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REP. AJAY PITTMAN (D-OKC). PHOTO FACEBOOK, REPRESENTATIVE AJAY PITTMAN

## Pittman Settlement

# Rep. Ajay Pittman *agrees to pay* *\$35,000* to settle campaign violations

Michael McNutt  
NonDoc

**State Rep. Ajay Pittman admitted to spending nearly \$18,000 for her personal use** instead of campaign purposes as intended by donors, according to a settlement agreement finalized today by the Oklahoma Ethics Commission. **To settle the complaint against her**, Pittman (D-OKC) agreed to use personal funds to reimburse her 2020 and 2022 campaign accounts \$17,848.22 and on top of that to pay a fine of \$17,141.78 to the state's General Fund. *Cont. A3*





PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

## Pittman Settlement

# Settlement *requires* personal payments to 2020 and 2022 campaign accounts

From A2

Pittman, who is seeking reelection against challenger Brittane Grant in the June 18 Democratic primary, agreed to reimburse her campaign accounts and pay a fine in three different payments over the next two years.

By Friday, she agreed to pay \$5,000 from her personal funds to her 2020 and 2022 campaign accounts. By May 31, 2025, Pittman agreed to pay \$12,000 to her 2022 campaign account. And by May 31, 2026, Pittman agreed to pay \$858.22 to her 2022 campaign account and \$17,141.78 in a civil penalty. Money from the fine, one of the larger recent fines issued by the Ethics Commission, will go to the state's General Revenue Fund.

Pittman served as chairperson and treasurer of her 2022 campaign committee. For Pittman's 2020 campaign committee, Naomi Jenkins served as treasurer while Pittman's mother, former state Rep. and State Sen. Anastasia Pittman, served as chairperson.

According to the settlement Ajay Pittman admitted to using candidate committee funds for her personal use. She made an improper withdrawal of campaign funds totaling \$17,858.52 through checking and ATM accounts for personal credit card payments.

She also admitted to inaccurately reporting

“

**Upon execution of this agreement, respondent admits her responsibility for the violations of the Oklahoma ethics rules**

**Oklahoma Ethics Commission and Ajay Pittman Settlement Agreements**

\$30,000 worth of contributions in 2020 and \$20,000 worth of contributions in 2022, according to the settlement.

“Upon execution of this agreement, respondent admits her responsibility for the violations of the Oklahoma ethics rules described below and agrees to receive education and training as specified by the Ethics Commission regarding these violations,” the settlement states.

Contacted at the State Capitol, where legislators were meeting Wednesday to wrap up their work by Friday's 5 p.m. regular session deadline, Pittman said she did not want to discuss campaign matters while fulfilling her duties as a legislator.

About 20 minutes after the publication of this article, however, Pittman emailed a statement blaming the improper use of campaign funds on “a clerical error.”

“I am pleased that our campaign has reached an agreement with the state Ethics Commission regarding a clerical error in our campaign filings. Although, it is not uncommon for legislators to hire people to manage and file reports on their behalf,” Pittman said. “I am glad that the error was brought to my attention, as it provided us with the opportunity to take swift action, including making changes in campaign staff and working closely with the Ethics Commission to ensure that our campaign is able to update previous years campaign filings

that will ensure that we remain in compliance with all state ethics rules now and in the future.”

Pittman signed her statement as “your servant leader.”

“We put this agreement in place to allow us to move forward with a renewed focus on our service to the constituents of House District 99,” she wrote. “I would like to express my gratitude to the constituents and supporters of our campaign as we prioritize our important work on behalf of the people we serve.”

## Rep. Ajay Pittman settlement avoids court action

The Oklahoma Ethics Commission's inquiry into the complaint about Pittman's use of campaign funds had been underway for months.

On April 12, the Ethics Commission directed the agency's executive director, Lee Anne Bruce Boone, to file a petition in Oklahoma County District Court concerning Case No. 2022-25 after discussing the matter in executive session during its regular monthly meeting. Names of people being investigated by the Ethics Commission for alleged campaign violations are kept confidential until some action is taken, such as the filing of a court complaint or the agreement to a settlement.

Cont. A6

## Religious Schools Options

# Senate, House have decisions to make on bills expanding religious options in schools

Bennett Brinkman  
NonDoc

As the Oklahoma Legislature negotiates the Fiscal Year 2025 budget, a number of policy bills are currently sitting on various rungs of the long legislative ladder, including two aimed at expanding religious options for kids in public schools.

The two bills, Senate Bill 36 and House Bill 1425, respectively would allow districts to hire volunteer chaplains as school counselors and define how students can receive off-campus bible instruction during school hours.

While opponents denounced previous versions of the bills as additional efforts to insert religion, namely Christianity, into public schools, supporters have said they simply expand instructional options for students if school districts choose to allow them.

“It's not really about necessarily inserting religion, but just having a firm foundation that these kids (and) staff could use,” said Rep.

Kevin West (R-Moore), who introduced the chaplain bill.

Sen. Carri Hicks (D-OKC), a former teacher who serves on the Senate Education Committee, said the bills do not address the needs of Oklahoma's education system.

