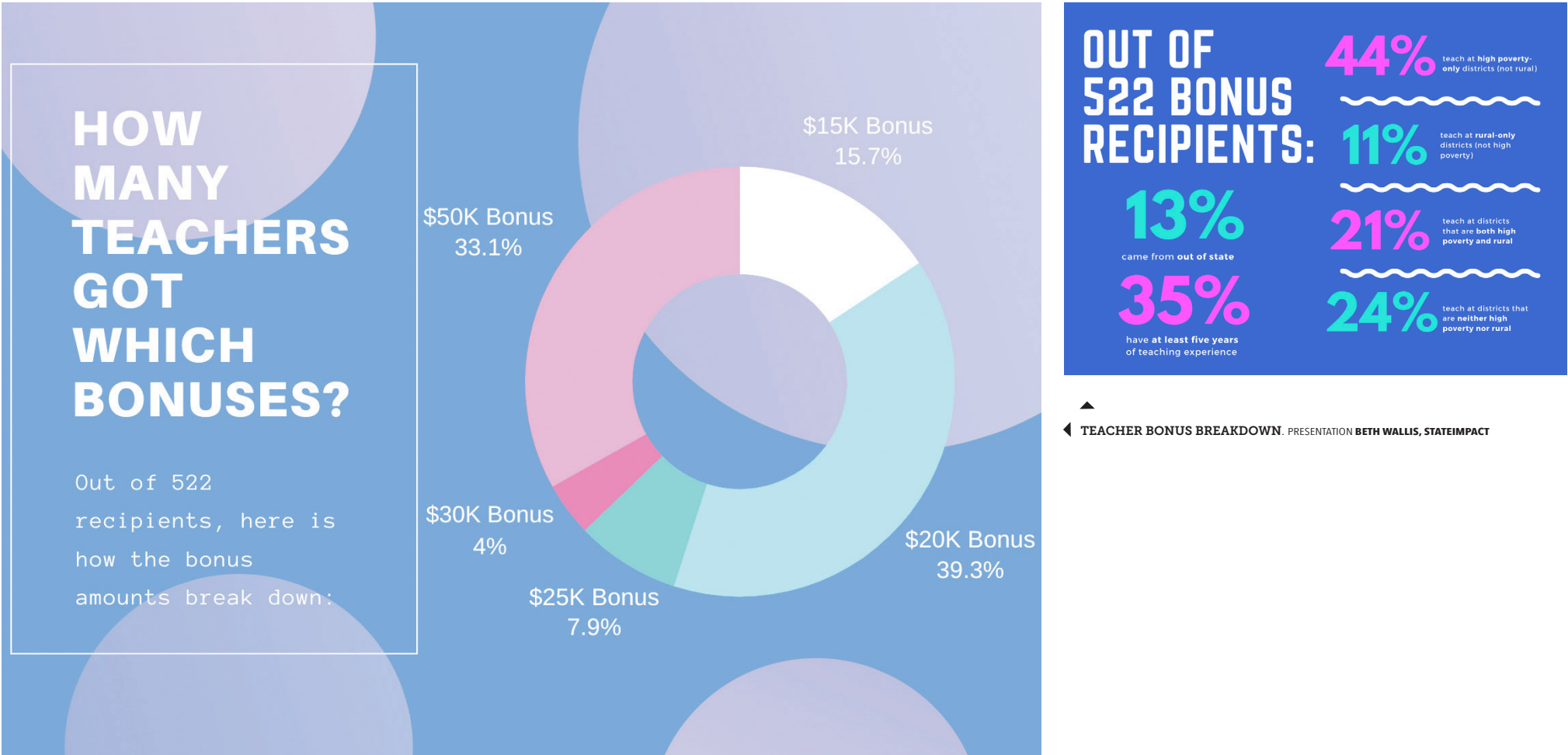
Walters announced the bonus program in April, one of his first major policy initiatives. In all, 951 teachers applied for bonuses, and 522 received amounts ranging from \$15,000 to \$50,000.

Participants had to be new or returning to the classroom and teaching special education or pre-K through 3rd grade. Teachers working in rural or high-poverty schools qualified for bigger stipends.

Walters has touted the success of the bonus program in media interviews.

“We’ve launched the largest teacher recruitment program in the country,” Walters said Nov. 13 in one such interview with FOX 25 (KOKH-TV). “Having over 950 teachers apply to come to Oklahoma to teach.”

Walters’ claims led GOP leaders in the House of Representatives to seek data from the Department and, when it wasn’t provided, they issued a subpoena in December. Within a week, Walters complied with the subpoena and provided data on the teacher bonus program, along with



Teacher Bonuses Repayment

Bonuses *created life-changing opportunities*, but clawbacks are causing nightmares

From A7

other requested information.

The incentives cost \$16 million in federal money earmarked for COVID-19 recovery and students with disabilities.

A review of recipients found five who received bonuses but shouldn't have; four of those taught in an Oklahoma classroom last year, which should have disqualified them. Those four indicated on their initial applications they taught last year and included the district in which they were employed. The state has demanded they return the bonus.

Four additional teachers were overpaid and are being told to partially refund the state. On top of that, the department says five more teachers are under review and being followed up with.

Bonus payments were made from October to December. In response to a request under the Oklahoma Open Records Act, the department provided data on Dec. 1, which Oklahoma Watch and StateImpact analyzed and started asking Isett questions Jan. 1.

In response, Isett said the report was a working document, and some data verifications had not happened. He said the department is implementing a three-tier review process and an ongoing audit of high bonus payouts.

Bonuses created life-changing opportunities, but clawbacks are causing nightmares

Critics, including school superintendents and lawmakers, were concerned about the potential for clawbacks when the program was announced. But it seemed those would trickle in as teachers moved jobs or away from the profession, breaking the required 5-year commitment, not a result of the initial payments being awarded incorrectly.

Kay Bojorquez applied for the bonus program last fall after a supervisor encouraged her, mistakenly believing that she qualified. She thought they were looking for people who obtained special education certification in the past five years, but she should have been ineligible because she taught last year. On the application, she reported being employed as a

“
I got an email... it was like the second week of January, saying I have to pay it back by the end of February.

KRISTINA STADELMAN, parent and special education teacher, kindergarten through fourth-grade students in the Oklahoma City metro area.

teacher at Epic Charter Schools last year.

“As far as I understood, I met all the criteria,” she said. “That’s why my name got put in the hat in the first place. I thought I had to be a teacher last year.”

In November, the department informed her she qualified for the maximum of \$50,000. It seemed too good to be true, Bojorquez said. Her finances were strained from years of caregiving for her parents and newly stressed from paying college tuition bills for her son. When she received the money, she made a few small home improvements but mostly paid off debts, hoping to improve her credit score to qualify for better college loans.

On Jan. 13, she received the email from the department telling her to return the \$50,000.

“When I read the letter, I threw up,” she said. “I’ve had two panic attacks in the last two days.”

