

The Oklahoma Eagle

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

SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

LEGACY
5,377

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

NATION
Flint's Toxic Water Poisoned Mental Health, Too | A15

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS, WORD IN BLACK

NATION
The Importance of Cost-Effective Childcare Services | A15

By SABREEN DAWUD, WORD IN BLACK

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

\$1.00

VOL. 103 NO. 18

MAY 03, 2024 - MAY 09, 2024

FRANKLIN

Tulsa's first Black police chief will retire July 31 and assume a new position leading security for the BOK Financial Corp. Chief Wendell Franklin was hired as the City of Tulsa's 40th police chief on Feb. 1, 2020, just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. **BY KIMBERLY MARSH, THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE, A2**



INSIDE

Cindy McGhee: How One Woman Built A Business From Scratch
Dr. Jerry Goodwin, The Oklahoma Eagle, A10

Attorney and Son Of Payne County District Court Judge Arrested for Second DUI
C. J. Webber-Neal, The Oklahoma Eagle, A10

Audit criticizes Oklahoma's handling of federal funds, OESC contract
Michael McNutt, Tres Savage, NonDoc, A8

Amid immigration bill controversy, South OKC high schools hold walkouts
Bennett Brinkman, NonDoc, A6

Talk of Greenwood: Celebrating The Lives of Tulsans Every Week
Dr. Jerry Goodwin, The Oklahoma Eagle, A17

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

Dawes Commission
Oklahoma History. A4

Jobs & Classifieds
Discover career opportunities. A12

Faith In Tulsa
The Eagle Church Directory. A13



**CINDY MCGHEE: HOW ONE WOMAN
BUILT A BUSINESS FROM SCRATCH** | A10

**ATTY & SON OF PAYNE COUNTY DISTRICT
COURT JUDGE ARRESTED FOR 2ND DUI** | A10



CHIEF WENDELL FRANKLIN, Tulsa Police Department. PHOTO TULSA POLICE.ORG

Franklin

Wendell Franklin Retires As Tulsa's Police Chief

Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle

Early in Franklin's career, he was called upon to create secure spaces for a series of high-profile events significant in the Black community, including the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter rallies, Black Panther marches, and the 2021 centennial anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre. He also led the department during the historic 1921 Graves Investigation launched to find answers regarding the massacre and subsequent excavations at Oaklawn Cemetery. *Cont. A3*



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Franklin

First Black Chief Leaves A Mixed Legacy

From A2

Franklin faced what has been described as unprecedented challenges, including two visits by U.S. Presidents. His leadership of the department occurred during a national “defund the police” movement that was activated during the protests against the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 - just three months into his position.

In the City of Tulsa Police Department’s published 2022 Annual Report, Franklin listed other challenges he encountered, including the loss of and injury to police officers in the line of duty, the civil unrest, heated elections, a ransomware attack on the City’s software, fatal shootings at St. Francis Medical Center, and a severe storm that brought Tulsa to a near standstill in June 2023.

Franklin said these events “made us stronger but also made many reevaluate life’s priorities.” His reevaluation led to his retirement from his \$200,466 salaried position with TPD to take a position as the new director of corporate security for BOK Financial on Sept. 1.

In a statement published online, Franklin noted that his term culminates four years of following the author Stephen Covey’s book, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” In particular, he cited a passage called “Begin with the end in mind,” which refers to building a legacy. Franklin said this

“

I’m profoundly grateful for Wendell Franklin’s service as Tulsa’s Chief of Police.

G.T. Bynum, Tulsa Mayor

kept him focused on the foundation for a plan he provided to Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum when he was selected. The position is a civil service role, and a specific process is followed in the department for promotions and successors to the chief position. A mayor’s spokesperson said it will be shared with the public when that process is finalized.

At the time that Bynum announced Franklin’s promotion to Chief, he said, “Wendell has a clear vision for the future of the Tulsa Police Department, he is an effective team builder with high standards, and he knows personally the realities of community policing in all parts of our city. He is passionate about innovation, and his selfless management style reflects the ideal that my administration seeks to instill in the culture of the city government.”

In a statement about the retirement, Bynum said, “I’m profoundly grateful for Wendell Franklin’s service as Tulsa’s Chief of Police. Chief Franklin led the Tulsa Police Department through some of the most challenging times in our city’s history and left the department better than he found it. I wish him nothing but the best in this next career phase.”

Despite the challenges, Franklin said he and Mayor Bynum accomplished most of what they sought to achieve. Calls to the communications spokesperson about Franklin’s plan, which he reviewed with the mayor before his retirement, were not returned.

One item in that plan is likely the pursuit of the use of funds authorized by Bynum and the City Council to establish a Real Time Information Center (RTIC) to leverage current and future technologies to improve responses to calls for service and provide additional awareness and investigative support to officers and detectives.

Franklin also thanked employees in the police department and across the City of Tulsa who immediately stepped up to help with new initiatives during his tenure.

The Challenges in Retrospect

Franklin’s retirement comes on the heels of the release of the 2023 City of Tulsa Equality Indicators Report. Among the six themes measured in the report, the Justice theme received the lowest score, falling nearly 5 points to 33.56 from 38.44 in 2018. This theme explores disparities in arrests, law enforcement workforce, officer use of force, and violence. The data was gathered to examine trends and patterns that may identify root causes of equality disparities and assist the City of Tulsa in developing strategies to reduce them. Read The Oklahoma Eagle’s article on the most recent report here at www.theokeagle.com. A reader can access the complete reports at cityoftulsa.org/equality-indicators/.

Cont. A5

Israel-Hamas

As Israel-Hamas War Sparks Campus Protests, Oklahoma Higher Education Officials Take Free Speech Training

Paul Monies
Oklahoma Watch

A traveling campus preacher at the University of Central Oklahoma wearing a hate-filled sign and yelling at students. Competing protests about Palestine and Israel at the University of Oklahoma. Hecklers trying to shout down an appearance by State Superintendent Ryan Walters at Oklahoma State University.

Those are just a few examples of recent events on Oklahoma college campuses covered by free speech laws. But as social media amplifies political polarization, making sure campuses continue to be centers of robust discussion and peaceful protests without trampling on individual rights remains a tricky balancing act for those in academia.

Oklahoma in 2022 established one of the first free speech committees in the nation for its public higher education institutions. The Free Speech Committee, an advisory

body under the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, came from House Bill 3543 by Rep. Chad Caldwell, R-Enid.

The nine-member committee reviews campus free speech policies, develops training programs and serves as a clearinghouse for free speech complaints. It meets quarterly and held its first training session this month at UCO. About 300 deans, associate deans and department heads from across the state attended.

Caldwell said the law left the composition of the committee up to the regents, who themselves are appointed by the governor to nine-year terms. That’s a departure from most legislatively created boards or commissions, which typically have at least some appointees from the House and Senate leaders.

“It’s not a heavy-handed approach,” said Caldwell, who is one of two lawmakers appointed by regents to the Free Speech Committee along with Democratic Sen. Kay Floyd of Oklahoma City. “I’m not interested in

being the free speech police. The government and the Legislature should not have that role for obvious reasons.”

Caldwell said it’s always a challenge to deal with offensive but protected speech, especially on college campuses.

“People want free speech when it agrees with their own viewpoint, but with someone of the opposing view, people aren’t always so quick to support that free speech right,” he said in an interview. “If you’re not willing to stand up and protect the speech of the people you don’t agree with, you can’t really expect that protection for your own speech, because then it will just depend on who is in charge at that time.”

Attorney Andy Lester, chairman of the Free Speech Committee and a former regent, said free expression is enshrined in both the U.S. and state constitutions. Encouraging critical thinking is a key component of higher education, he said.

“Critical thinking comes about not by avoiding challenges or disagreements, but by

encouraging free inquiry, free debate and free thought,” Lester said at the April 11 training session. “Yet many on contemporary college campuses around the country appear to be turning their backs on freedom of expression, which I find to be quite tragic. We can, and we must, make our campuses welcoming places for the civil, respectful discussion of ideas.”

Lester said colleges and universities retain the power to restrict the time, place and manner of speech on campus to ensure it doesn’t interrupt ordinary educational activities. They also can restrict speech that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment or falsely defames a person.

“To put it plainly, classes must go on,” Lester said. “But these are narrow exceptions to the general policies of freedom of expression.”

Regent and former House Speaker Jeff Hickman told attendees the goal of the free speech training was to make sure Oklahoma colleges and universities are making news for the right reasons, not because they botched

Cont. A5

Dawes Commission & Federal Allotment Policy

By KENT CARTER, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



The Dawes Severalty Act (the General Allotment Act) of 1887 ushered in the allotment era. Drafted by U.S. Sen. Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, the act did not pertain to the Five Tribes. Therefore, on November 1, 1893, Dawes, then retired, was appointed to head a three-member commission to the Five Tribes to negotiate agreements with the leaders of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole that would end tribal land ownership and give each member individual possession of a portion of the tribal lands. The Dawes Commission established its headquarters in Muskogee, Indian Territory, and its membership was expanded to five in 1895. Dawes died in 1903, and Tams Bixby replaced him as chairman, but the commission has always been called the Dawes Commission.

From 1894 to 1896 Dawes and his fellow commissioners, Meredith Helm Kidd of Indiana and Archibald S. McKennon of Arkansas, had no success convincing tribal leaders to accept the federal government's allotment policy. By 1896 congressional frustration led to passage of the first

in a series of acts that increased the commission's powers and changed its character from a diplomatic mission to a judicial tribunal that decided who was eligible for tribal membership and what land they received.

Under powers granted to it by the Curtis Act of 1898, the commission processed enrollment applications of more than 250,000 people and approved more than 101,000 whose names were put on what are commonly called the "final rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes." The enrollment process was closed as of March 4, 1907, and the final rolls remained the definitive source on eligibility for each tribe's membership. In order to allot the land, the commission surveyed and appraised the 19,525,966 acres of tribal land. The persons enrolled by the commission were allotted 15,794,000 acres, with individual allotment sizes based on the appraised value. Some persons eligible for allotment received cash rather than land. The rules governing both enrollment and allotment were unique to each tribe and were contained in agreements negotiated

between 1897 and 1902 and were ratified by both Congress and the tribes. Many enrollees wanted the same land, and the commission ruled on 10,952 contested allotments.

The commission reserved 125,497 acres for railroad rights-of-way, townsites, churches, schools, and cemeteries and segregated 431,080 acres of Choctaw and Chickasaw land holding coal and asphalt deposits and 1,278,753 acres containing timber. These segregated lands were leased under government supervision and eventually auctioned. After allotment was completed, 3,174,988 acres of unallotted land were sold. The commission surveyed 308 townsites and platted them into lots and blocks that were auctioned. The commission received and maintained accounts for the revenue from all these transactions and prepared, approved, and recorded patents for each tract of land. The Dawes Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes was abolished by act of Congress on August 1, 1914, and its unfinished business was transferred to the Five Civilized Tribes Agency in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma's history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

DAWES COMMISSION (821, Aylesworth Album Collection, OHS).

The Oklahoma Eagle

Founded in 1921

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

Business

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

News

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

Photography

- Cory Young**
Photographer

Print

- Sam Levrault**
Production Director

Circulation

- Kirstein Lynn**
Subscription Manager

Digital

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

Contact

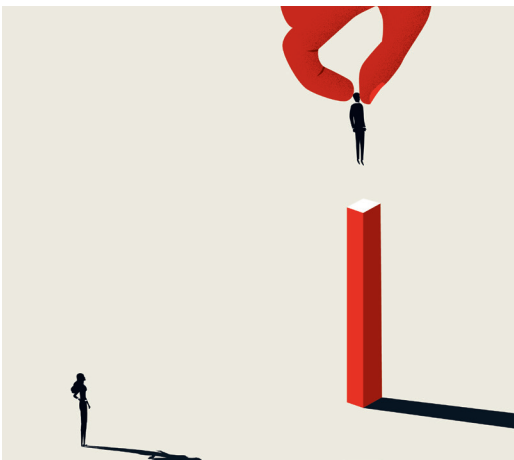
- Letters to the Editor**
editor@theokeagle.com

- Advertise**
advertise@theokeagle.com

- Circulation**
publishers@theokeagle.com

- Subscribe**
theokeagle.com/subscribe

Featured Last Week



Report shows minimal progress for Black Tulsans



DEI programs should broaden access to higher education



OKCPS class sizes increasing as pandemic funds expire

The Oklahoma Eagle

Enjoy articles, events and featured content online



Online

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

The Oklahoma Eagle | Founded in 1921 | Vol. CIII No. 18

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

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

©2024 The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC. All rights reserved. No portions of this periodical may be reproduced with expressed written consent.

Delivery

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

Submissions

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

Letters to the Editor

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

Advertising

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

The Newsroom

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

Franklin

TPD continues to *face* equality disparities: Officer use of force, arrests and violence

From A3

In the 2022 annual report, Franklin also acknowledged that recruitment and retention of police officers became a significant challenge due to a strong economy combined with negative perceptions of law enforcement and increased scrutiny from the public in the wake of national conversations about policing and social justice.