“Everyone, specifically in the business community, is asking for better. We want kids to be ready to enter the workforce,” Hicks said. “These two proposals — I don't see that that is an actual solution to the challenges that we're facing in education currently.”

Both bills began the legislative process as something else entirely before they were amended to their current versions when they reached their opposite chambers.

SB 36 began as a holdover bill from last year dealing with the Open Records Act. It passed off the Senate floor in March 2023 but did not receive a hearing in the House.

This year, West granted the bill a hearing in the House General Government Committee that he chairs. But during an April 9 meeting, West substituted the bill text with language that

would authorize school districts to hire chaplains as counselors.

In its current version, SB 36 would allow school districts to hire volunteer chaplains of any faith who meet certain requirements as school counselors. If a school district chooses to hire a chaplain, the person must pass a background check. Chaplains would be prohibited from “attempting to convert someone from one religion, belief, or opinion to another,” and parents would have the option to opt their student out of receiving services from the chaplain.

The committee substitution drew concern from House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson (D-OKC) who argued that bill substitutions had to be germane to the original bill's subject. Despite the bill going from a Title 51 measure to a Title 70 proposal, West said that, as chairman, he was allowed to determine the amendment's germaneness.

“General Government (Committee) is general government, which, generally speaking, everything that we do up here

is government. So I get her point, and her point's well taken that it didn't go through the Education Committee,” West said May 15 of Munson's objection. “That wasn't really by design. It was a vehicle that was available. It was still heard by the entire body on the House floor, so everybody had a had an opportunity to weigh in on that.”

West also said he accepted some Democratic amendments to the bill after it passed out of committee, namely the clause that prohibits the chaplains from proselytizing as they perform their school counselor duties.

## SB 36's chaplain proposal pushed by national group

The addition of those amendments means SB 36 is more narrow than the Texas bill after which it was modeled. That bill passed the Texas Legislature and became law with Gov. Greg Abbot's signature June 18, 2023. It took effect in September.

Cont. A8



# Red Bird: An Oklahoma Historic All-Black Town

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



Red Bird, located in Wagoner County five miles southeast of Coweta, is one of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing. The Barber and Ruffin families settled in the Red Bird community before 1900, and other families soon followed. The settlement attained a post office in 1902, with A. A. White as the first postmaster. In 1889 E. L. Barber, one of the town's developers, organized the First Baptist Church, the largest church in Red Bird. He also became Red Bird's first justice of the peace and served as an early mayor. The Red Bird Investment Company recruited African American families from all parts

of the South to settle in the newly established town. More than six hundred people attended the grand opening at Red Bird, August 10, 1907. By 1920 Red Bird's population was 336.

In 1919 Professor J. F. Cathey, the principal of the school, planned Miller Washington High School, which flourished until 1959 when it closed for lack of students. The high school and Red Bird City Hall are both listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Sharp's Grocery/Masonic Hall and the Red Bird Drugstore, both constructed in 1910, are the two commercial properties listed in the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory. In 1938 I. W.

Lane, a former mayor of Red Bird, successfully challenged a law, similar to the grandfather clause, that made it difficult for African Americans to register to vote in Wagoner County. Like many rural towns in Oklahoma, Red Bird faced devastation and population decline brought about by falling cotton prices and by the onset of the Great Depression. In 1930 the population was 218. It rose and fell over the decades, reaching a high of 411 in 1950 but dropping to 310 in 1960 and 199 in 1980. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the town was steadily rebuilding, although the population stood at only 137 in 2010.

**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.

**A SCENE IN RED BIRD** (2012.201.B1078.0824, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

## Featured Last Week



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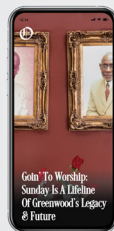
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## Pittman Settlement

# Ethics Commission approves vote to pursue a settlement in the manner

From A3

Reasons for filing a court action vary, but failure of a person being investigated to respond to the Ethics Commission's notice of allegations can be one of the triggers.

At the commission's next meeting, May 10, commissioners discussed Case No. 2022-25 in executive session and eventually voted to authorize Boone to pursue a settlement in the matter.

Pittman signed the settlement agreement May 20. Members of the Ethics Commission held a special meeting today to approve it.

Pittman, 30, is one of the youngest members of the Oklahoma Legislature. She was elected in 2018 to the House District 99 seat in northeast Oklahoma City, which was held by her mother, Anastasia Pittman, from 2006 to 2014.

During her 2018 campaign, Pittman denied that she was the person cited for shoplifting \$28 worth of "makeup and merchandise" from a Walmart store.

"We're looking more into it to make sure there was no self-checkout incident, or accident on camera and a ticket was written without me being there, all of that," Pittman said of the shoplifting charge at the time.

But signatures on the citation and on OKC Municipal Court records appeared to match Pittman's signature on her 2018 declaration of candidacy form, which was notarized. A spokesman for the Oklahoma City Police Department said at the time he could find no record of Pittman challenging the accuracy of her arrest and citation.