Bojorquez said the anxiety was so great she was unable to sleep.

Paying it back, she said, will financially ruin her.

She said it’s not her fault. If the department failed to verify her eligibility, they should have to cover their mistake, she said.

“You can’t just introduce that much money into someone’s life and then say, ‘Oops, sorry, you don’t really get it,’” she said.

The \$50,000 bonus wasn’t what drew Anita Hopson Malone, a special education teacher in the Oklahoma City metro area, back to the classroom. She found out about the signing bonus after committing to her district. She said the bonus was unexpected but welcomed.

After taxes, Hopson Malone got about \$29,000, which she spent paying down debts. That allowed her to get approved for a mortgage to buy her first home, on which she will close in a few weeks. At 62 years old, Hopson Malone said she’s excited about spending time in her new house’s big family room with a fireplace, doing craft projects and painting her walls bright colors.

“Once I had the opportunity to get in this program, I was like, ‘OK, this is our one shot at trying to find a home,’” Hopson Malone said.

But because of a dispute about Hopson

Malone’s years of service, the department sent her an email a month after she received the bonus, telling her she had only four years of service. That meant she didn’t qualify for the \$50,000.

Now, Hopson Malone is waiting to hear from the department how much she is supposed to repay. Isett wrote in an email to StateImpact that her corrected bonus amount was \$30,000 for working four years instead of five, a claim Hopson Malone still disputes.

But even more frustrating, she said, was that this particular issue was already identified by the department and resolved months before.

Teachers describe frustrating back-and-forth with department

In Hopson Malone’s application, she listed five years of experience in the classroom. In August, the department emailed her a notice saying she was eligible for the full \$50,000. In September, she received a contract, but only for \$15,000. The department then sent a corrected contract for \$50,000.

When the bonus didn’t come in October as expected, she contacted the Department of Education. She said she called several times before she was able to get in contact with the right person.

She was told she had only four years of teaching on record. The fifth year, she told the department, was at an Oklahoma City charter school. An OSDE employee told her they would look into it.

When she received the \$50,000 bonus in November, minus taxes, she thought the issue had been resolved, that she could trust the department’s vetting process to get it right.

But she received word from the department in January reversing what she thought she’d resolved: their records indicated she only taught four years instead of five. She said she is talking things over with her teacher’s association representative before she engages again with the department over the discrepancy. She’s concerned this situation will put her dreams of homeownership in jeopardy.

“I was coming back to teach, and here was this blessing that was given to me,” Hopson

Cont. A11

Education Bills

Ed. Legislative Agenda: Teacher Pay & Tax Credits

Jennifer Palmer
Oklahoma Watch

Negotiations over boosting teacher pay and education funding as well as implementing a tax credit to reimburse parents who pay private school tuition dominated last year’s legislative session. Some of those major initiatives could see revisions this year.

There’s Senate Bill 1477 by Greg Treat, which would make adjustments to the tax credit program. Under the bill, children who haven’t enrolled in a private school, but expect to, could apply. The bill would also expand eligibility to students attending a private school that exclusively serves homeless students. It would also prohibit the tax credits from being used to reduce tax liability.

Sen. Adam Pugh has Senate Bill 1313 to again boost teacher pay, bumping the minimum salaries next school year.

What else is on the horizon for 2024? Here are five bills to watch in the upcoming legislative session, which begins Feb. 5.

Expanding the Board of Education
Senate Bill 1395
Sponsor: Adam Pugh, R-Edmond

This proposal would expand the membership of the state Board of Education from 7 members to 11. Of the four additional seats, two would be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and two by the Speaker of the House. Currently, the governor appoints 6 members and the superintendent of public instruction fills the 7th seat and serves as chairman. Under the bill, any of the board members could be removed for cause.

Private School Student Testing
Senate Bill 1381
Sponsor: Darcy Jech, R-Kingfisher

Under this legislation, private school students benefiting from the Oklahoma Parental Choice Tax Credit would be required to take the same assessments required of public school students.

Reading Sufficiency
Senate Bill 1906
Sponsor: Adam Pugh, R-Edmond

Another proposal by Pugh, chair of the Senate education committee, would amend the Reading Sufficiency Act, which supports students in early elementary with reading and requires students who are reading deficient to repeat third grade. Pugh’s bill removes the third grade retention and instead requires those students to be provided intensive intervention services and a “summer academy.” It also expands reading supports to include fourth grade, and renames the law the Strong Readers Act.

Cell Phone Free Schools
Senate Bill 1321
Sponsor: Sen. Ally Seifried, R-Claremore

Seifried’s proposal would implement a three-year pilot program to create phone-free schools. Grant funding would be provided for up to nine middle or high schools that volunteer to go cellphone free during school hours. The funds

can be used to purchase devices or equipment where students can store their cellphones during the school day. It’s intended to remove distractions in order to increase educational outcomes.

Graduation Requirements
House Bill 3278
Sponsor: Rhonda Baker, R-Yukon

Though this is currently a shell bill with no specific language, Baker is expected to propose changes to the state’s high school graduation requirements following an interim study she held last fall. Increasing the required math and/or science credits from three to four is one possibility but she’s also looking into creating ways for students to obtain credit for different types of workforce training. □



SUPPORTERS AND CRITICS of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters hold signs and speak outside of the Oklahoma State Department of Education before a meeting of the State Board of Education on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.
PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

Teacher Certifications, Gender Rule

Amid occasional shouts and chants from the audience, *Oklahoma State Board of Education members approved the permanent version of a controversial rule regarding gender designation on student records* in a meeting today that featured the superintendent of Midwest City-Del City Public Schools accusing State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters of making incorrect statements about his district.

Bennett Brinkman
NonDoc

Additionally, board members revoked the state certification of one former teacher who is in prison after being convicted on three charges related to sexual abuse. Board members also suspended certifications for six teachers, sent revocation applications for eight people to a hearing officer and scheduled a revocation hearing in the controversial case of a former Norman Public Schools teacher.

“Today, this will be the most aggressive action the state’s ever taken against sexual predators in the classroom,” Walters told board members at the beginning of the meeting. “I want to be really clear to sexual predators — you will not work in Oklahoma schools. Today, we have 14 teachers’ certificates that will be on the agenda today that we will be going through. We will continue to take drastic and quick action against those individuals who break that sacred trust involving working with people’s children.”

The suspensions, revocation and other actions come one week after State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters called a special board meeting for the sole purpose of suspending the teacher certificate of a former Western Heights employee who was allegedly messaging an online account belonging to someone he thought was a 15-year-old boy. The man has not been charged with a crime at this time.

The teacher certifications suspended or revoked Thursday belonged to a mix of teachers across the state, some of whom have been charged with crimes and some of whom have very little information online about them.

Board members revoked the certification of Dallas Ewton, a former Morris Public Schools

Walters and the board also set a hearing date for Summer Boismier, a former Norman Public Schools teacher who resigned in August 2022 after making headlines for covering up her classroom display of books with red paper and writing on it, “Books the state doesn’t want you to read.”

teacher now imprisoned for sexual abuse convictions.