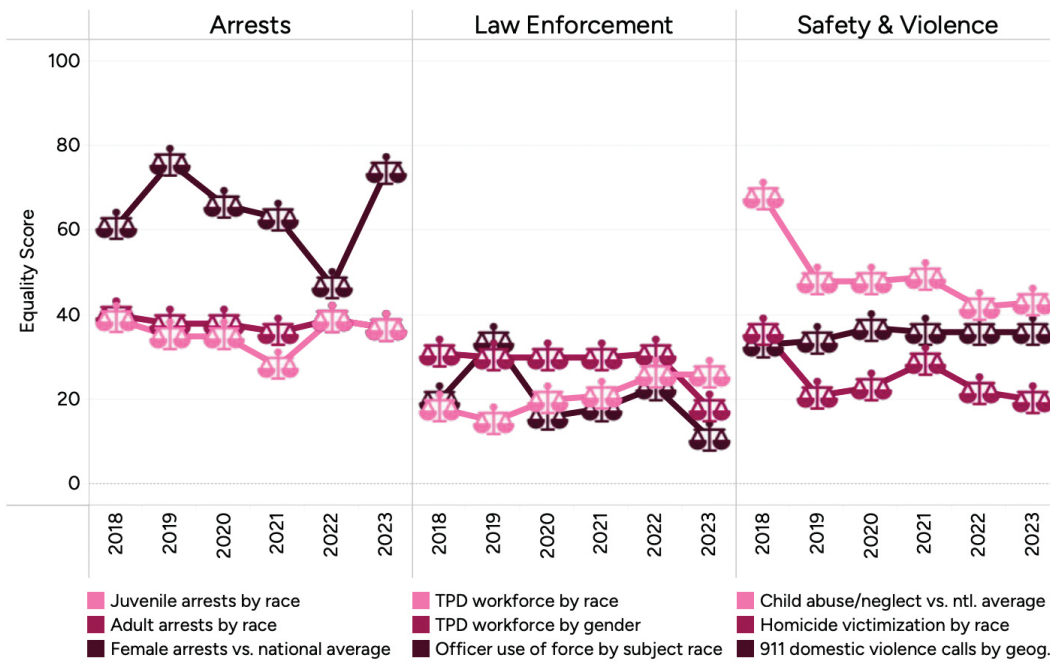
Those factors contributed to historically low numbers of qualified applicants.

Franklin also listed several accomplishments, including the reduction in crime and the leveraging of new crime-fighting technology, including the Real Time Information Center.

In a news report in Tulsa People magazine published March 29, 2024, Franklin outlined even more challenges for the department, including a highly unfavorable Fraternal Order of Police survey, the McGirt ruling that criminal cases involving tribal members on tribal lands should not be tried in a state court, and the biggest, dangerous issue of street drugs, primarily fentanyl.

In May 2022, the Police Department came under fire for the way it handled the investigation of the arrest of a 70-year-old woman experiencing a mental health crisis while locked in the restroom of a local shop. The three responding officers and the City of Tulsa were sued for their handling of the Oct. 21, 2021, arrest, then once released,

Justice Theme = 33.56/100



Note: For years in which new data are not available, the previous year's scores are repeated for calculation of indicator, topic, theme, and city scores. This is symbolized in the above line graph by a missing icon for those years.

JUSTICE THEME, TULSA EQUALITY INDICATORS. PHOTO CITY OF TULSA

the body cam footage spurred public outrage over the incident. The department then investigated its officers nearly six months after the arrest. An Oklahoma Watch report said it found that the department violated its policy by keeping the results of that investigation secret. Oklahoma Watch has a pending

lawsuit against the City of Tulsa to compel the release of investigation results and records pursuant to the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

In addition to state law, the Oklahoma Watch report said the section of the policy manual, which was updated and approved by Chief Franklin seven months before officers

arrested Paris, is not being followed. The police states: "The nature of the allegations, the results of internal investigations, and any disciplinary action taken will be treated as a matter of public information."

More recently, a Feb. 13 Tulsa World report by Kevin Canfield stated a Fraternal Order of Police

Lodge 93 survey conducted in February 2023 found that "85% of respondents said morale has gotten worse under Franklin's leadership."

The report said: "In a Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 93 survey conducted in February 2023, the survey said 69% of the 325 active members rated morale as four or lower on a scale of 1 to 10; 55% of respondents put the number at three or lower. At the time the survey was conducted, TPD had approximately 800 sworn officers, according to the department.

When asked what was most responsible for low morale, the survey revealed 30% of respondents cited inconsistent discipline, followed by micromanagement (21%) and staffing levels (19%).

Poor leadership was next at 15%, with "The Chief" ranking near the bottom at 6%."

At that time, Mayor Bynum was quoted saying he had complete confidence in Chief Franklin's leadership. He cited the number of significant challenges he faced in Tulsa practically from day one, and he credited Franklin's emphasizing the deployment of technology in the field that "has led to the creation of the Real Time Information Center and the overhaul of computer systems used in every patrol vehicle."

KIMBERLY MARSH is a contributing writer at the Oklahoma Eagle. She is a native Oklahoman. Public education is one of her passions.

Israel-Hamas

It's easy to be pro-free speech when the speech being uttered is speech you agree with...

From A3

a response to a free speech issue or a campus protest.

"When you have 18-year-olds make different judgment calls than we would hope, those things are going to end up in the news," Hickman said. "Our hope is the institution is not the news because you are equipped with what you need to follow the law."

James Davenport, associate dean for social sciences in the Liberal Arts & Sciences division at Rose State College, said he hasn't seen any efforts on his campus in Midwest City to restrict student or faculty speech.

"I've expressed my viewpoints on a lot of stuff, very publicly, and I've never had administration or other faculty come and say, 'Hey, we think you shouldn't say that,' or try to block me professionally in some way because of it," Davenport said.

Davenport, who is a member of the Libertarian Party, said he has seen a broader leftward shift politically among faculty in the past few decades. But he said it's impossible to mandate ideological diversity among faculty, an effort being tried in states like Indiana.

"Any time you develop any type of monoculture, you're leaving out points of view that can better inform students, faculty and the community at large about issues," Davenport said. "It's basically a type of groupthink where we all see things the same way and we never ask questions that somebody from another perspective might ask to better inform us. It's really a cultural issue within academia itself."

Davenport said junior academics in Oklahoma who haven't yet earned tenure are getting hit by both sides in the broader culture wars. Some may be afraid to say anything controversial out of fear of how it might affect their academic career or draw attention from lawmakers or others looking for the next professor to brand as a communist or socialist or terrorist.

"It's not fair to those folks, and it's also not fair to the mission of the university of generating knowledge and the widespread views of multiple perspectives," Davenport said. "It's easy to be pro-free speech when the speech being uttered is speech you agree with or the speech being censored is speech you agree with. It's a lot harder to be pro-free speech when the speech is something you absolutely oppose."

Campus Protests Have Long History

College campuses have been at the frontlines of free speech debates, protests and activism for decades, from the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam War protests to calls to end apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s and the police killing of George Floyd in 2020. In the past six months, numerous college campuses across the country have been roiled by protests over the war in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas.

College campuses have been at the frontlines of free speech debates, protests and activism for decades, from the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam War protests to calls to end apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s and the police killing of George Floyd in 2020.

Recent controversies in Oklahoma include a video of racist chants by members of an OU fraternity on a bus and two OU students posting blackface videos on social media. Two fraternity members in the bus video withdrew from the university, although multiple reports at the time said they were expelled. The students involved in the blackface video voluntarily withdrew, and the university did not take any punitive action.

In 2022, Oklahoma Christian University fired a tenured professor after he hosted a guest speaker in class who used explicit language. The private university said some students complained about the language, which it said went against its policies and values. The professor sued OC, and the case is now before the Oklahoma Supreme Court on a narrow issue of whether his termination for gross misconduct was covered by the arbitration terms of his employment contract. The university's attorneys said the case is not about academic freedom but is instead an employment dispute.

In February, OU campus police responded to a suspicious package and nearby buildings were evacuated for several hours as police investigated. It was later discovered to be a protest sign over the Israel-Hamas war along with a trash bag of rotten meat and other objects. Police said it was an example of protected speech involving "protest art" and didn't pursue charges against the person who admitted placing it on campus.

In Stillwater, Oklahoma State University this month settled a lawsuit over its harassment and computer-use policies, which some students said chilled conservative speech. As part of a settlement in federal court, OSU must also shut its bias-response team. A group called Speech First sued the university in January 2023 over its policies, alleging they constituted vague and overbroad restrictions on constitutionally protected speech.

"We are excited to announce that OSU will be eliminating their insidious bias reporting system that told students to anonymously report on one another for 'bias,' they will have to rewrite their harassment policy to include important speech protections so that students can no longer be punished for merely expressing their views, and we have secured a change to their computer policy so that it no longer targets the protected political speech of students," Speech First Executive Director Cherise Trump said in a press release.

Ensuring Civil Discourse

Caldwell said colleges and universities should not be echo chambers. Ensuring civil discourse on campus will help students navigate the transition between young adulthood and becoming an adult, he said.

"As a student, you should go to college expecting your ideas to be challenged,"

Caldwell said. "Unfortunately, some in our society, and in higher ed, enforce this idea that words are violence and you have the right never to be offended. An important part of free speech is respecting the viewpoints of others enough to hear them and be heard."

Joseph Thai, a constitutional law expert and presidential professor at OU's College of Law, said the law guarantees freedom of speech, but students, faculty, staff and administrators have different rules and levels of protection on campus.

"The protection varies depending on the context and on the position," said Thai, who was the keynote speaker at the training session at UCO. "The First Amendment does not restrain private actors like private universities. But most large private universities have adopted free speech principles."

Restrictions on the content or viewpoint of speech would likely fall afoul of the First Amendment, Thai said. But universities can impose reasonable restrictions to safeguard typical campus activities in classrooms or offices if they apply evenly to all groups and are content-neutral.

"Speech can be curated to make sure it doesn't devolve into chaos," Thai said. "But viewpoint-based restrictions, even in classrooms, are typically invalid."

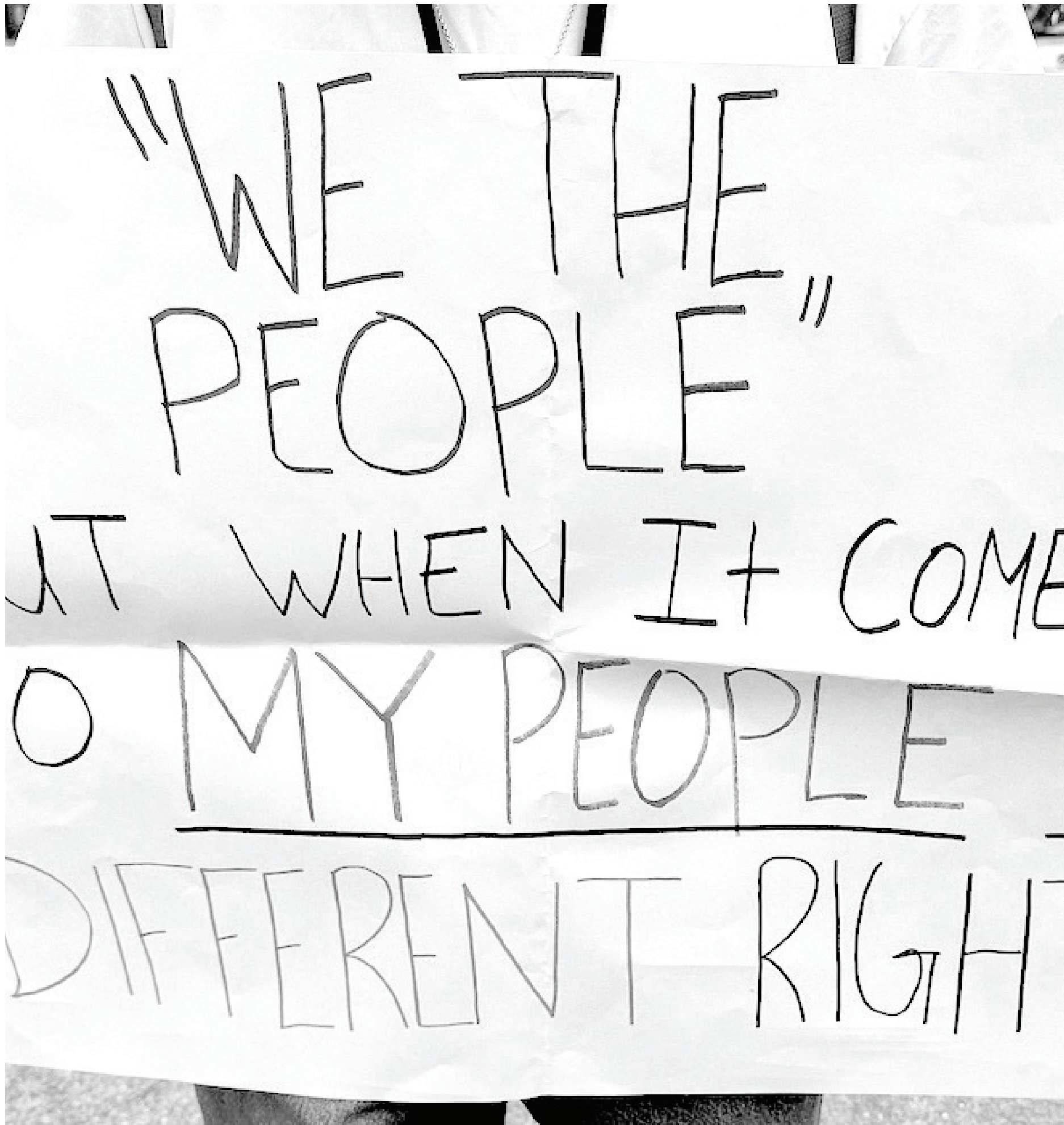
Thai said hate speech, including racist speech, is protected by the First Amendment unless it includes incitement, true threats or words that in context would immediately provoke a physical response.