The U.S. Attorney’s office for the Eastern District of Oklahoma announced July 7, 2023, that Ewton was sentenced to 15.5 years in prison for two counts of sexual abuse of a minor in Indian Country and one count of abusive sexual contact in Indian Country. He pleaded guilty July 7, 2022. Ewton’s teacher certificate was initially suspended at a state board meeting July 12, 2021.

The teachers whose certifications were suspended Thursday pending a formal hearing include:

- Benjamin Hall,
- Lauren Anderson,
- Jordan Caldwell, and
- James Miller, a former Braggs Public Schools teacher who was charged Jan. 4 in Cherokee Nation District Court with rape, forcible sodomy, sexual battery and destroying evidence. He was arrested by the Muskogee County Sheriff’s Office on Jan. 4.

Two certifications for other teachers, Erin Overton and Kacy Katibeh, were suspended for “breach of contract with Glenpool Public Schools.”

Board members were told that the State Department of Education has pending applications to revoke the teacher certificates of eight other people, seven of which were referred to a hearing officer by the board Thursday. Those applications are for:

- Kimberly Coates, a former Perkins Public Schools third-grade teacher who was arrested and charged with public intoxication after she was allegedly intoxicated and drinking in the classroom;
- Kristen Andrews, who is serving a nine-year prison sentence with four of those years

deferred for driving under the influence and manslaughter;

- Melissa Smith, a former Western Heights teacher who pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute;
- Rhonda Carlile;
- Stacy Dimarco;
- Christin Covell; and
- Devon Mitchell.

The eighth person, Ivy Reneau, voluntarily surrendered her certificate, OSDE general counsel Bryan Cleveland said.

Walters and the board also set a hearing date for Summer Boismier, a former Norman Public Schools teacher who resigned in August 2022 after making headlines for covering up her classroom display of books with red paper and writing on it, “Books the state doesn’t want you to read.” Boismier also posted a QR code in her classroom that linked to the Books Unbanned webpage of the Brooklyn Public Library.

Walters, who had not yet been elected state superintendent at the time, called for Boismier’s certification to be revoked and initiated proceedings to do so once he took office. At the time, Walters made numerous social media posts and other comments about Boismier, leading her to eventually sue him for defamation.

Boismier’s revocation hearing is scheduled for March 28 during the board’s regularly scheduled meeting that month. Boismier has requested that Walters recuse himself from the case, but he declined to say whether he would do so.

“I have not reviewed the motion yet,” Walters told reporters after Thursday’s meeting. “I’m not familiar quite with what the argument was there on that.”

Teacher Certifications, Gender Rule

New prohibitions: State Board of Education must approve all requests to change student’s gender designation on old school records

From A9

Permanent gender rule approved

Largely without comment, board members approved the permanent version of a controversial rule Thursday concerning student gender identity and school records.

The rule prohibits school districts from changing a student’s gender designation on their old school records without State Board of Education approval, even if the student has obtained a court order changing their gender. School districts are allowed to comply with court orders changing students’ gender designations for records created after the order but are prohibited from changing records created prior to the court order.

The rule has already been in effect for nearly four months as an emergency. At their Oct. 26 meeting, board members used the emergency rule to deny record change requests from two districts.

One of the students in Moore Public Schools whose records were at issue during that meeting filed a lawsuit last month in Oklahoma County District Court seeking to block the rule. The suit was moved to federal court Jan. 10.

Filed against Walters and members of the state board in both their individual and official capacities, the suit alleges that Walters and the board violated the student’s equal protection rights by refusing to allow the district to change its gender marker on student records.

The plaintiff asks the court to enjoin the rule and asks for the court to award them a monetary judgement of at least \$75,000 for the alleged deprivation of their rights.

“It’s really common sense,” Walters told board members Thursday. “And I’ll tell you guys — I’ve heard this from folks of all political backgrounds that we do not want these transgender games going on in our schools.”

Board members discussed the lawsuit in executive session but took no action on it.

Mid-Del Superintendent: ‘You’ve also disrespected me’

During the public comments section of the meeting, Mid-Del Public Schools Superintendent Rick Cobb accused Walters of making false statements about his district during a budget hearing Jan. 11 before the Senate Appropriations and Budget Education Subcommittee.

At that meeting, Walters said the district had misspent more than \$500,000 of federal pandemic relief money on lawn care that was not allowed by federal guidelines.

But Cobb said Thursday that his district had repeatedly double-checked to make sure that they were spending the money the way it was allowed, and he provided handouts to board members with information on federal ESSER funds.

According to the guidelines Cobb explained, ESSER funds were allowed to be used on 20 different kinds of expenses, including “activities necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services of the LEA and continuing to employ existing staff of the LEA.”

Cobb said the district’s groundskeeping contracts fell under this guideline.

“So yes, we have included our contracts with the companies that manage our groundskeeping. Every year in which we have done so, this has been allowable. In fact, from the current fiscal year, your staff has approved this in our ESSER application,” Cobb said.

Cobb expressed frustration with Walters’ comments in front of the Legislature.

“If accusations such as these are already being made, I as the superintendent of Mid-Del Public Schools shouldn’t first hear of them during a Senate subcommittee budget hearing,” Cobb said. “You’ve disrespected my district. You’ve disrespected the hard working people in Mid-Del, who have always conscientiously, always diligently put in the hours to make sure that we are serving our students to the best of our ability with the resources we have and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. You’ve also disrespected me.”

After the meeting, Walters doubled down on his claims that the district misspent federal funds.

“(Cobb was) very defensive for someone who’s been caught misusing funds,” Walters said. “He’s been a terrible steward of taxpayer dollars to misuse federal funds, and our agency will hold him and his district accountable.”

Walters also said the budget hearing should not have been the first time Cobb heard of the issue.

“That’s a joke. Our federal programs people are in contact with districts every week. They’re very aware of their issues. You heard his lies today. They’re trying to cover it up. We’re not gonna tolerate it,” Walters said.

Walters talks advisory board, new secretary, signing bonuses

Members of the audience broke into chants at



RYAN WALTERS, Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction, leads the State Board of Education in a salute to the Oklahoma flag during a meeting on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.
PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

“If accusations such as these are already being made, I as the superintendent of Mid-Del Public Schools shouldn’t first hear of them during a Senate subcommittee budget hearing.”

RICK COBB, Superintendent, Mid-Del Public Schools, responding to accusations made by Ryan Walters, Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction, regarding federal funding (ESSER) expenditures.

times and shouted as people spoke in the public comment section of the meeting and as Walters shared his remarks with the board.

His remarks seemed to provoke some ire when he began that section of the meeting with a video from Chaya Raichik, the woman who runs the controversial Libs of TikTok account.

Walters recently appointed Raichik to OSDE’s “Library Media Advisory Committee,” a committee that department spokesman Dan Isett said is meant to advise the board on getting allegedly pornographic materials out of libraries. Isett also said the committee is made up of “parents, current/retired librarians, and English literature teachers.”