"Hate speech sometimes is a form of fighting words, a true threat or incitement, and can be disciplined without violating the First Amendment," he said. "Racial slurs hurled at someone else in a face-to-face debate would not be protected speech in that context because it would be a fighting word. On the other hand, racial slurs in rap music played at a party or on your iPhone are probably protected speech in most contexts."

Hickman said he hopes the Free Speech Committee will be a resource for everyone at Oklahoma's public colleges and universities. So far, the committee has not received any complaints.

"Ultimately, the Free Speech Committee is a pressure-relief valve for the institutions," Hickman said. "If someone on your campus doesn't feel like they were heard or got the result they needed through your process, that's why this entity exists."

Note: This story was updated to correct an error over what happened to the OU fraternity members involved in a racist chant on a bus in 2015.



A SOUTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT holds a sign after a school walkout protesting HB 4156 on Friday, April 26, 2024. PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

Immigration, OKC Schools

Amid immigration bill controversy, South OKC high schools hold walkouts

Bennett Brinkman
NonDoc

As Gov. Kevin Stitt weighs an impending decision over whether to approve a controversial bill aimed at curbing illegal immigration, students at four Oklahoma City-area high schools walked out of classes Friday afternoon in protest of the legislation.

Additionally, the archbishop of Oklahoma City has also spoken out against the bill, which Stitt has stopped short of saying he would sign.

An hour before classes were set to end Friday, hundreds of students held signs, waved Mexican flags and chanted “No hate! No fear!” on the lawn of Southeast High School. At the same time, students at Santa Fe South, Capitol Hill and U.S. Grant high schools held similar walkouts to protest the bill.

“This is a time when we really do need to unite and talk with each other,” said Nayeli Rojo, a Southeast High School student who helped organize the event. “It was honestly just an event to (...) spread awareness about how [the bill is] affecting us and how it’s affecting our homes.”

Passed by both chambers of the Oklahoma Legislature but awaiting final approval from Stitt — who has through Tuesday to make his decision — HB 4156 would create the crime of “impermissible occupation” for any “non-citizen or national of the United States” to reside in the state without permission or federal legal authorization. Those already working within the country’s immigration system would be exempt from prosecution.

Any person who commits the crime of “impermissible occupation” would be guilty of a misdemeanor on first offense and a felony on second offense. Both would carry

possible fines and jail time, and both require offenders to leave the state within 72 hours of release from custody.

Those opposed to the bill say it will result in further marginalization of the state’s Hispanic community, members of which rallied on the north lawn of the State Capitol on Tuesday while the Senate considered the measure.

The bill’s passage drew praise from numerous Republicans in both chambers of the Legislature, many of whom are facing primary reelection campaigns and may have other political aspirations. The bill has also been crafted and pushed heavily by Attorney General Gentner Drummond, who is also a Republican with aspirations for higher office.

“This measure protects immigrants here legally while ensuring law enforcement have the tools necessary to go after criminals,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC) in a statement after the bill passed his chamber. “The southern border crisis has created a scourge of illegal activities, including an increase in fentanyl, human trafficking and crime in our communities because of the inaction and abject failure at the federal level to secure our borders. The Oklahoma Legislature is taking the necessary action to protect our citizens. Doing nothing is unconscionable and this legislation is the appropriate measure to keep Oklahomans safe and uphold the rule of law.”

But other stakeholders, including the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, are strongly opposed to the bill. Stitt, also a Republican, has declined to state whether he will sign the bill, saying Friday that he’s still reviewing it but praising the bill’s intent.

“First off, we have a great Hispanic community in Oklahoma. They contribute a lot to our state (...) — hard-working, entrepreneurial, living the American dream, coming

here the right way,” Stitt said Friday morning. “This bill is trying to do what the (President Joe) Biden administration is not doing.”

The term “Hispanic” encompasses more than just people from Mexico, and Stitt said the bill is meant to protect the state from immigrants from other places besides Mexico, including “Communist Chinese,” who he said are illegally crossing the southern border of the United States.

“We have to be a law-and-order state,” Stitt said. “We want immigrants. We’re a country of immigrants that have come in and want to be part of the American dream, but we have to know who they are, and they have to come here legally.”

‘Stood up for our people’

The students who helped organize Friday’s walkouts across four South OKC high school sites said they wished policymakers in the state would recognize the value Oklahoma’s Latino community offers to the state and its economy.

“Having [so many students] be there and just showing total support for our community, especially in these areas that are Hispanic heavy, and just to show our community that we are here for each other (...) is a big point of why we had such a big crowd,” said Alberto Nuñez, a Southeast High School student who helped organize the walkout.

Another student who attended the Southeast High School protest had a simple assessment of the events.

“We just stood up for our people,” said Rolando Gonzalez, a sophomore at Southeast.

The students said that while they did not ask for permission from school administrators to organize the protest, they did

Cont. A7



STUDENTS AT OKLAHOMA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' SOUTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL hold a walkout to protest HB 4156 on Friday, April 26, 2024. PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

Immigration, OKC Schools

“OKCPS supports our students’ rights to peaceful assembly and their freedom of expression”

From A6

work with them to carry out the event, which an Oklahoma City Public Schools spokeswoman confirmed in a statement.

“OKCPS supports our students’ rights to peaceful assembly and their freedom of expression. OKCPS leadership worked closely with students and student groups who wished to assemble today so we could provide them with a safe space to express themselves regarding their opposition to HB 4156,” said OKCPS communications director Crystal Raymond. “Our top priority is always to support the academic and social emotional needs of our students while maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment for all.”

The largely Hispanic student bodies of south

“**House Bill 4156 is flawed legislation that harms communities, separates families and weakens our economy**

Archbishop Paul Coakley, Oklahoma City

OKC high schools are not the only people to take issue with the bill. In a scathing statement, Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul Coakley said the legislation fails to consider the humanity of those immigrating to the U.S.

“House Bill 4156 is flawed legislation that harms communities, separates families and weakens our economy. It fails to address the real criminal issues we face in Oklahoma — seeking a misguided sense of justice at the expense of mercy,” Coakley wrote. “The new law inadvertently will target men and women who are living productive lives with their families, and subject them to jail time, large fines and deportation within 72 hours, separating them from their children.”

Coakley said that while the country’s immigration system needs to be fixed,

Oklahoma’s bill is not a good way to address the problem.

“Measures should be considered to protect Oklahoma’s borders, most especially against the influx of human and drug trafficking,” Coakley said. “But, we also must recognize that the vast majority of undocumented immigrants in Oklahoma are upstanding members of our communities and churches, not violent criminals. They assist their communities in many ways and provide needed services. They are our friends and neighbors. They happen to be some of the most vulnerable in our midst.”

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.

Teacher Turnover

Education Watch: No Quick Fix for Teacher Turnover, But Some Solutions



TEACHER RUTHIE NICEWANDER works with a second grader at Epic Charter Schools’ Stonegate Virtual Learning Center in Oklahoma City on Feb. 28, 2023. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Jennifer Palmer
Oklahoma Watch

Classroom teachers in Oklahoma this year earn an average of \$61,000 in salary and certain retirement contributions. That’s up from \$55,500 the year before.

The Legislature approved boosting teacher pay in 2023 as part of its education funding package. And yet, 6,065 teachers employed in Oklahoma that year didn’t return for 23-24.

That’s up from 5,950 the year before and 5,234 the year before that.

The bottom line: pay alone can’t fix the teacher pipeline, which has been broken for over a decade.

In response to my latest story on teacher turnover, some chimed in with solutions.

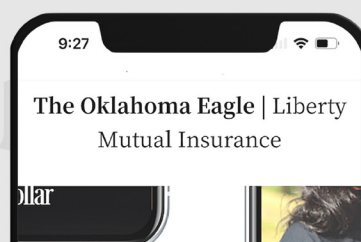
Robert Franklin, an associate superintendent at Tulsa Tech, suggested on X the state consider targeted tax incentives for teachers — as Oklahoma offers to aerospace engineers.

The Oklahoma Parent Legislative Advocacy Coalition wrote that legislation qualifying teachers’ children for Oklahoma’s Promise, a college scholarship program for high school students whose families meet income requirements, would go a long way. □

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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





SHELLEY ZUMWALT, director of the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, speaks to media Tuesday, April 23, 2024, after rebuffing Attorney General Gentner Drummond's request that she resign. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

Oklahoma Audits

'Grave disservice to taxpayers': Audit criticizes Oklahoma's handling of federal funds, OESC contract

Shelley Zumwalt said OESC's contract with a company that employs her husband was initially signed before she became the agency's director. However, she approved the extensions.

Michael McNutt and Tres Savage
NonDoc

In a blistering review of how Oklahoma agencies spent pandemic-era federal funds, State Auditor and Inspector Cindy Byrd sharply criticized the Office of Management and Enterprise Services for failing to seek bids on a series of state contracts.

Byrd's audit also alleged that Shelley Zumwalt, now a member of Gov. Kevin Stitt's Cabinet, failed to disclose that her husband was a top official with a software company that received more than \$8 million in federal funds to rebuild the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission's antiquated computer systems that crashed weeks into the pandemic when thousands of people were filing for unemployment benefits.

Attorney General Gentner Drummond, who frequently chimes in on state issues making headlines and often butts heads with Stitt, called for Zumwalt to resign as executive director of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department and as secretary of tourism, wildlife and heritage. He asked that Zumwalt "cooperate fully with my office as I seek to determine whether any Oklahoma statutes were violated."

At the end of a press conference late Tuesday where she called Byrd's audit "misleading," Zumwalt said "of course" she would cooperate with Drummond.

"I have great respect for the Central Purchasing [Act], and the contract we are talking about was done under a declared emergency," Zumwalt said. "We all remember COVID-19, and I think it's really important to view this situation under that lens as well."

Zumwalt said a legislative effort she was pushing to exempt the Tourism and Recreation Department from components of the Central Purchasing Act has now been withdrawn following extensive questioning from the Senate Appropriations and Budget Committee last week.

"In my opinion, Oklahoma is rapidly becoming a no-bid state."

CINDY BYRD, State Auditor and Inspector

'Oklahoma is rapidly becoming a no-bid state'

Some of the problems highlighted by Byrd involved Oklahoma's administration of federal CARES Act funds, which Stitt branded as CARES Forward. Congress passed the CARES Act in an effort to bolster public services during the pandemic.

Called a "federal single audit," Byrd's report released Tuesday (embedded below) constitutes the mandated annual review of whether the state of Oklahoma spent federal grant money in compliance with federal regulations. The latest report covers more than \$13 billion, which are audited through a formula provided by the federal government. A majority of the money came from COVID-19 relief funds.

The report released Tuesday covers the state's 2022 fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2022. This is the second year in a row that Byrd's office has found questionable costs with how Oklahoma appropriated pandemic-era federal funds. She said last year that the state "dropped the ball on compliance and oversight."

Oklahoma kept making errors during 2022 fiscal year, according to Byrd's 226-page audit report.

Byrd, in a press release accompanying her audit, said the most compelling finding was that COVID-19 allowed OMES to establish a new set of rules for vendor contracts. The Oklahoma Central Purchasing Act requires OMES to conduct a competitive bidding process to vet most potential vendors, but OMES neglected to follow the statute, she said.

Zumwalt reminded media that, in 2020 when OESC's initial contract with Phase 2 Development was signed before she became director, the public was seeking immediate response to issues created by the pandemic. Stitt, for instance, declared a catastrophic health emergency, which triggered his ability to suspend certain regulatory statutes for action by the state's public health authority.

Byrd said problems identified in the audit point to OMES' disregard for competitive bidding requirements and a systemic lack

of oversight and accountability. The Code of Federal Regulations requires the state of Oklahoma to use the state's competitive bidding policies and procedures before awarding vendor contracts, but instead the State Auditor and Inspector's Office discovered OMES was operating under a 2019 pilot program it termed "rolling solicitations."

Under the program, OMES directors, the chief information officer and the purchasing director gave themselves permission to place any vendor of their choice on a list to be awarded state contracts without a competitive bid, Byrd said.

"In my opinion, Oklahoma is rapidly becoming a no-bid state," Byrd said. "This is a grave disservice to every Oklahoman. The 'rolling solicitation' design allows for circumvention of financial safeguards and could place potentially better state vendors at an unfair disadvantage."

As a result, Byrd asked the Legislature to:

- Investigate the "rolling solicitation" process employed by OMES;
- Investigate the revenue stream associated with the "rolling solicitation" process and determine if it has created an incentive for noncompliance with sound competitive bidding procedures; and
- Review the growing list of exemptions to competitive bidding laws that do not protect taxpayer dollars.

"The state is 100 percent responsible for following federal guidelines and ensuring any recipients or subrecipients comply with the terms of federal grants," Byrd said. "Oklahoma taxpayers could be forced to return millions of dollars to the federal government."

Zumwalt accused of conflict of interest with software firm

Byrd's report states that Stitt's CARES Forward leaders earmarked \$17 million of federal funds

Oklahoma Audits

Conflict Disclosures And Transparency Demanded

From A8

to help OESC make needed improvements to its computer network mainframe. Because of the pandemic, OESC had a large backlog of unemployment claims.