Isett and Walters have declined to say when the committee was formed or who specifically sits on the body besides Raichik. She recently posted about a Tulsa Union Public Schools employee on her TikTok account, after which several bomb threats were made against Ellen Ochoa Elementary School.

Raichik also attended a Western Heights board meeting in the weeks following revelations that one of the district’s principals performs in drag during his off-hours. Raichik told NonDoc at the meeting that she and others hoped the principal would be fired.

In the video shown at Thursday’s state board meeting, Raichik called it an “honor” to be appointed to an OSDE committee.

“Good morning, Oklahoma,” Raichik began. “Here’s my message to [the left]: We are going to take back our schools. We’re going to fix the schools. We’re going to remove porn from the schools, and you can’t stop us.”

Additionally, during his comments to the board, Walters praised Gov. Kevin Stitt’s appointment of Nellie Tayloe Sanders as the new secretary of education.

“She has got a tremendous background of working on private school choice, but also she has done tremendous work in literacy, specifically with dyslexia,” Walters said. “We have had many conversations with her around our literacy programs, so she will be a great addition to the team. Again, Gov. Stitt showed a great emphasis on student outcomes and school choice. I think he did a great job with this and so we are very excited to work with her.”

Sanders will fill a position that has been empty since late July, when Katherine Curry resigned owing to the “political environment” of the job. Nuria Martinez-Keel of Oklahoma Voice later reported that Curry’s resignation came after she was unable to view financial information for the department.

Most recently, Sanders has been a member of the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board. She was one of three on the five-person board who voted in favor of authorizing St. Isidore

of Seville Catholic Virtual School. Two court cases against the school are pending in the state Supreme Court and Oklahoma County District Court, but if it opens, it would likely become the nation’s first religious charter school.

Sanders resigned her seat as a voting member of the board when she took her new position, but as education secretary, she will remain on the board in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity.

In Stitt’s press release announcing Sanders’ appointment, he called her “a dyslexic thinker and advocate” who has “first-hand experience navigating the school system as a dyslexic child and later as a parent.”

Sanders said in the same press release that she considered it a “privilege” to be appointed.

“In an era where one-size-fits-all education falls short, my mission is to revolutionize our approach, ensuring every child finds a pathway to success tailored to their unique needs,” Sanders said in the press release. “My goal is to empower parents with choices and support teachers in unleashing their full potential — moving beyond the constraints of politics and bureaucracy.”

Sanders is the wife of Mike Sanders, a former state representative who Stitt pushed to become the executive director of the Oklahoma Broadband Office.

After Thursday’s meeting, Walters was asked about a report from Jennifer Palmer of Oklahoma Watch and Beth Wallis of StateImpact Oklahoma that said at least nine teachers who received tens of thousands of dollars in OSDE signing bonuses may have to pay back all or part of the money.

“This is exactly why we put in place clawback measures, because if any individual lied throughout the process, did not agree to follow the stipulations in the contract that they signed, we have been very clear from upfront we will claw back those dollars,” Walters said. “So what you saw was our accountability system work, like we said from the beginning.”

According to Palmer and Wallis’ reporting, many of the teachers being told to pay back the money were truthful on their applications for the program and were only told to pay back the money once the department noticed a problem on their application.

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



SCHOOL EDUCATOR assisting a student with classroom assignment. PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Teacher Bonuses Repayment

Eligibility rules changed throughout the process

From A8

Malone said. “And now you just want to snatch it back.”

Several bonus applicants described a chaotic process and some said they struggled to decipher the program qualifications.

Oklahoma Watch and StateImpact reported on June 22 how some district leaders were receiving questions they didn’t know how to answer because of a lack of guidance from the department.

One superintendent said she told her entire staff to apply after she couldn’t decipher the qualifications.

Teacher Julia Howard, who moved from Arkansas and qualified for the maximum bonus, said she had to keep following up on her application. When she didn’t receive the money in October, as expected, she called again and a department staffer said she didn’t qualify.

After re-submitting her documents, someone told her she did qualify but they previously failed to check her eligibility correctly. Howard said she thought it was sketchy, and she wondered who was running the show at the Education Department.

The eligibility rules also changed throughout the application process. For instance, program rules say an emergency-certified teacher must obtain a non-emergency teaching certification before the 2023-2024 school year. When StateImpact

and Oklahoma Watch checked, four bonus recipients still have only an emergency certification.

The department said those teachers are working toward standard certification.

“Our goal is to recruit as many certified and special education teachers to Oklahoma public schools as we can,” Isett wrote. “After reviewing certification processing times during the summer, we allowed participants who had applied but were pending a non-emergency certification to remain on the eligibility list.”

Additionally, despite the program’s original guidelines, educators who taught during the last school year were eligible for the bonus if they taught part-time.

Walters asks for state dollars to offer more recruitment bonuses

Walters proposed expanding the bonus program using state money next year. His agency’s budget request includes more than \$60 million for teacher bonuses and tutoring stipends to support his philosophy of using a pay-for-performance model to supplement teacher salaries.

He asked the Legislature for \$10 million to pay for signing bonuses for up to 350 new math and science teachers; amounts would again max out at \$50,000 and also come with a clawback mechanism.

He also asked for \$16 million for bonuses

for teachers whose students demonstrate reading growth and \$6 million for teachers whose students demonstrate growth in math. The House of Representatives education budget committee chairman, Mark McBride, R-Moore, said this month he will consider filing a bill to implement those proposals. McBride and Walters’ public feuding has simmered recently and the two have reset their relationship.

But after dealing with the vetting lapses that plagued the first round of signing bonuses, educators, such as Kristina Stadelman, don’t trust the department to correctly manage programs like these. She said she regrets signing up for the bonus.

Stadelman said despite the nightmare her family is experiencing from the clawback, she’s trying to focus on what matters the most.

“My children are more important than this right now,” Stadelman said. “I didn’t want to have something like this bearing over me.”

After finishing her maternity leave, Stadelman plans to return to the classroom. She has a master’s degree in special education, and that’s where her passion lies. But for a position experiencing such a critical shortage statewide, Stadelman said she wishes she felt like her state cared. Instead, it’s saddling her with tens of thousands of dollars of debt.

“Most teachers go into the profession

knowing that they’re not going to make a big amount of money,” Stadelman said. “But I love what I do, and I love working with kids that struggle a little bit more than other kids.”

“And so to have a state that’s supposed to like, support you — you know, the education department — you’d think that they would be more understanding,” Stadelman said. resequ simus.

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Criminal Justice Bills

Criminal Justice Legislative Agenda: Domestic Abuse, Felony Classifications & More

Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

Proposals to mandate pretrial data collection, crack down on domestic abuse and expand expungement eligibility are among the criminal justice bills eligible to be considered during the 2024 regular legislative session.