In April 2020, OMES contracted with Phase 2 Development, a software company, to recover, stabilize and update the agency's systems. The contract was not competitively bid, nor had Phase 2 had a previous contract with the state of Oklahoma, according to Byrd.

Zumwalt, who previously served as chief innovation officer at OMES, was named interim executive director of OESC in May after a prior director resigned amid turmoil. Between April 2020 and August 2022, OMES, through contract and multiple change orders, paid Phase 2 about \$7 million to stabilize and improve the OESC mainframe, Byrd said.

By April 2022, Zumwalt had approved additional contracts and change orders to Phase 2 totaling about \$8.5 million, Byrd said.

In her press conference Tuesday, Zumwalt emphasized that the initial Phase 2 contract was approved the month before she was hired as interim director of OESC.

However, in subsequent documents and contract extensions, Byrd said Zumwalt failed to disclose that her husband, John Zumwalt, was the vice president of Phase 2. As director of OESC, Zumwalt was required to complete annual forms stating that no related party transactions existed regarding the expenditure of funds. She checked "No" on the forms, Byrd said.

"Federal law requires that any entity receiving federal grant money must disclose any conflict of interest in writing," Byrd said. "Any person who could possibly benefit from a federal grant cannot be part of the selection, award or contracting of that money."

Asked whether she believed her husband's employment at Phase 2 Development constituted a "related-party transaction," Zumwalt said she had been told several times by OMES and attorneys that no conflict of interest existed.

"I would go back to my statement that I have not talked to Auditor Byrd or anyone on her staff, so I would truly like to understand what she's talking about," Zumwalt said. "At the point where there was a disclosure, I have disclosed many, many times to all parties that my husband is an employee of this company. We are not part of the ownership group, we have never been part of the ownership group, and he is not working on state contracts."

Legislation went into effect in late 2022 that required appointees to heads of agencies to disclose any conflicts of interest to the Oklahoma Ethics Commission. Zumwalt discussed her husband's employment at Phase 2 after she was named executive director of the Tourism and Recreation Department in 2022, Byrd said.

Prior to her press conference, Zumwalt said in an emailed statement that the contracts with Phase 2 were executed and approved by OMES and the state's chief information officer, Jerry Moore. The initial contracts and all agreements to begin work with Phase 2 were executed before she was appointed by the OESC Board of Commissioners on May 27, 2020, and she did not have any decision-making authority when OMES hired Phase 2 to work with OESC, Zumwalt said.

She said that before she was being considered to head OESC, legal counsel at OMES was consulted out of an abundance of caution. She said it was determined the arrangement did not constitute a conflict of interest. Upon being named the executive director at OESC, Zumwalt said she had a direct conversation with legal counsel at OESC and OMES to ensure all were aware of her husband's employment. She again said she was assured there was no conflict.

However, at her press conference, Zumwalt said she was unaware whether any documentation to that effect exists.

"I'd have to go back and look," she said.

In his own press release, Drummond called Zumwalt's actions "one of the most egregious findings" in the audit.

"This level of self-dealing represents an unforgivable breach of trust that disqualifies Ms. Zumwalt from overseeing the expenditure of our tax dollars," Drummond said. "She should resign immediately."

Zumwalt, who has worked in state government for 12 years, said she is not resigning.

"The auditor's report is misleading," she said in her statement. "I've never had a conversation with Auditor Byrd or her team regarding this matter. A thorough review of this situation would have easily cleared up any confusion on the many sign-offs and disclosures that happened well before I was named executive director of OESC."

Consulting contract with CARES Forward questioned

In an unrelated pandemic-era federal funding examination, Byrd said in Tuesday's audit announcement that neither Jill Geiger, who was

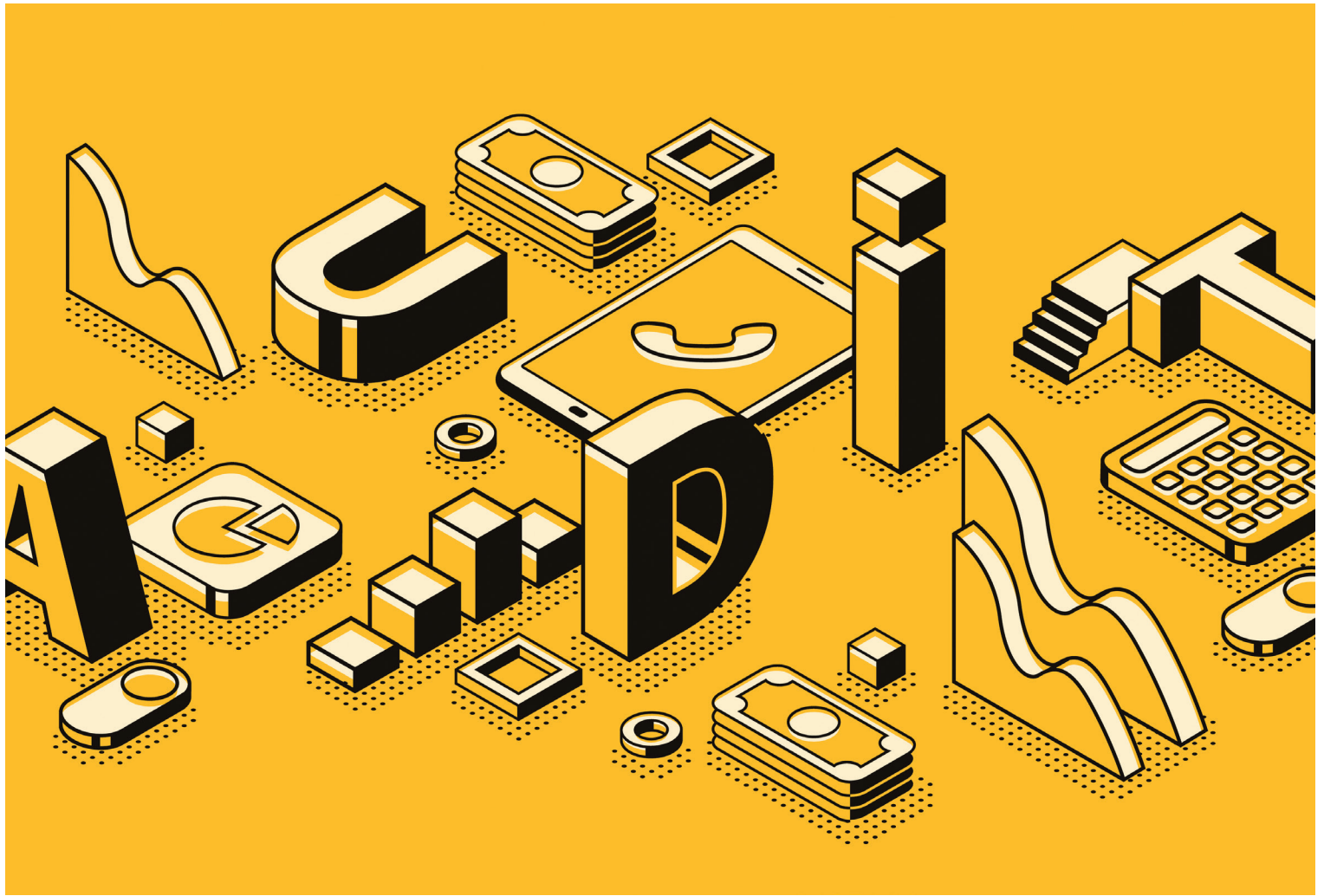


PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

“

Federal law requires that any entity receiving federal grant money must disclose any conflict of interest in writing.

CINDY BYRD, State Auditor, Inspector

hired to oversee the CARES Forward program, nor her firm appeared to have the necessary experience for administering federal grants.

"Federal grant guidelines are incredibly complex and require a high level of expertise to manage properly," Byrd said.

Jill Geiger Consulting, which was formed Jan. 30, 2020, was given the position of team lead and project director over the CARES Forward program. Until 2019, Geiger had worked 15 years in the OMES budget department.

In May 2020, OMES awarded Geiger's company a no-bid contract to administer, monitor and provide reporting on the CARES Forward money. Byrd said bids should have been sought for the \$325,000 contract. A former co-worker of Geiger's was assigned to provide oversight and monitoring of Geiger's work.

Byrd said OMES paid Jill Geiger Consulting before verifying any work had been performed. In some instances, she said her office was unable to determine whether the work had occurred.

Altogether, OMES paid Jill Geiger Consulting \$1.1 million for the administration of CARES Forward and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief funds from 2020 to 2022. The state auditor's office is questioning all of the \$718,416 that OMES paid Jill Geiger Consulting in the 2022 fiscal year, Byrd said.

In an emailed response, Geiger said the pandemic was a critical and hectic time and that "undoubtedly mistakes were made during the first six months of the pandemic."

"Our company was tasked with supporting the rapid issuance of \$1.2 billion in federal disaster relief to those agencies and organizations on the front lines struggling to make payroll and keep people in their homes, not to mention those agencies who were battling against the disease that was killing thousands of Oklahomans," Geiger said. "As the SAI report mentions, these were mostly mistakes of proper documentation or procedural steps that we believed were waived as part of the catastrophic health declaration we were under."

Geiger said those mistakes represented "a small percentage of overall dollars" that were reimbursed to agencies and organizations.

"Even though the report contains factual errors, the SAI audits find fault with less than 2 percent of the total dollars deployed by the procedures we executed," Geiger said. "In other words, our company performed the duties for which we were hired and got better than 98 percent of the reimbursement efforts correct in the middle of a global health pandemic."

In regard to the lack of competitive bidding on her company's contract, Geiger said Byrd's report failed to recognize that statute allowed the governor to waive sections of law to enable expedient response during a declared catastrophic health emergency, which Oklahoma was under in May 2020 when the contract was signed.

Geiger also disputed Byrd's findings that her firm was paid for work not performed.

"In making this incorrect assessment, the report improperly combines disparate contracts citing timing from one contract while using a scope from a different contract, alluding to them being the same contract," Geiger said. "There is significant evidence of work performed for all contracts JGC has with the state of Oklahoma."

Emergency Rental Assistance Program

The largest amount of questioned costs in the audit released Tuesday dealt with how the state appropriated \$276 million distributed to it through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which was earmarked to help Oklahomans with rental and utility assistance.

OMES contracted with Communities Foundation of Oklahoma, a nonprofit entity, to receive \$241 million and implement the program by funding partner agencies around the state to process and pay qualifying participant claims. The money was spent over two fiscal years, according to the state audit. Byrd's federal single audit released last year also alleged misuse of ERAP dollars by the Communities Foundation of Oklahoma.

Byrd's report questioned:

- CFO's administrative and management fees: OMES advanced lump-sum payments to CFO for its administrative costs to oversee the ERAP grant without monitoring or requiring documentation for how much CFO actually spent for program and administrative costs. "Federal funds provided for administrative costs are not for the nonprofit to make a profit," Byrd said;
- Conflict of interest allegations: Jill Geiger Consulting prepared federal reports on behalf of the state for ERAP expenditures. Because of vague wording in contracts and/or a lack of proper contracting procedures, Byrd said it is unclear how OMES paid Jill Geiger Consulting for the services; and
- Afghan refugee relocation efforts: CFO directed \$6.5 million to relocate refugees from Afghanistan into Oklahoma. This was not an allowable expense for this grant. Other grants were available to the state, Byrd said.

Of the \$206 million granted to CFO during the 2022 fiscal year for the administration of ERAP funding, the State Auditor and Inspector's Office is questioning about \$21 million, Byrd said. She estimated more than 5,338 Oklahomans did not get financial help they could have during the pandemic.

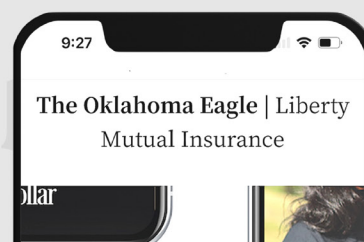
MICHAEL MCNUTT became NonDoc's managing editor in January 2023. He has been a journalist for nearly 40 years, working at The Oklahoman for 30 years, heading up its Enid bureau and serving as night city editor, assistant news editor and State Capitol reporter. An inductee of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall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

WILLIAM W. SAVAGE III (TRES) has served as the editor in chief of NonDoc since the publication launched in September 2015. He holds a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma and covered two sessions of the Oklahoma Legislature for eCapitol.net before working in health care for six years. He is a nationally certified Mental Health First Aid instructor.

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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



McGhee

Cindy McGhee: How One Woman Built A Business From Scratch

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Cindy McGhee: How One Woman Built A Business From Scratch

In 2017, Cindy McGhee formed NextGen Tax Services. The start-up had only a used laptop and a kitchen table for a desk.

But, McGhee recalls, she harbored one more invaluable resource in her entrepreneur's tool kit. I had a "relentless work ethic to find a way to make it work (and to get my idea and company off the ground)," McGhee recalled in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle.

In 2024, NextGen has grown from one to 24 staff members. That's a 2,300% increase in employee headcount. The company's clientele base has grown impressively from 1 to nearly 1,100 in seven years.

This is the story of how a scrappy entrepreneur created a thriving business in accounting, an industry, a field that has long been dominated by major national brands such as the former Arthur Andersen and Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) – companies that fall into the "Big 8," "Big 5," or "Big 4" classifications.