Oklahoma’s criminal justice system has rebounded from delays and logistical challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the threat of coronavirus behind bars has waned, concerns about an uptick in the state’s prison population, poor conditions at some correctional facilities and the treatment of mentally ill detainees persist.

Here are five bills to watch in the 2024 legislative session, which convenes on Feb. 5:

Cracking Down on Domestic Abuse
Bill Number: Senate Bill 1211
Sponsor: Kristen Thompson, R-Edmond

As Oklahoma’s domestic violence rate trends up, several bills look to increase punishments for abusers.

Thompson’s proposal would increase the maximum first-time sentence for domestic abuse by strangulation from three to 10 years in state custody. Domestic abuse by strangulation can cause long-term injuries and trauma and has been shown by researchers to be a precursor to homicide, Oklahoma Watch reported in 2019.

Other anti-domestic violence bills filed would add domestic abuse to the Oklahoma Violent Crimes Registration

Act and reclassify domestic abuse against a pregnant woman as a felony.

More than 25,000 domestic abuse incidents were reported to Oklahoma law enforcement in 2021, a slight decrease from 2020 but higher than the average total from 2011 to 2021.

Mandating Pretrial Data Collection
Bill Number: House Bill 3957
Sponsor: Meloyde Blancett, D-Tulsa

This bill would require district attorneys, police departments and jailers to submit monthly data on felony and misdemeanor charging decisions, average jail stays and bail amounts to the Office of Management and Enterprise Services. The information would be publicly accessible on a state-run website.

Advocates for expanded justice data collection argue the information would allow state lawmakers to craft better reform policies. Several states, including Florida and Michigan, have enacted similar legislation in recent years.

“All of our conversations on reform or alternatives to incarceration really are centered on emotion and not fact,” Blancett said. “I, coming from a business background, feel like it’s important to get agnostic data that’s not bent to drive a conclusion, but rather inform and tell us what the heck is going on out there.”

Expanding Expungement Eligibility
Bill Number: House Bill 3037
Sponsor: Preston Stinson, R-Edmond

This bill would authorize the expungement of most misdemeanor offenses three years after the completion of a sentence. The

current waiting period is five years.

Looking to boost workforce participation and ease reentry barriers, lawmakers have embraced expungement reform. In 2022 the Legislature passed House Bill 3316, which authorized the state to automatically expunge certain criminal offenses. State officials expect the system to launch by 2026.

The manual expungement process is complex and typically requires applicants to hire an attorney. Those who can’t afford to pay thousands of dollars in fees may struggle to find secure housing and employment.

“When someone has a conviction on their record or even a deferred sentence, those things are huge barriers to getting the job that really pays enough to live on or getting safe housing that requires a background check,” Rachel Delcour, the criminal justice director for Women in Recovery, told Oklahoma Watch in 2022. “We want to save people money, but more than that I want people to get better jobs and better housing and remove some of those barriers.”

Authorizing Unannounced Prison Visits
Bill Number: House Bill 3082
Sponsor: Justin Humphrey, R-Lane

This bill authorizes state elected officials to enter any state prison at any time to inspect conditions and interview staff and inmates. Pennsylvania enforces a similar law.

Humphrey, who chairs the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, told Oklahoma Watch in November he would look to boost prison accountability in response to reports of poor conditions at the Great Plains Correctional Facility in Hinton. Last year dozens of Great Plains prisoners

were confined to 3-by-2.5-foot shower stalls for several hours or days due to backlogs in the facility’s restricted housing unit.

In response to the proposal, corrections department spokesperson Kay Thompson said the agency has an open door policy with elected officials and the measure is unnecessary.

Creating a Felony Classification System
Bill Number: House Bill 3455
Sponsor: Anthony Moore, R-Clinton

A push to modernize Oklahoma’s criminal code fell short in the final weeks of last year’s legislative session, but lawmakers appear poised to take another crack at it in 2024.

Moore’s bill groups felonies by severity with common sentencing ranges. The proposal as currently written does not include sentencing ranges, but that could be modified as the legislative process progresses.

Critics of Oklahoma’s current criminal code say it lacks uniformity and causes sentencing ranges to vary widely from county to county. For instance, a second offense of second-degree burglary is punishable by two years to life in prison. The legislative push to reform Oklahoma’s criminal code accelerated after voters in 2020 rejected State Question 805, which proposed barring courts from imposing sentence enhancements for certain crimes. While versions of a classification bill passed out of the House and Senate last year, the proposal stalled in a Senate conference committee and failed to reach the governor’s desk. □

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Church Of The Living God

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

Minister RJ Smith

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

CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1962 N. Sheridan Rd.
(918) 834-4747

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard

Sunday School
10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship
11:00 a.m.
Bible Study & Prayer Wednesday 7:00 p.m.
For Transportation (918) 402-6027

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

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(918) 230-3022

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

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GTOMi

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Traveling Outreach Ministries

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Tulsa, Oklahoma
Elder Julius W. Bland
Sr., Pastor
918-810-3882

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MOHAWK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sunday School
9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning
Worship 11 a.m.

Bible Study
Wednesday
7 p.m.



Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr.
Pastor

Gethsemane Baptist Church

727 East 56th St. North
(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

Sunday School
9:00 a.m.

Church Services
11:00 a.m.

Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

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

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons

Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

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

SOLID ROCK 7th DAY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Rick Bruner

Sabbath School (Saturday)
9:30-10:45 a.m.

Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.

Choir Rehearsal
Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

"The Seventh Day Is Still
God's Sabbath"

Northside Christ Gospel Church

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

Sunday School -
10 am

Sunday Morning
Worship - 10:45

Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm
Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm
Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm
Wednesday worship - 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

VERNON AME CHURCH

307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.

P: 918-587-1428
F: 918-587-0642

vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

Sunday
Church School
8:30 am

Worship Service
10:00 am

Wednesday
Bible Study
6:00 pm



Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA

THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

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

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74103
918-582-5129

www.fbcnt.org

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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"

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

Warren Blakney, Minister

Sunday Bible School.....9:00 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.

Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

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Pettie Chapel CME



19364 S. S. Mingo Road.

Bixby, 74008

Phone: (918) 366-8870

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

Church In Power

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

Service times: 9am Sundays,
7pm Wed, and Special Supernatural
Breakthrough Services every
last Friday and Saturday of every
month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am

Wednesday Bible Study
- 6:30 p.m.

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



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22

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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



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...



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BLACK CHURCHES TACKLE RACIAL
LIFE EXPECTANCY GAP A14

INEQUITABLE ALGORITHMS: FACIAL
RECOGNITION'S ALARMING PATTERN A15

Afrofuturism: A Journey to Health Equity



PHOTO DRAGANA991, GETTY IMAGES

At the core of **A Afrofuturism** is using science and tech to create a better future for Black folks. Here are three leaders who are doing that.