McGhee knew her entrepreneurship goals would be an uphill battle. She knew that only 2% of businesses opened make it past the first five years. She was also aware that building a women-owned business posed its own set of challenges. Understanding the average start-up business needs half a decade to establish itself and its foundation, McGhee was not going to be deterred.

What others might have viewed as obstacles, McGhee saw opportunities. She began to chart a path that has led from the opening of a Tulsa office in 2017 to additional locations in Texas (Dallas, 2022) and Tennessee (Memphis, 2023). She plans to open another office in Kansas (Kansas City) by the end of the year.

McGhee played to her strengths. She was already an experienced professional when she launched the business. McGhee is a graduate of Rhodes College with a master's degree in accounting and a bachelor's degree in international business.

She had been on the staff of Ernest and Young, one of the "Big 4" accounting firms. There, she worked on the accounts of Fortune 400 companies.

Besides her solid background, another advantage was that she launched her company when business formations were on the rise.

According to Forbes magazine, the number of applications for new business creation has increased for the past two decades.

Between 2005 and 2017, millions of business applications were submitted to the government. On average, the Internal Revenue Service accounted for 2.6 million applicants requesting an EIN (Employer Identification Number).

"I could not envision what NextGen would become and is becoming... We've evolved from a 'solopreneur'... to a multi-state firm serving... business owners and with a very diverse team of women who get the privilege to help small organizations retransform themselves into larger organizations," said McGhee.

In 2024, NextGen has grown from one to 24 staff members. That's a 2,300% increase in employee headcount. The company's clientele base has grown impressively from 1 to nearly 1,100 in seven years.



CINDY MCGHEE, founder and managing director of NextGen, one of the nation's largest black-owned, women-led CPA firms. PHOTO CINDY MCGHEE CPA.COM

Response To the Pandemic

McGhee took steps to increase the chance that she would be one of the 2% to succeed in business.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, seeing and engaging with clients was limited. She saw this as an opportunity. She leaned into providing education in business matters for current and potential clients.

"We transitioned to a virtual office, which ironically served us better than the traditional model anyway... It was a win," said McGhee.

Like other businesses across the country, her office became a virtual environment. Her staff worked remotely, communicating with clients through Zoom and other platforms.

McGhee also produced a series of videos on social media on the topics of PPP (Paycheck Protection Program), which were Small Business Administration-backed loans to help and support businesses in keeping their workforces employed during the COVID-19 crisis.

"The content of the videos included what (PPP) is, how it works (and) how to make sure that you're maximizing the support you can get to keep your business afloat through these (difficult) times," said McGhee. Also, the firm shared why it is good to outsource accounting services to a firm.

"By providing the education, it ended up attracting people that wanted to do business with us through PPP... because they had a better

understanding," McGhee told The Oklahoma Eagle.

"We built on that (producing) more videos and educational concepts."

Client Success Story Number One

McGhee took to heart the approach of building her business one client at a time. One of NextGen's clients had the desire to buy a home. His self-employment status hindered him from getting the financing he needed to buy his dream residence.

The client's business had a small employee base. Even though he was running a business, he "had no way to get there financially (to buy a home) and get the bank comfortable with him being a sole proprietor."

"We worked with him over 18 months of helping him be disciplined, manage his company by a budget... (to) do the things that large organizations do to help them grow and be successful on paper," said McGhee.

"He closed on his house earlier this year."

Business Success Story Number Two

McGhee helped another client expand from a "solopreneur" housekeeper to a thriving business. As a stay-at-home mom with a house cleaning service, the client came to McGhee and asked, "How can I turn this into a business?"

"She had too much work (from clients) to

Cont. A11

DUI

Attorney and Son Of Payne County District Court Judge Arrested for Second DUI

C. J. Webber-Neal
The Oklahoma Eagle

Ky Dowdy Corley, an Oklahoma attorney, was arrested on March 21, 2024, by Stillwater police and charged with DUI-driving under the influence of alcohol, transporting an open container of beer, and speeding. He is the son of Payne County District Court Judge Phillip C. Corley and a relative of Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond.

Stillwater police arrest records indicate that Corley was booked into the Payne County Jail on March 22, where he posted a \$1,000 bond and was released.

According to the Stillwater Police Department, the case has been forwarded to the Creek County District Attorney's Office. The Oklahoma Attorney General's office told The Oklahoma Eagle the transfer was made in part because of the involvement of Judge Corley.

Phillip C. Corley is generally considered to

being a conservative administrative judge for the Ninth Oklahoma District Court, including Logan and Payne counties. Judge Corley has a record of passing harsh and lengthy sentences to repeat offenders arrested for violations similar to Ky Corley's. Corley is a practicing attorney formally associated with Baker, Ihrig, and Corley P.C. law firm in Stillwater, Okla.

Some members of the local minority community are watching the Corley case closely and have questioned whether it will be another instance of "Justice for some" but not "Justice for all."

Max Cook, district attorney of Creek County, confirmed that his office was assigned the case by the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office after the Payne County District Attorney's Office recused itself in the matter. District Attorney Cook stated that his office would have no further comment at this time based on the status of the case as an ongoing investigation.

He added that the matter was still "under review." Ky Corley appeared before Payne

County District Court Special Judge Katherine E. Thomas shortly after his arrest. At that hearing, the matter was passed to a later docket for June of this year. Though this appearance was confirmed by District Attorney Cook, neither the Oklahoma Supreme Court Network (OSCN) nor the Payne County Court Clerk's Office have any record of the hearing.

This is the second time Ky Corley has been arrested for a charge resulting from a DUI. Court records show that in February 2020, Corley entered an Alford Plea before District Judge Elizabeth Kerr of the Oklahoma County District Court in Case Number CM-2018-1456, for the charge of driving under the influence. The conviction stemmed from an arrest made by the Oklahoma Highway Patrol in January 2018 after Corley was involved in an automobile accident in a construction zone. Former Oklahoma County District Attorney David Prater handled the case.

Corley was sentenced and received a deferred sentence of one year until February

2021. The arrest launched an investigation by the Oklahoma Bar Association, Case Number SCBD-6902 that led to a disciplinary hearing for violation of Rule 7 of the OBA Rules Governing Disciplinary Proceedings (RGDP). In his response to the OBA, Corley admitted he had consumed alcohol during dinner and was taking a prescription for Adderall but argued this in no way played a role in the accident, which led to his arrest. Despite the arrest and subsequent conviction, the OBA found insufficient cause to proceed, and no final order of discipline was issued.

The Oklahoma Eagle attempted to contact Ky Corley, but he was unavailable for comment. The Oklahoma Bar Association was approached for comment but did not respond to this request.

C.J. WEBBER, a contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle, is a photojournalist based in Norman, Okla.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

McGhee

Committed to service and growth

From A10

do on her own...so, she started building a team," said McGhee.

The client started with NextGen five years ago. The accounting firm helped her create the right business and legal structure to get people on the payroll and take other necessary steps to formalize the business. The formula that McGhee provided to the client was to know how many houses/homeowners as customers to have before she could hire the next employee, according to McGhee.

"We mapped out almost a strategic plan," she said. "We're considering (with her) when to make the next move so that you're not (making decisions) by your gut, but that you are making data-informed decisions."

As McGhee said, the client was "intentional at following the (strategic plan and) map we laid out for her."

Today, the client "boasts over 20 employees and locations in three states... (coming from) a side hustle (to forming a company)."

At NextGen, "we know the right moves to make, (how to put) the puzzle together, and work collectively with our clients," said McGhee. "We help them achieve... great

success."

Business Success Story Number Three

McGhee also shared the story of a third client who could not find work. "He was highly skilled, competent, great work ethic, (but) unable to find work because his background didn't support someone hiring him...He could not get a job." He is a convicted felon and was formerly incarcerated.

"So, he was like, the only option I have is to work for myself," said McGhee.

He created an opportunity to provide IT services to small businesses that do not have a full-time IT individual on staff.

NextGen again asked the same questions and advised this client, as her company had provided to the former solopreneur housekeeper.

"How do I formalize this (business idea), how do I make a business, how do I make sure that I'm doing things in a way that's going to allow it to be sustainable and grow and ultimately fully support me," said McGhee.

She said, "he went from an entrepreneur out of necessity to now he is so good at what he does, and it's so successful that he coaches other entrepreneurs."

An added benefit is that the IT client refers the customers he is working with to NextGen for its accounting services.

The client has become so successful that the accounting firms that turned him down earlier to work with him are now "firms knocking on his door trying to get his business and (his) clients' business."

"We were the only firm that said yes (to work with him) ... he is locked and loaded with us," said McGhee.

"I want to say the difference we're making in the clients we serve is really impressive, and also, their before and after stories are just...I can talk about that forever," said McGhee.

Fifth Anniversary Recognized

In 2022, McGhee held a five-year party marking her achievement of beating the odds. "...We did a big celebration for that (milestone)," said McGhee. "I am proud... I would say surviving and thriving in the journey."

Her company has grown to offer a broad range of financial services, including tax services (tax preparation, tax planning, and tax resolution), accounting (bookkeeping, fractional CFO services, and financial planning and analysis), and a legal division

(business law and intellectual property services).

McGhee and her company continue to enjoy the growth she is experiencing, as do other women-owned companies from around the country. She is riding a wave that is ushering in a new generation of women-owned business owners.

McGhee is not one to rest on her laurels. She plans to open another office in Kansas (Kansas City) by the end of 2024. That move will solidify her ranking as a regional accounting firm. She is exploring offering additional financial services at the firm in the future.

When asked what excites her about NextGen Tax Services, she told The Oklahoma Eagle "(I am) humbled daily by the stories of our clients... (We are) making a difference in our clients' businesses (who are classified as) ... underestimated (performers)."

She is married to Jonathan McGhee, M.D. Together, they have two children – Jonathan "L. J." and Jaden.

For more information, see www.nextgenempire.com for accounting services or inquiries@cindymcgee CPA.com for speaking engagements. □



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com

CLASSIFIEDS

2024
OKLAHOMA CITY MEMORIAL MARATHON
RUN TO REMEMBER

THANK YOU!

RUNNERS, SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS AND SPECTATORS!

OKCMARATHON.COM
PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE OKLAHOMA CITY NATIONAL MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

OIL & GAS AUCTION
MINERAL & OVERRIDING ROYALTY INTERESTS
US BANKRUPTCY COURT & OWNERS

MORE THAN 125 PROPERTIES LOCATED IN OKLAHOMA, ARKANSAS, KANSAS & TEXAS

FOR COMPLETE LISTING OF PROPERTIES PLEASE SEE WEBSITE

TUES. MAY 21ST AT 10:00 AM
REGISTRATION: 9:00 AM

AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC.
200 NW 114TH ST, OKC
(W. Side Service Rd of the Bdwy Ext. between 122nd & Hefner)

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

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

ESTATE SALE LOG HOMES
PAY THE BALANCE OWED ONLY!

4 LOG HOME KITS SELLING FOR BALANCE OWED, FREE DELIVERY

1) MODEL #103 WACO	\$22,780 BALANCE OWED \$14,500
2) MODEL #202 TOPEKA	\$34,050 BALANCE OWED \$16,000
3) MODEL #403 AUGUSTA	\$42,450 BALANCE OWED \$16,500
4) MODEL #502 SANTE FE	\$44,950 BALANCE OWED \$20,500

BEFORE CALLING: VIEW at www.americanloghomesandcabins.com Click on House Plans

NEW - HOMES HAVE NOT BEEN MANUFACTURED

- Make any plan design changes you desire!
- Comes with Complete Building Blueprints & Construction Manual
- Windows, Doors, and Roofing not included
- NO TIME LIMIT FOR DELIVERY!

Offer not available to American Log Home Dealers*

AMERICAN LOG HOMES & CABINS
EST. 2001

SERIOUS ONLY REPLY. Call (704) 602-3035 ask for Accounting Dept.

CLASSIFIEDS

OKLAHOMA CLASSIFIED AD NETWORK

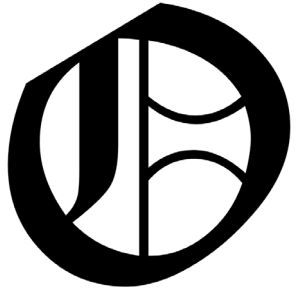
FOR MORE INFO CALL
1-888-815-2672

WANT TO BUY

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

ADVERTISE STATEWIDE

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



The Oklahoma Eagle

Arts
Culture
History
Education
Business
Faith

"PREPARE TO BE ECSTATICALLY BLOWN AWAY!"

THE DAILY BEAST

Tina

THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL

GET TICKETS - OPENS IN TWO WEEKS!
May 14-19
Tulsa Performing Arts Center
CelebrityAttractions.com
918.596.7111

Presented by
Tulsa World
CelebrityAttractions
/bwayTulsa

Photo: Pari Dukovic



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeyeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY

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

Church Of The Living God

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

Minister RJ Smith

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

CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard

Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

Bible Study & Prayer Wednesday 7:00 p.m.
For Transportation (918) 402-6027

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriot 3340 S 79th E Ave Tulsa OK
(918) 230-3022

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

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

List your church in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

Participation in the directory allows free church announcements/ church news.

Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

GTOMi

Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.
Traveling Outreach Ministries

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

ALL ARE WELCOME

MOHAWK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship 11 a.m.

Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m.



Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr. Pastor

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

"Teaching Minds Changing Hearts Touching the World"

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

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

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

BOSTON AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

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

Sunday School 9:40 a.m.

Sunday TV Worship 11:00 a.m.

KTUL Channel 8

TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021
REV. TWAN T. JONES

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"We've come this far by faith"

NORTH PEORIA CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

Warren Blakney, Minister

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

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

Pettie Chapel CME

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

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

Church In Power

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

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

Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

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



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22

List Your Church Today! The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

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

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

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



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

Zion Mount Baptist Church

419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma

Office: 918-584-0510
Fax: 918-584-1958
Prayer Line: 918-584-PRAY

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 10:45
Wednesday Bible Study Noon and 7:00



In The Spirit Christian Church

"Come And Experience The Spirit"

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

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.

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

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

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

List Your Church Today!

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory

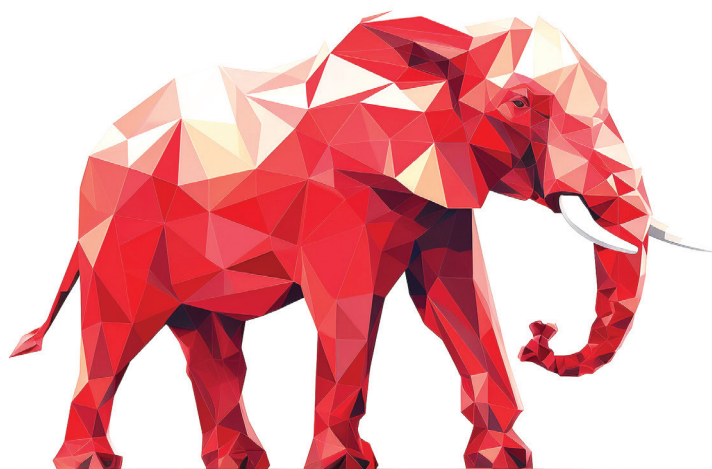
Participate in The Oklahoma Eagle's weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.

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

SMILING HEARTS The NICK BLAKELY Foundation

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

www.nickblakelyfoundation.org



Wake Up, Black Voters. Don't Let Trump's Lies Fool You

SOME RECENT POLLS SURPRISINGLY SHOWED THAT IF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS HELD TODAY, 17% OF BLACK VOTERS SAY THEY WOULD VOTE FOR TRUMP.

BY DONALD M SUGGS

The fact that exit polls showed that Donald Trump received 9% of the Black vote in 2016, the highest number since George Bush in 2000, and then won 12% in the presidential race in 2020 should be a cause for concern.

Moreover, some recent polls surprisingly showed that if the presidential election was held today, 17% of Black voters say they would vote for Trump, and even more troubling, 20% say they would vote for someone other than either Trump or President Biden.

Black voters have been the largest and most loyal voting bloc for Democrats for years, but there has been a shift in the number of Black voters who consider themselves Democrats.

That trend could be explained partially by a number of younger Black voters with no direct experience with the civil rights movement. They have scant knowledge and no direct personal memory. They feel disappointed with Democrats and the Biden administration and seem willing to consider Trump despite his blatant and toxic racial baggage.

This disconnection with the Democratic party is felt most strongly by some young Black males, many in critical battleground states like Michigan, Wisconsin, Georgia, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, where Democrats need every vote. Most of these states

have large concentrations of Black voters in their urban areas. This is a special issue in potentially close races like this one because the Electoral College gives Republicans a massive advantage in federal elections. This system allows them to govern with a minority of the popular vote.

However, there is also data that shows that the Democratic candidate for president over the last five presidential elections since 2000 has averaged 90% of the Black vote with an average of only 8% for the GOP candidate. In addition, the overwhelming concern of most Black voters continues to be race and racism with a particular aversion to the reprehensible and duplicitous Trump who has shown repeatedly that he is an instigator of racial hate. Any relationship he has with Black voters has been deceptive and disingenuous.

Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of Black voters can not be bamboozled or deceived because we know the record of his stance on healthcare with his recent attacks on Obamacare, opposition to greater diversity in the workplace, and efforts to restrict our voting rights as well as his racist, conspiracist "birther campaign" that sought to undermine the then-president, Barack Obama.

Still, we can't simply ignore the reports that Trump is possibly making inroads with Black voters while

Biden is losing support from us. Granted polls have been shown not to be reliable predictors of what Black voters will do. Actually, our biggest worry should probably be third-party voting (third-party presidential candidates have no chance of winning. This is a binary election, and only a Democrat or Republican can win) and potential voter apathy, despite the high stakes in this contest to determine whether Donald Trump is elected again.

Clay Cane, a Sirius XM radio host, rightly said that the 2024 presidential election is not just a choice between the lesser of two evils, but this is an election to see if we can stop Trump and his pernicious plans to institute a future dictatorship to carry out his vile policies. A Trump victory would be a grave threat to the well-being of Black Americans for certain.

In any case, the Democratic party must recognize the seriousness of the disenchantment of many Black voters who don't feel motivated to make it to the polls and campaign more directly and intentionally in our community.

Furthermore, we ourselves must make an unprecedented and determined push to get to the polls in greater numbers to help stop this monstrous man and his MAGA minions from regaining control of the White House.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COST-EFFECTIVE CHILDCARE SERVICES.

Early childhood education experts recognize the need for more funding for childcare, describing it as a necessary resource for the public. A15



Flint's Toxic Water *Poisoned* Mental Health, Too



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Flint

A decade after the water crisis emerged, residents are struggling with higher-than-average rates of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome

Joseph Williams
Word In Black

It's been a decade since Joyce Ellis McNeal learned the water coming from the taps in her Flint, Michigan, home was, in her words, "poisoned." The anger and trauma in her voice is still very much present.

In April 2014, not long after news broke that her city's water was tainted by lead and bacteria, McNeal, a K-12 special-needs educator, noticed her adult son, Joseph Pounds, Jr., didn't look well. By 2015, Pounds came down with a crippling illness that caused him to gradually waste away before her eyes. Flesh began falling from him in grisly chunks.

Shuttled from one Flint doctor and hospital to another, prescribed one medication after another, Pounds' body continued to break down, consumed by something seemingly no one could diagnose, much less fight effectively. Puzzled clinicians and specialists asked Pounds' mother: Had he been to Africa? What was his HIV-AIDS status? How did he get so sick?

But mother and son had already identified a prime suspect after he was hospitalized; "He kept screaming, 'It was the water!'" McNeal says.

Pounds' physical illness would soon

become his mother's psychological pain.

The Other, Invisible Crisis

The phrase "post-traumatic stress syndrome" brings to mind individuals often linked to the diagnosis: a war veteran who's seen combat, a violent crime victim, perhaps someone who survived childhood abuse or a plane crash.

Rarely do we connect the psychological disorder with turning on the faucet in the kitchen sink.

Yet that's what Flint residents have experienced since April 25, 2014, when the city registered its first complaints that the drinking water looked, smelled, and tasted foul. Research has shown city residents suffer from extraordinarily high rates of PTSD and depression as a result of the crisis, even though the water infrastructure is in the midst of a massive, system-wide upgrade.

They still don't know if it's safe to drink the water.

Long-Lasting Mental Health Impacts

The collective stress from the uncertainty, researchers say, stems from a decade of quietly relentless stress related to the water crisis: from government misinformation and falsehoods about the extent of the problem; concern about how Flint's children have

Cont. A16

Childcare

The Importance of Cost-Effective Childcare Services

Early childhood education experts recognize the need for more funding for childcare, describing it as a necessary resource for the public

Sabreen Dawud
Word In Black

The rising cost of childcare is causing concern for parents or people considering having a child.

According to a brief issued by the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau last year, median childcare prices for one child ranged from \$4,810 to \$15,417 per year. These prices make up 8% to 19.3% of average family income.

With many families in need of childcare services for multiple children, the cost of childcare can significantly strain even the best, carefully thought out budget. When considering care type, age group and county population size, the report found that childcare was still reported to cost a considerable portion of family income.

Cont. A16

Flint

Social and economic stressors



FLINT WATER CRISIS. The Flint water crisis is a public health crisis that started in 2014 after the drinking water for the city of Flint, Michigan was contaminated with lead and possibly Legionella bacteria. PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A15

been affected by consuming lead-tainted water; and a range of illnesses, from rashes and hair loss, to young children with behavior issues and developmental delays.

Ten years of news coverage portraying Flint, a majority-Black city, as poor, dysfunctional, and in perpetual crisis adds to the psychological distress, experts say.

The PTSD and related depression in Flint manifests itself in a range of problems, including absenteeism at work and school, difficulty in personal and on-the-job relationships, and higher-than-average rates of substance abuse, including alcoholism and illicit drug use.

That's the finding of a study conducted by the Medical University of South Carolina, a teaching and research institution, based on data collected in Flint from 2019-2020. Nearly 2,000 adults living in Flint throughout the water crisis were asked about their experiences, their psychological symptoms five years after the crisis, and whether they had access to or had used mental health services between August 2019 and April 2020.

Dean Kilpatrick, a psychiatry professor and PTSD researcher at MUSC, says that although the data was collected five years ago, most psychological improvement occurs earlier than five years after the event. Therefore, he says, it's likely the data he and his team analyzed for their 2022 report hasn't changed much; Flint likely is still struggling with its mental health.

"The fact that it was five years afterward, and a substantial proportion of people were still having problems, indicated that there were some long-lasting mental health impacts to us," Kilpatrick says. "The rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression were higher than we thought they would be. We thought that they would be elevated, but we didn't realize they would be as high as they were."

Even though the water crisis in Flint is being addressed, it qualifies as an ongoing PTSD event, according to the MUSC report, particularly in light of "its rapid onset and long duration,

THE PTSD AND RELATED DEPRESSION IN FLINT MANIFESTS ITSELF IN A RANGE OF PROBLEMS, INCLUDING ABSENTEEISM AT WORK AND SCHOOL, DIFFICULTY IN PERSONAL AND ON-THE-JOB RELATIONSHIPS, AND HIGHER-THAN-AVERAGE RATES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE, INCLUDING ALCOHOLISM AND ILLICIT DRUG USE.

potential for personal and family member exposure to toxic substances, and misinformation from trusted officials."

Exacerbating the problem: Flint suffers from a shortage of mental health workers. While PTSD is often seen as an individual problem, Kirkpatrick says in Flint's case, it's a big deal when a fifth of the city's majority-Black population is struggling.

"Populations are made up of people," says Kirkpatrick. "So if you've got a large number of people, or a substantial number of people within that population (who are

suffering), then the effect is going to be magnified across communities."

"So when a stressor like that affects a large number of people, it's going to mean that a higher proportion of your population is going to be impaired to some level or another," Kirkpatrick says. "And they'll have difficulty with schoolwork, they'll have difficulty with jobs, they'll have difficulty just maneuvering life, difficulty maybe getting along with other people."

Three Grades Behind

McNeal, a member of Flint's school board and a special-needs classroom educator, says she's seen the problems first-hand.

Recently, "I started teaching in schools. And I started looking at the behavior of Black boys," she says. "They were not growing. They seemed to be short for their age. And the average kid in Flint — If you're in the fourth grade, you're reading on a kindergarten level. They are three grades behind."

Aaron Reuben, who worked with Kilpatrick on the report, says Flint's high poverty rate is an aggravating factor in how the city copes with the twin mental health and water crises.

"Those rates are far too high, and should be a signal that more needs to be done to treat these conditions now and improve the underlying factors that contribute to them," says Reuben, a Duke University postdoctoral researcher specializing in neuropsychology and environmental health. That includes, he says, tackling "poverty, high rates of exposure to potentially traumatic events, and low levels of social support and cohesion."

While Flint residents deserve to be celebrated for their resiliency, "the crisis did not occur within a vacuum, but rather within a context of years of disinvestment and other challenges," Reuben says.

And without concentrated investment and mental health support to address the PTSD, things won't improve and could get

worse, Reuben says.

"We consider the water crisis to be a potentially traumatic event," he says. "This is particularly true for individuals who were concerned that they or their family members had been exposed to lead-contaminated water" and who haven't received answers.

A Mother's Trauma

People like Joyce Ellis McNeal, who still doesn't know exactly what happened to her son. After weeks of fruitless treatment, his organs failing one by one, Joseph Pounds Jr. died last year on Oct. 18 in his mother's home. He was just 41.

While she never received an official diagnosis, McNeal believes her son fell ill "by him drinking that contaminated water," she says. "Remember — we were drinking E. coli (bacteria.) The water wasn't being cleaned — period."

"I'm traumatized," McNeal says, and not just for the loss of her son. She is angry, frustrated, and sad over "what I have seen is happening to the people of color and a poor community."

Although she lives in a more affluent section of Flint, she still doesn't believe the water is safe and won't drink it. She worries about the children she sees in schools, acting out and falling further behind. And she still doesn't believe the government is taking the problem seriously.

"There's people at the top who benefit from killing off a race of people, crippling a race of people in the city of Flint, and nobody is crying wolf," she says. "A community of 85,000 was poisoned."

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

Childcare

Ensuring that children *have access to* high quality education experiences

From A15

Early childhood education experts recognize the need for more funding of childcare, describing it as a necessary resource for the public.