Leaders & Changemakers

Anissa Durham
Word In Black

The future of our health largely depends on the healthcare leaders and changemakers of today. Everyone is on their own journey to health and healing. But, at the core of Afrofuturism is the idea to use science, technology, and philosophy to create a better future for Black people. How does that intersect with health? As Word In Black has vigorously reported, the healthcare system has historically done a lot of harm to our community. And we still experience mistreatment, medical neglect, racial bias, and death. In a Pew Research Center survey of more than 3,500 Black adults, 40% say they’ve had to speak up to get proper medical care. Despite it feeling like we have the cards stacked against us, there are a number of Black scientists, doctors, and those adjacent to health working to make the future of healthcare better for Black folks.

Here are three.

Joel Bervell, 28,
Medical Student

For the last three years, Bervell has used

his social media platforms to educate people about the healthcare disparities that Black and brown people face. For example, his content went viral after posting a 30-second video explaining how pulse oximeters are often inaccurate on Black skin because of how melanin absorbs light. Since then, he started a racial bias and medicine series where he looks at the ways modern medicine still treats people of color differently. “I want this content to be what I wish I’d gotten in my first year of medical school,” he says. Bervell is also attentive to the way he communicates his message, making sure he reaches audiences that are not in medicine. “My whole goal is to give people that are listening more power in understanding their own health,” he says. “So that when they go to the doctor, they’re not scared.” Bervell recommends Black and brown people ask lots of questions when they are in a healthcare setting, and provides five tips of how to advocate for themselves. One of his primary motivations for becoming a doctor is to diversify medicine. Noting, that less than 6% of all physicians in the United States are Black and this has a direct impact on people of color. And, most Black people don’t have a doctor in their family, he says. It’s more than just

Cont. A15

For Black Churches, A Strengthened Focus on Black Health

With the help of The Balm In Gilead, Inc., congregations are responding to the health crises in their communities

Jasmine Roberts Duncan
Word In Black

Life expectancy for Americans, including for Black Americans, is on the rise due to the decline in the prevalence and severity of COVID-19. Nevertheless, a racial gap exists in life expectancy. As of 2022, Black life expectancy was 72.8 years, compared with 77.5 years for White Americans. While the roots of this shocking fact lie in a legacy of systemic racism that is outside our control, part of the solution lies in an institution that is within our control: the Black church. More and more Black churches are starting, or strengthening, a focus on health. Many are doing so with help from The Balm In Gilead, Inc., a

Cont. A15

Afrofuturism

Equal representation



US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN (L) LISTENS TO DR. KIZZMEKIA S. CORBETT (R) as he tours the Viral Pathogenesis Laboratory at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, February 11, 2021. PHOTO SAUL LOEB/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

From A14

diversifying medicine but how to disseminate information to communities most impacted. “My wish is ... that people of color and marginalized communities are foremost in medical education,” Bervell says. “And making sure that these narratives are heard and recognized.”

Chidiebere Ibe, 27, Medical illustrator

Ibe became a medical illustrator because he saw a gap in medical education and the health care system that needed to be bridged, he says via email. He’s currently a medical student and medical illustrator at the Harvard Medical School International Center for Genetic Diseases. In 2021, he illustrated the Black fetus. Many social media users commented that it was the first time they’d seen a fetus that wasn’t white. While some commentators left hateful comments on his work, now he says, most people praise and applaud him for his illustrations. “It was important for me to represent Black skin in my illustrations because Black people were not represented,” Ibe said. “And this has caused a lot of misdiagnosis or poor treatment of Black people.” When asked what his vision is for the future of medical illustrations, Ibe says he wants people to be able to pick up a medical textbook and see different races represented properly.

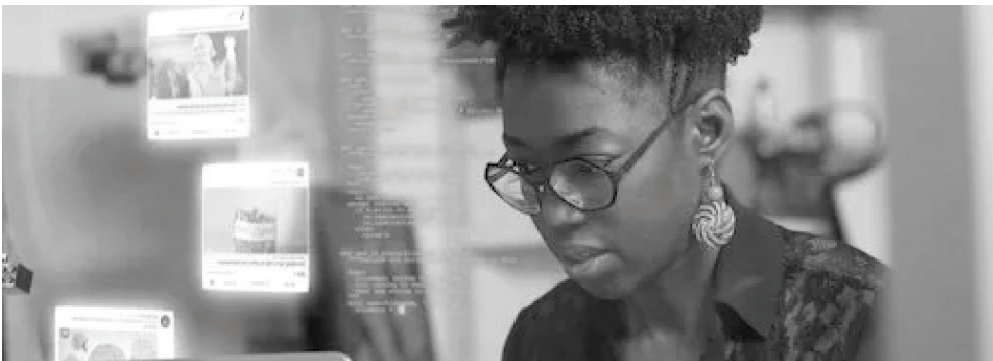
Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire, Virology researcher

Dr. Corbett-Helaire is one of the leading scientists who helped develop the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. She is a research fellow

and the scientific lead for the Coronavirus Vaccines & Immunopathogenesis Team at the National Institutes of Health. Prior to the pandemic, she spent about five years researching illnesses caused by coronaviruses like SARS and MARS. Due to the existing research Corbett-Helaire already completed, her team played a critical role in the vaccine’s development. “There are people who I have out-published and out-succeeded, who are 60 years old and who have the nerve to ask me what I’m going to do next and what’s my expertise,” she told the New York Times in a June 2023 article. “And I’m like, ‘You took my vaccine.’” In the New York Times article, she told reporters she feels the pressure to not fail as a Black woman. And she recognizes the importance of inspiring and standing up for other Black women and girls. Corbett-Helaire and the many Black scientists and medical students whom she works with are the living embodiment of what Afrofuturism means and needs. In a Pew Research Center survey, Black adults were asked if health outcomes have improved for Black people in the last 20 years. A lot of work is still needed, but 47% say health outcomes have gotten a little or a lot better. I became a health data reporter because there aren’t enough Black reporters telling our stories. And there certainly aren’t enough health reporters looking at the barriers Black folks face when it comes to healthcare access. But, beyond the coverage of access, inequities, and the many failings of the healthcare system, we can’t forget to have hope. Our ancestors dreamed of a life of health and wellness. It’s important that we not only continue those dreams but work to carry it out. What do you imagine as the future of our health? □

Facial Recognition

Inequitable Algorithms: Facial Recognition’s Alarming Pattern of Misidentifying Black Individuals Sparks Calls for Reform



JOY BUOLAMWINI, a Ph.D. candidate at the MIT Media Lab, and facial recognition researcher, is the subject of the documentary ‘Coded Bias’ produced and directed by Shalini Kantayya. PHOTO INDEPENDENT LENS

Stacy M. Brown
Word In Black

Recent research conducted by Scientific American online supported fears that facial recognition technology (FRT) can worsen racial inequities in policing. The research found that law enforcement agencies that use automated facial recognition disproportionately arrest Black people. The report’s authors stated that they believe these results from factors that include the “lack of Black faces in the algorithms’ training data sets, a belief that these programs are infallible and a tendency of officers’ own biases to magnify these issues.” FRT was again cast in a negative light after the arrest of a 61-year-old grandfather, who is now suing Sunglass Hut’s parent company after the store’s facial recognition technology mistakenly identified him as a robber. Harvey Eugene Murphy Jr. was subsequently held in jail, where he says he was sexually assaulted, according to a lawsuit. The robbery occurred at a Sunglass Hut store in Houston, where two gun-wielding bandits stole thousands of dollars in cash and merchandise. Houston police identified Murphy as a suspect – even though he lived in California. They arrested Murphy when he returned to Texas to renew his driver’s license. His lawsuit claims that, while in jail, he was sexually assaulted by three men in a bathroom, causing him to suffer lifelong injuries. The Harris County District Attorney’s office later determined Murphy was not involved in the robbery – but the damage was already done while he was in jail, his lawyers said in a news release. “This is precisely the kind of situation we’ve been warning about for years; that these systems, whatever their theoretical reliability, are in practice so finicky, and so consequential, that they cannot be fixed,” Os Keyes, an Ada Lovelace Fellow, and PhD Candidate at the University of Washington, told Vice News. “The only thing I’d push back on is Murphy’s lawyer’s claim that it could happen to anyone;

these systems are attractive precisely because they promise to automate and speed up ‘business as usual,’ which includes laundering existing police biases against people who are already in the system, minority groups, and anyone else who doesn’t fit. This outcome is as inevitable as it is horrifying and should be taken as a sign to restrict and reconfigure policing in general as well as FRT in particular.” Scientific American researchers noted that the algorithms used by law enforcement “are typically developed by companies like Amazon, Clearview AI and Microsoft, which build their systems for different environments.” They argued that, despite massive improvements in deep-learning techniques, federal testing shows that most facial recognition algorithms perform poorly at identifying people besides white men. In 2023, the Federal Trade Commission prohibited Rite Aid from using FRT after the company wrongly accused individuals of shoplifting. CBS News noted that, in one incident, an 11-year-old girl was stopped and searched by a Rite Aid employee based on a false match. Also last year, the Detroit Police Department was sued by a woman whom their technology misidentified as a carjacking suspect. Eight months pregnant at the time, Porcha Woodruff was jailed after police incorrectly identified her using FRT. The FTC acknowledged that people of color are often misidentified when using FRT. “Disproportionate representation of white males in training images produces skewed algorithms because Black people are overrepresented in mugshot databases and other image repositories commonly used by law enforcement,” Scientific American researchers determined. “Consequently, AI is more likely to mark Black faces as criminal, leading to the targeting and arresting of innocent Black people.” “We believe that the companies that make these products need to take staff and image diversity into account. However, this does not remove law enforcement’s responsibility. Police forces must critically examine their methods if we want to keep this technology from worsening racial disparities and leading to rights violations.” □

Life Expectancy Gap

The church was founded and rooted as a place for trusted resources and support

From A14



PHOTO THE BALM IN GILEAD, INC.

36-year-old organization whose mission is to equip Black churches to respond to the health crises in their communities. “The church was founded and rooted as a place for trusted resources and support,” Donna Smith Barksdale, a member of the Fit 4 Faith Wellness Ministry at First Baptist Church in South Richmond, Virginia, says. “Our health ministry was established more than 20 years ago. We help people understand the importance of preventative care, knowing your family history, and getting early screenings.” In November, Ms. Barksdale attended the Healthy Churches 2030 Virtual Conference produced by The Balm In Gilead. “We created the Healthy Churches 2030 Conference for church members and leaders working to improve the health status of their families and communities,” Dr. Pernessa C. Seele, Founder and CEO of The Balm In Gilead, Inc., says. “The conference gives them information and tools to foster awareness about healthy behaviors, disease symptoms, treatment innovation, and overall wellness.” Like Ms. Barksdale, Rev. Lisa Lewis Balboa also attended the Healthy Churches 2030 Conference. Rev. Balboa is Pastor of Freeman Chapel CME Church in Hopkinsville, Kentucky,

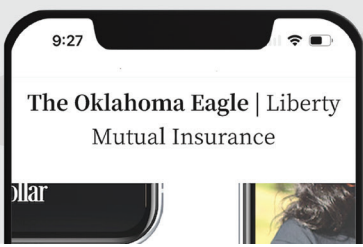
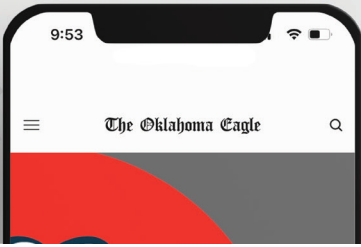
which runs a health ministry that meets monthly. “There are so many needs when it comes to our health that we make health awareness a top priority at our Chapel,” Rev. Balboa says. As an example, following Bible Study at Freeman Chapel on Wednesday nights, attendees take a 15-minute walk. What advice does Rev. Balboa give to churches considering starting a health ministry? “Identify a member that is knowledgeable on health issues, network with the community to identify partners with resources, and be committed to the ministry.” Yvonne Askew, an ICU nurse, also participated in November’s Healthy Churches 2030 conference. “Our health ministry is essential. Most doctors are in and out in 10 minutes during a visit. Members are left feeling like they need someone to sit down and explain their condition and treatment,” said Ms. Askew, who is very involved with health outreach at her church, St. Paul’s AME Zion Church in Buffalo, New York. She is a certified faith community nurse who meets with members one-on-one before or after service. Additionally, Ms. Askew provides health pamphlets in a standing display in the church foyer, which she updates monthly. Furthermore, she trains congregational health promoters in her church and other churches in

the Buffalo area. Darlene Cheek, of Harlem, has attended every Healthy Churches conference since the first event 10 years ago. Ms. Cheek was one of the very first staff members of the Balm In Gilead, and today, she is a consultant for the organization. “Each year, I take the new information and perspectives I hear about during the conference back to my church. I love connecting with people and seeing the ‘light bulb’ moments,” Ms. Cheek, who attends St. Paul Baptist Church, says. “It is extremely gratifying to see churches confront the Black health crises with the help of our organization,” Dr. Seele, the Balm CEO, says. “Many challenges stand in the way of Black health, but our churches and The Balm In Gilead, will continue to make a difference. We are all in this together.” JASMINE ROBERTS DUNCAN, Public Relations Consultant, The Balm In Gilead, Inc. Duncan is a marketing and PR professional with more than 15 years of experience. Her experience includes branding, marketing campaign development, strategy and market research. Duncan has worked with corporate, non-profit, higher education and faith-based organizations exerataquat.

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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





NANCY BOEVERS (c) has gifted the school bell from the former Alsuma School to the Tulsa Historical Society. Receiving the gift from Dr. Jerry Goodwin (l) is Luke Williams of the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum. PHOTO PROVIDED

Alsuma School Bell Donated To Tulsa Historical Society

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Once Segregated School In South Tulsa

In a brief ceremony, the school bell from the former segregated Alsuma Separate School was donated to the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum.