"Childcare needs to be funded as a public good, just like we fund the libraries, third grade classrooms — in some cases — [the] metro, [and] the parks," shared Marica Cox Mitchell, vice president of early childhood for the Bainum Foundation. "It should just be funded as part of the public good because it benefits young children, it benefits their families, it benefits the economy."

The high rates of childcare do not come with no explanation.

Kathy Hollowell-Makle, executive director for the District of Columbia Association for the Education of Young Children, notes how the smaller classroom sizes required in early childcare institutions play a role in the high costs.

"It's very expensive and that's mostly because the ratios have to remain small," she stated.

"For instance, infants usually have maybe six [children] and, depending on the square

footage, maybe eight, and they've acquired two teachers. They have two teachers in a classroom with six kids. That's expensive when you look at that same cost of two educators being in a classroom of 25 kids," she explained.

Hollowell-Makle also emphasizes how pricey childcare often leads parents to receive childcare services from family members. However, when said family members do not implement early childhood education practices in their services, there can be concern surrounding the benefit of this approach in comparison to enrolling a child in an educational institution.

"We want to make sure children have exposure to high quality experiences where the educators are credentialed, they have experience, and they have the supervision and regulatory oversight that makes sure that children remain safe and healthy," she added.

The impact that expensive childcare can have on certain communities also remains a concern as parents in low income, marginalized communities may be unable to access childcare altogether.

Cynthia Davis, executive director for

the District of Columbia Family Child Care Association, spoke of the contributions of women in the workplace and the impact of high child care costs on their ability to be successful in their careers.

"Black and Brown women have always been in working positions. We always served the public [and] we always served in help positions—positions where we had to serve children, serve families [and] cleaning positions," she expressed. "It's very crucial that it be affordable for them to be able to [maintain]. Every woman doesn't want to stay home and those options need to be available for them to be able to experience work."

As parents continue to navigate through costly childcare options, early childhood experts advocate for more educational and affordable care for children.

"We really have to step up and start funding and treating early childhood education as a public good like we treat K-12 or Pre-K," Mitchell said.



PHOTO UNSPLASH/MARKUS SPISKE

Miss Juneteenth to be shown on Mother's Day at Circle Cinema, May 12

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Free admission for all moms

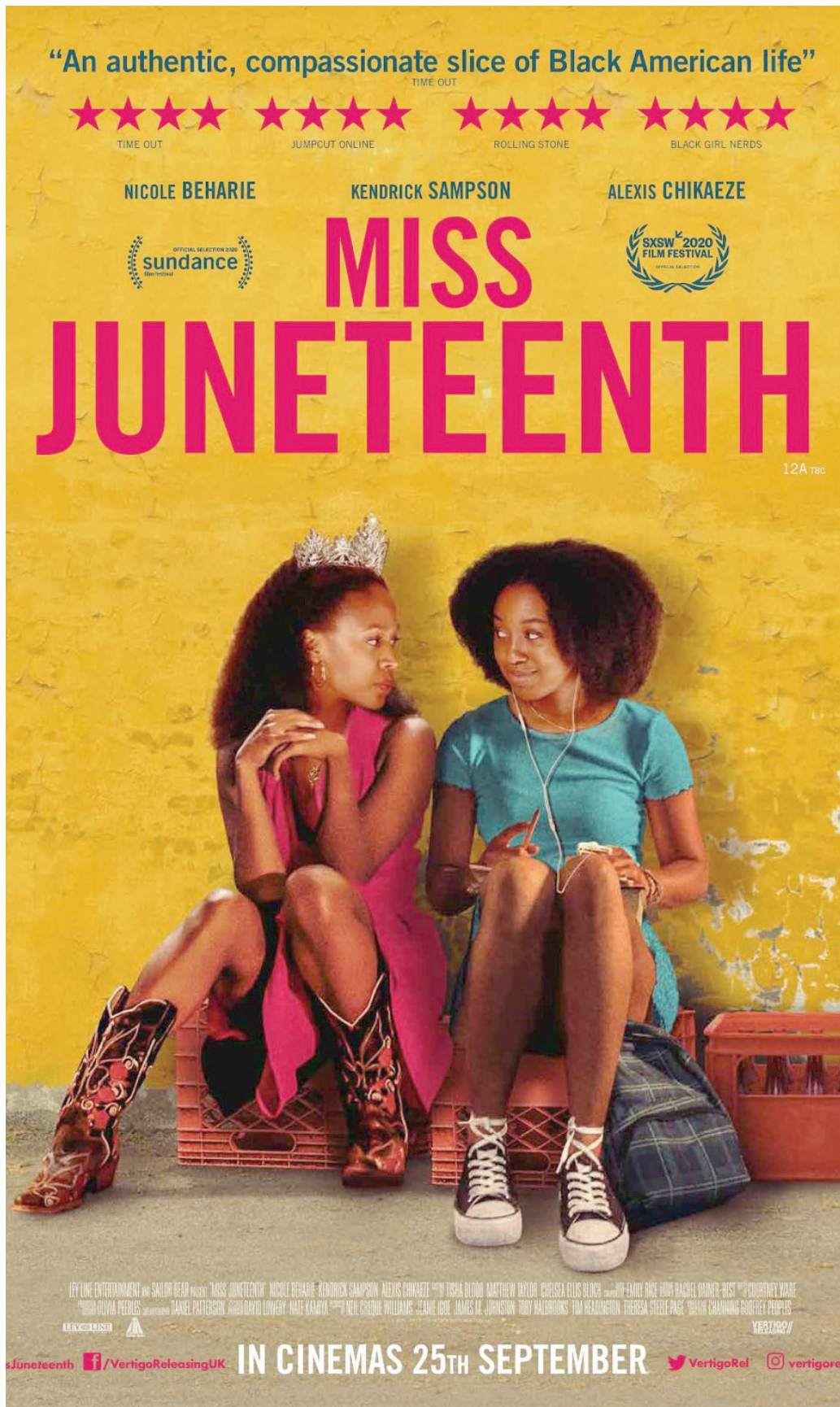
Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., will show "Miss Juneteenth" on Mother's Day on May 12, 4:30 p.m. Free admission will be provided to all mothers.

The film shows a former beauty queen turned hard-working single mom as she prepares her rebellious teenage daughter for the Miss Juneteenth pageant, hoping to keep her from repeating the same mistakes in life that she made. The movie was released in 2020 during the pandemic.

According to Circle Cinema, it "is proud to bring this excellent film about the strength of a mother/daughter relationship to the big screen for the first time."

"A search for freedom and a sororal spirit pulse through 'Miss Juneteenth.' Calmly navigating the intersections of a Black, working-class, American woman, the film's director Channing Godfrey Peoples ensures care, heart and hope are in every step," said in a review in Empire Magazine.

For more information, visit <https://www.circlecinema.org/movies-events/miss-juneteenth>



'MISS JUNETEENTH' will be shown at Circle Cinema on Mother's Day, May 12. Mothers will have free admission on that day. PHOTO PROVIDED

More To Come – Historic All-Black Town Tour, June 1



FOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH, the former Muskoke Baptist Church, is considered one of the first established in Mayes County in Oklahoma in 1832. Previous All-Black Town Tours have included a visit to the church. PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

The 25th Annual Historic All-Black Town Tour Commemorating Juneteenth is sponsored by the African American Resource Center at Rudisill Regional Library and the Tulsa Library Trust. The tour will include visits to the town of Langston, the African American History exhibit

at the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City, and other sites.

One of the many sites visited in previous years was Fountain Baptist Church. The Oklahoma Baptist Convention has recognized the church as the oldest Baptist church in the state. OBC erected

a marker on U. S. 69 in 1977 to commemorate the significance of the church's origins.

More information will be provided in The Oklahoma Eagle in the coming weeks.

For more information, contact larissa.meneil@tulsalibrary.org.

Events

May

May 3 - May 25

Nowata Historical Society and Museum, 136 S. Oak St., will be hosting "Voices and Votes: Democracy in America" exhibition. From the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street, the exhibition explores the complex history of the nation, including The Revolution, Civil Rights, Suffrage, Elections, Protests, and the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens. The project is touring the state beginning in Nowata. For more information, visit www.okhumanities.org or call (918) 273-1191.

May 4

Tulsa Symphony is hosting the Flint Family Foundation Concert Series. It is a series of concerts around town, including St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 4045 N. Cincinnati Ave., at 11 a.m. The concert series is related to music from recognizable movies. The movie-themed selections for the "Winds" instrument performances will be from "Colors of the Wind" ("Pocahontas"), "How Far I'll Go" ("Moana"), "Neverland" ("The Story of Peter Pan" in poetry and music (with narration)), "Peter and the Wolf" (with narration), and "Under the Sea" ("The Little Mermaid"). For more information, visit <https://www.tulsasymphony.org/flint/>

May 5

Morning Star Baptist Church, 1014 E. Pine St., will host its Ninth Pastoral Appreciation Celebration for Pastor Dr. Rodney Goss and Lady Veronica Goss at 10 a.m. Guest speaker will be Elder Noah R. Williams Jr., pastor of St. Peter's Primitive Baptist Church, Neptune, N. J. For more information, call (918) 582-8668 or msbc@tulsacoxmail.com.

May 7

Author Hannibal B. Johnson will present his newest book, "10 Ways We Can Advance Social Justice: Without Destroying Each Other" at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., at 7 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.hannibalbjohnson.com/>

May 9

Tulsa Council for Holocaust Education, the Jewish Federation of Tulsa, and the Tulsa City-County Library present 26th Annual Yom HaShoah: An Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration at Congregation B'nai Emunah, 1719 S. Owasso Ave., at 7 p.m. The featured speaker will be scientist, education designer, and fiction writer Danny M. Cohen, Ph.D. Additional sponsors are the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art and Temple Israel. Registration is required. For more information, visit jewishtulsa.org/yomhashoah2024

May 10 - May 12

Mayfest will be held near 101 E. Archer in the Arts District, Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. – 11 p.m. and on Sunday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. The event is presented by MidFirst Bank. For more information, visit www.tulsamayfest.org.

May 10

North Tulsa Economic Development Initiative (NTEDI) Book Scholarship Banquet at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. The theme is "Investing in Tomorrow." For more information, contact ntedi.north@aol.com or ltturner_ntedi@aol.com.

May 11

Fiesta de Mayo will be held in the City of Broken Arrow, 2 p.m. – 10 p.m. The event is sponsored by Morelos Supermercados.

May 12

Circle Cinema to show "Miss Juneteenth on Mother's Day, May 12, 4:30 p.m. Mothers will be provided free admission. For more information, visit <https://www.circlecinema.org/movies-events/miss-juneteenth>

May 15 - May 19

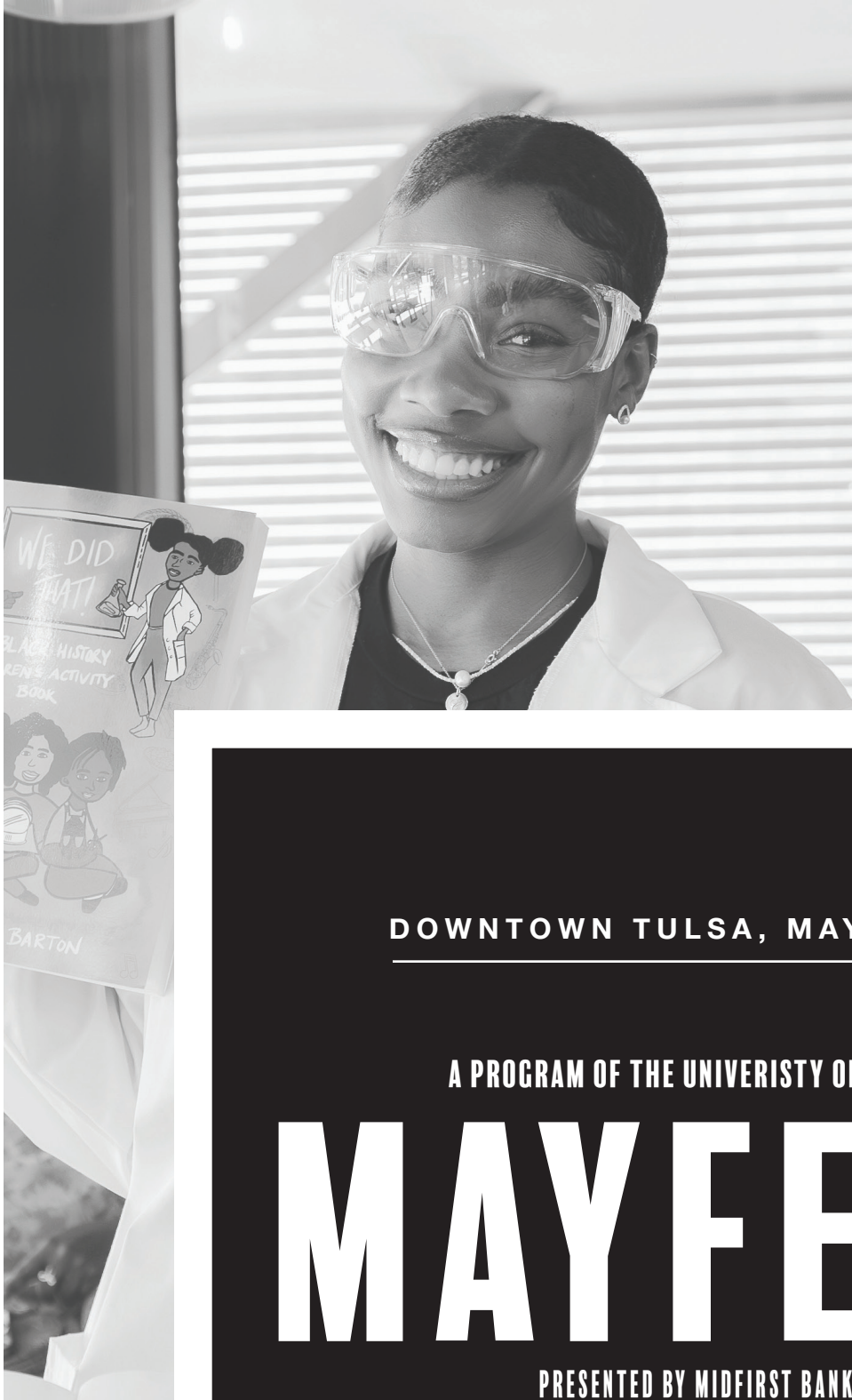
Mount Rose Baptist Church, 1137 N. MLK Blvd., will hold the First Pastor and Wife Anniversary for Pastor Kevin Williams and Lady Danielle Williams from May 15-19. The scheduled speakers are Rev. Larry Hooks, Gethsemane Baptist Church (May 15, 7 p.m.); Rev. Rex Woodfork, St. John Baptist Church (May 16, 7 p.m.); Dr. Rodney Goss, Morning Star Baptist Church (May 17, 7 p.m.); Dr. Eric Gill, Antioch Baptist Church (May 19, 11 a.m.); and Dr. Leroy Cole, Mt. Zion Baptist Church (May 19, 3 p.m.) For more information, call (918) 584-7522.

May 16

Black Wall Street Rally and Festival will feature speakers, live entertainment, history tours, vendors, and much more in the Greenwood Business District. For more information, contact www.blackwallstretrally.com.

The Oklahoma Eagle

CHARITY BARTON, a newly published author and versatile storyteller, will be at a booth at Mayfest, May 10-12. PHOTO **IVANNA PRICE, THE SOCIAL BAR**



OMALEYB, a gifted musician and singer, is scheduled for the Roark Stage at 101 Garden at Mayfest, May 12 at 2 p.m. PHOTO **PROVIDED**



DOWNTOWN TULSA, MAY 10-12

A PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERISTY OF TULSA

MAYFEST

PRESENTED BY MIDFIRST BANK

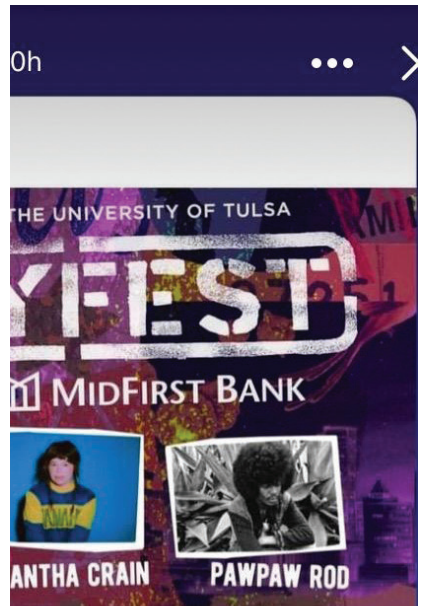
ARTISTS & AUTHORS

By DR. JERRY GOODWIN

Mayfest will be back and better than ever in downtown Tulsa, May 10-12. The annual festival will be filled with music, art, food and more. The Tulsa Arts District will be buzzing with 150 plus art vendors, 75 musical performances and thousands of Mayfest attendees. Below are several that are scheduled to appear and perform.



WILLIE JONES
MAYFEST
TulsaMayfest.org



LUKE LEIFESTE & CURTIS TAYLOR JR. will present on the topic of "No NDA Required: World Building Through Story" at 101 E. Archer on May 11, 11 a.m.. PHOTO **PROVIDED**

VINCE KADLUBEK
TALKS ABOUT CREATIVITY AND VISION
ART • MUSIC • FOOD
MAY 10-12, 2024
TULSA ARTS DISTRICT • DOWNTOWN TULSA
FREE PARKING • SHUTTLES FROM OSU-TULSA
TULSAMAYFEST.ORG

tulsamayfest 5 days until Mayfest Presented by @MidFirst kicks off in downtown #Tulsa 🤩 Here's a loo...

COUNTDOWN TO MAYFEST

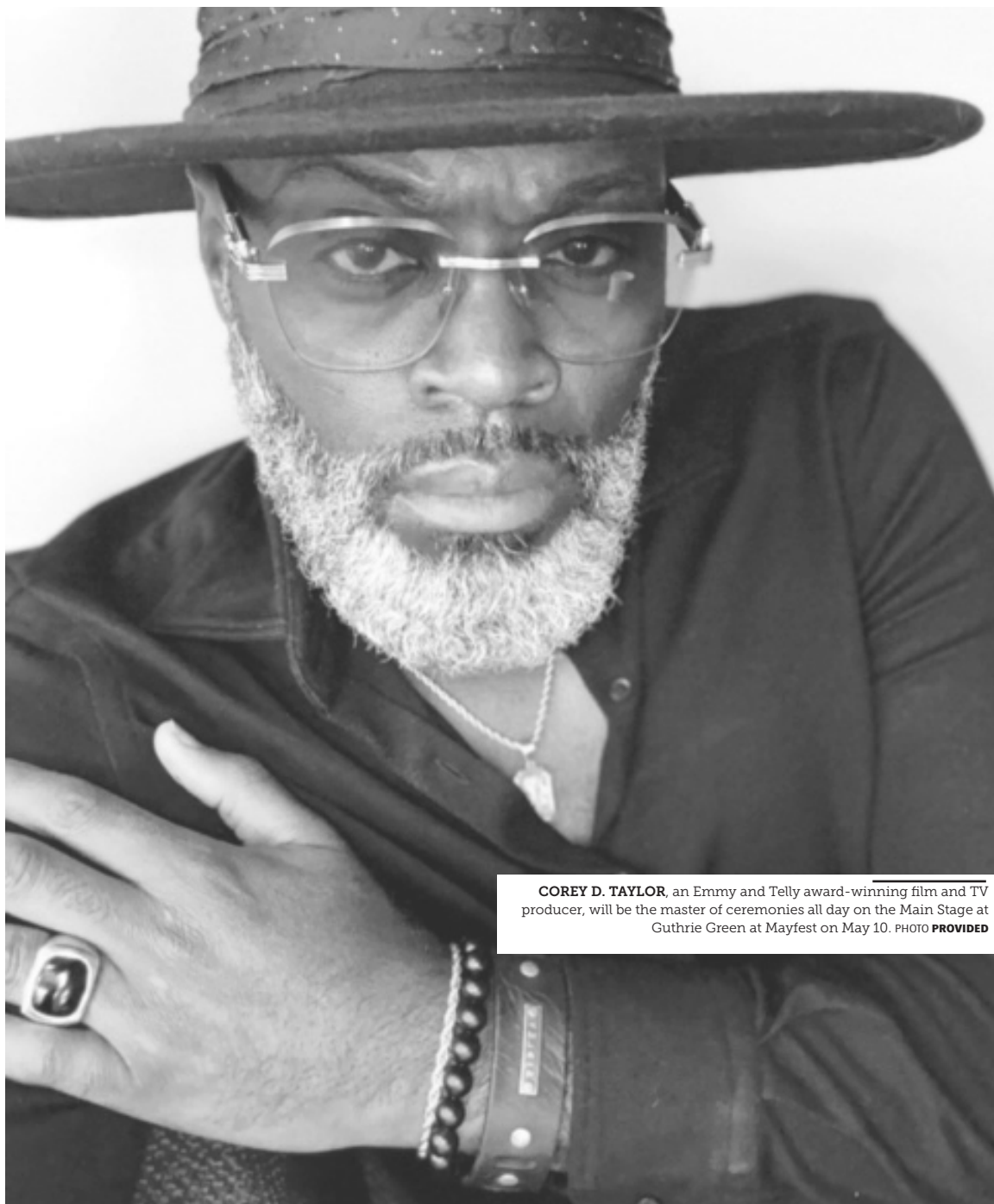
04 : 11 : 29
days hours minutes



CURTIS TAYLOR JR. & LUKE LEIFESTE will present on the topic of "No NDA Required: World Building Through Story" at 101 E. Archer on May 11, 11 a.m. PHOTO PROVIDED



VINCE KADLUBEK is founder and director of Meow Wolf, an art-based organization that supports and encourages artists by providing creative spaces and donations to organizations. Kadlubek will provide a lecture on May 11. PHOTO PROVIDED



COREY D. TAYLOR, an Emmy and Telly award-winning film and TV producer, will be the master of ceremonies all day on the Main Stage at Guthrie Green at Mayfest on May 10. PHOTO PROVIDED

EVENT SCHEDULE

May 10

Corey D. Taylor will be the master of ceremonies for the entertainment all day on the Main Stage at Guthrie Green, May 10. He is an Emmy and Telly award-winning documentary, film, TV producer, and author. Taylor is scheduled to launch a radio show, "Soul of Sunday," on NYCU.FM on May 12.

Tony Mason will perform on the Main Stage at Guthrie Green on May 10 at 6 p.m.

Majeste Pearson will grace the Main Stage at Guthrie Green on May 10 at 7 p.m.

May 11

Charity Barton will have her booth on Reconciliation Way (across from Majestic Club). She will be there May 10 (11 a.m. – 10 p.m.), May 11 (11 a.m. – 10 p.m.), and May 12 (11 a.m. – 6 p.m.)

Barton, author and TEDx lecturer, will be autographing copies of her new book, "We Did That: A Black History Children's Activity Book." Her booth will feature an immersive experience with a few themes of the book.

"It's not just about reading; it's about living the adventure right alongside the characters," said Barton.

Additionally, Barton has a podcast that is airing a variety of subjects:

- April 30 – A question-and-answer session with the host
- May 3 – Part II of the question-and-answer session will air
- May 10 – Season 2 will begin with Jayla Simone Meeks, owner of JSM Body and I-Represent Jewelers. She is an activist and entrepreneur with a focus on fitness for self-love. She also won \$10,000 in seed money for her next fitness endeavor. She was the grand winner of the Build in Tulsa Female Founder Pitch Night.

The podcast link is <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/onlyinyourdreams>

For more information, visit www.cboriginal.com or send an email to charity@cboriginal.com.

Meow Wolf Founder and Director

Vince Kadlubek is head of one of the most influential art companies in the world. His presentation is entitled, "The Value of Creativity in These Transformative Times" on May 11, 11 a.m., at the 101 Archer Building. The program is free and one can RSVP here: <https://www.tulsamayfest.org/talks>

Writer and Director Curtis Taylor and entertainment media veteran Luke Leifeste will present on the topic of film and media. The

lecture is "No NDA Required: World Building Through Story" on May 11 at 1 p.m. at the 101 Archer Building. The program is free and one can RSVP here: <https://www.tulsamayfest.org/talks>

Willie Jones will perform on the Main Stage at Guthrie Green at 7 p.m.

PawPaw Rod will appear on the Main Stage at Guthrie Green on May 10 at 8 p.m.

May 12

OmaleyB is scheduled to entertain on the Roark Stage at 101 Garden on May 12 at 2 p.m.

He is an accomplished R&B/Soul/Pop/Gospel singer. Additionally, he is an accomplished musician, who has mastered multiple instruments, including the piano, alto saxophone, drums, and organ. OmaleyB stands out as the sole artist featured on both the Fire In Little Africa Project, in collaboration with Motown Records, and the 1921 Music Collective Project with Isotopia Records.

In 2014, OmaleyB made his mark with the release of his debut single, "Who What When Where Why," followed by the compelling "Can't Plead the 5th" in 2015. However, it was in 2017 that he truly captured attention with the release of his album, "Unsung 1921." The tracks "Find That Strength," "Come On Up," and "We Died In Church" not only earned him nominations for "Black Wall Street Artist of The Year" but also secured a place in the Tulsa Music Awards for Best Video with "Come On Up." The impact of the "Unsung 1921" album has rippled through the Midwest, steadily gaining immense traction on radio and various airwaves.

His song "June Riot" made waves on ABC's Soul of a Nation, Hulu, Disney, and even reached international audiences on BBC Britain Broadcasting Company in the United Kingdom.

A dynamic performer, OmaleyB has shared the stage with renowned artists and personalities, including Musiq Soulchild, Lakeside, Al Sharpton, Midnight Star, Le'Andria Johnson, PJ Morton, and Michael Bloomberg. According to his press release, "His diverse musical journey continues to captivate audiences, marking OmaleyB as a rising star with a unique blend of soulful sounds."

An additional award includes Tulsa Artist of the Year.

For more information about Mayfest events and activities and for updates to the programming, visit <https://www.tulsamayfest.org/>

DOWNTOWN TULSA, MAY 10-12

MAYFEST

ARTISTS & AUTHORS

Today's a new day for mental health.

Helping transform lives requires transforming how we treat mental health diagnoses. At GRAND Mental Health, we take a progressive yet personal approach towards caring for those in need. From our facilities to our programs to our ongoing outreach, it's all focused on delivering a better tomorrow.



LEADING CHANGE. ADVANCING CARE.

grandmh.com • 24/7 CRISIS LINE: 800-722-3611



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeyle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com