Nancy Boevers, a former resident of Alsuma, in making the donation said, “I am submitting the donation in the memory of two dedicated teachers – George Boevers and Jeanne B. Goodwin – and in the honor of all Alsuma students.”

Her father, George Boevers, taught vocational agriculture for 34 years at Union school, where the Alsuma students attended after desegregation. Jeanne B. Goodwin taught first to third graders at the Alsuma school during segregation. Goodwin used the bell to announce the beginning of the school day and for other occasions. (Goodwin was married to E. L. Goodwin Sr., who was the founding publisher of The Oklahoma Eagle.)

Alsuma was located near 51st Street and South Mingo Road. Even though the community was recognized as a Black town, the 165-acre site had both Black and white residents. According to Edward L. Goodwin Jr., a former resident of Alsuma, in an interview with the Union

Boundary in 2019, he said, “(The community) was just like most other towns then. The railroad split the community in half, so that the Blacks lived on one side and the whites lived on the other side.”

Luke Williams, archivist and curator of collections at the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum, represented the museum, where the bell will be added to its collection.

“The school bell is now a part of the permanent collections of the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum. The museum plans to include this significant artifact in future exhibits highlighting the history of education and racial segregation in area schools,” said Williams.

For more on Alsuma, see Arnett, D. (2019, September 12). Alsuma: The town that disappeared from southeast Tulsa. The Oklahoma Eagle. <https://theokeagle.com/2019/09/12/alsuma-the-town-that-disappeared-from-southeast-tulsa/> (Reprinted from “Alsuma: The town that disappeared from southeast Tulsa,” March 1993, Union Boundary/Greater Tulsa Reporter Newspapers).

University of Tulsa College of Law celebrates Black History Month



“GREENWOOD IMAGINE” was created by Ebony Iman Dallas. The artwork recognizes the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. It is on display at the University of Tulsa College of Law during Black History Month. PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

The University of Tulsa College of Law will be displaying an art piece in observance of Black History Month.

In recognition of this year’s theme, “African Americans and Art,” the college is hosting an exhibit titled “Greenwood Imagine” by Ebony Iman Dallas. The painting commemorates the events of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

“During this annual commemoration of Black History Month, the College (of Law) takes the opportunity to honor the strength and resilience of the African American experience, particularly as it relates to the field of law and its pivotal role in protecting the rights of all individuals. At the University of Tulsa College of Law, we recognize and appreciate the significant contributions made by our faculty, students, and alumni

in effecting positive change within their communities and beyond,” Dean Oren Griffin said.

The project is related to the City of Tulsa’s Greenwood Art Project during the centennial recognition of the incendiary event that engulfed the heart of the north Tulsa community in 1921.

Greenwood Art Project commenting on the art said, “Moving through an entangled temporal landscape between past and future and in alternate universes, ‘Greenwood Imagine’ cultivates a space to contemplate the future in a world where the Massacre never happened. The work is inspired by poet Tony B (Brinkley)’s poem ‘When Dreams Lose Wing’.”

The large four-panel art represents the story of life before and after the massacre. It is carved acrylic, including Ghanaian and Kenyan textiles and magnets.

“The power of art is to create empathy not only sharing just information and stories,” said Dallas, a native Oklahoman. “I hope people can see themselves in (the art).”

She is founder of the Afrikanation Artists to unify African American, Afro-Caribbean, and continental African populations through art and design for community activism. Dallas is a fifth-generation Oklahoman and a second-generation Somali American.

The art is available for public view at the TU College of Law, 3120 E. 4th Pl., during regular business hours.

For more information, see Ebony Iman Dallas Art and Design on social media.

Black Wall Street Heritage And History Festival To Be Held Feb. 3



BLACK WALL STREET MARKET is open year-round. It has many collectibles regarding the famed and historic community that existed prior to 1921. PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

The 11th Annual Black Wall Street Heritage and History Festival is planned for Feb. 3, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m., at the Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences, 1202 W. Easton St. This year’s theme is “Black Towns Matter.” The event is sponsored by the Black Wall Street Market and the Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences.

At this year’s program, mayors from 13 Black towns in Oklahoma will be honored. According to the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities, the state is home to more historically all-Black towns

than any other state in the nation. St. Sen. Kevin Matthews will address the topic of helping to preserve the towns.

As early as the mid-1800s and into the 1900s, more than 30 Black towns existed in the state. Freedmen, who were former slaves of Native Americans and the source of the development of the towns, planted themselves and established farming and neighborhoods “for mutual protection and economic security (among Blacks)” (Oklahoma Center for Humanities, 2018).

The festival celebrates the historic community, Black Wall Street, formerly located on North Greenwood and East Archer streets. A variety of entertainment will be presented, including art

displays, drumming, dancing, a fashion show, and food. Different vendors will be offering arts and crafts and other items.

Donations will be accepted for the Community Children Garden School in north Tulsa. For more information, call (918) 770-6020.

Reference: Oklahoma Center for the Humanities. (2018, March 16). Oklahoma: Home to more historically All-Black towns than any other U. S. state. <https://humanities.utulsa.edu/oklahoma-home-historically-black-towns-u-s-state/#:~:text=But%20one%20unique%20feature%20of,than%20any%20other%20U.S.%20state>

Events

February Black History Month

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. 3

Crowning Glory: The Ameka Premiere Extravaganza at Circle Cinema Kicking off Black History Month, Dr. Tamecca Rogers, a member of the Tulsa-based Artists Creative Fund, is thrilled to present “Crowning Glory: The Ameka Premiere Extravaganza” at Circle Cinema. This red-carpet event is an exclusive celebration of the animated series “Ameka and Her Magical Crown,” created and directed by the visionary Dr. Tamecca Rogers. When: Feb. 3, 2 p.m., Where: Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave..

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.

Feb. 23

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.

Mar. 13

2024 Greenwood Women’s Business Center InnovateHER Women’s Summit at the Doubletree Warren Place, 6110 S. Yale Ave. The program is sponsored by the Greenwood Women’s Business Center, 102 N. Greenwood Ave., Suite 201, 10 a.m. -3 p.m. For more information, contact info@greenwoodwbc.com or gbcwomensummit.com.

Mar. 27

Women’s History Month – “And So I Stayed” will be shown at Tulsa Community College at its VanTrease Performing Arts Center for Education (PACE), 103000 E. 81st St., on March 27 from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. The film is an award-winning documentary by Natalie Patillo and Daniel A. Nelson about survivors of abuse fighting for their lives and spending years behind bars. This is the story of how the legal system gets domestic violence wrong, according to a press release about the film. The program is sponsored by the T. Oscar Chappelle Family and the TCC Foundation. For more information, contact ramona.curtis@tulsacc.edu.

Apr. 12-13

National Association of Black Journalists Region III conference, Tulsa, Okla. Eleven states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, will be represented. For more information, contact Eva Coleman, Region III director, at evacolemannabj@gmail.com.