In 2020 Pittman defeated Susan Porter, the daughter of former state Sen. E. Melvin Porter, the first Black state senator, in the Democratic primary. Pittman ran unopposed in 2022 and now faces Grant in the June 18 Democratic primary. The winner of the primary will win the House District 99 seat, as no candidate from other parties filed.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

**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 [mcnuttt@nondoc.com](mailto:mcnuttt@nondoc.com).



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EIGHTY TWO FLAGS adorn the south lawn at the State Capitol during Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 2019. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Domestic Abuse Legislation

# Revised Domestic Abuse Survivor's Bill Advances

Keaton Ross  
Oklahoma Watch

Supporters of a proposal to give more lenient sentences to domestic abuse survivors are optimistic Gov. Kevin Stitt will sign a revised version of the bill he rejected three weeks ago.

Last week I reported that Senate Bill 1470 was in limbo after Gov. Kevin Stitt vetoed the measure, stating that it was poorly written and could allow violent offenders to cite unrelated abuse to receive a lesser sentence. The Senate overwhelmingly overrode the veto but it remained pending in the House.

The measure is now revived as Senate Bill 1835, with Senate Pro Tem Greg Treat, R-Oklahoma City, signed on as the lead sponsor. The updated bill raises the burden of proof survivors must show to receive a reduced sentence and specifies that violent offenders must prove that the defendant was a victim of abuse.

Treat told Senators on Thursday morning the updated bill language addresses concerns from Stitt and the Oklahoma District Attorney's Association.

"This clarification does not change the intent of the bill whatsoever," Treat said.

The Senate passed the bill without objection and forwarded it to the House, where it's authored by Rep. Jon Echols,

R-Oklahoma City. Lawmakers have until May 31 to wrap up business.

Colleen McCarty, executive director of the Oklahoma Applesseed Center for Law and Justice, said Stitt has pledged to sign SB 1835 if it clears the Legislature.

The Oklahoma Survivors Act is a beacon of hope for domestic abuse survivors across the state, and we eagerly await Governor Stitt's signature," McCarty said in a written statement.

The bill includes a formula for calculating the reduced sentences based on severity. For instance, someone convicted of a crime that carries a maximum sentence of 8-15 years would receive five years or less. The measure also allows abuse victims in state

custody to request a hearing for a reduction in sentence.

If enacted, the bill could spur the release of prisoners such as April Wilkens, a Tulsa woman serving a life sentence for killing her ex-fiancé and alleged abuser Terry Carlton in 1998.

Have story ideas or questions as we approach the end of the legislative session? Let me know at [Kross@Oklahomawatch.org](mailto:Kross@Oklahomawatch.org). □





SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE GREG TREAT (R-OKC) speaks with media Thursday, March 19, 2024. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

## Religious Schools Options

# Released Time Course Bill: Fate uncertain

From A3

“What came through committee was modeled after the Texas language,” West said. “In my opinion, it was way too broad, but we were at deadline week, so I wanted to get something.”

As Texas lawmakers debated the bill last year and rejected a number of amendments similar to those approved by the Oklahoma House, reporting at the time from the Texas Tribune showed the Texas bill and related bills across the country were being pushed by the National School Chaplains Association, an organization that calls itself a Texas nonprofit on its website but which lists its address on tax forms as a post office box in Norman. (The organization also goes by the moniker Mission Generation, and its registration with the Oklahoma Secretary of State’s Office lists it as a foreign not-for-profit corporation founded in Texas in 2015.)

The NSCA, which recently posted on social media about Oklahoma’s bill, is run by Rocky Malloy, a former South American missionary who has promoted using public school systems to evangelize to students.

“We realized that the largest network in any country was the school system,” Malloy said in an interview with Risen Magazine, a Christian publication.

Malloy also promoted school chaplains in another interview as a way to push back against secularism and transgender rights.

West said he worked with the NSCA and other groups to support the bill.

“I have talked to them,” West said of NSCA. “They’re not the ones that had initiated this.”

West said NSCA leaders were not thrilled with a part of the bill that requires chaplains to hold a masters-equivalent level of education.

“They probably would have preferred that part not be in, but they said it doesn’t hurt it,” West said. “It limits your your field but certainly doesn’t hurt the overall effort.”

The amendment means that some people who go through the NSCA’s \$1,500, eight-week chaplain certification course might not be eligible if the bill becomes law as is. Hicks said the fact NSCA even offers that course in the first place made her curious about the group’s motivation.

“It felt very much like a money grab,” Hicks said. “They’re trying to expand the school chaplaincy program so that they can expedite the [eight] week training course and push folks into the classroom.”

West’s bill gained notoriety recently after The Satanic Temple, an organization that promotes secular virtues and values, announced that it plans to take advantage of the program with its

own chaplains. The announcement prompted State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters, who has been supportive of the chaplain bill, to tell the group to “go to hell.”

But West said the qualifications in his bill, such as one that requires chaplains to have an “ecclesiastical endorsement,” would prevent groups like TST from placing their chaplains in schools.

West said he believes the bill is important to address growing mental health challenges for public school students and teachers.

“Teachers have a very similar level of PTSD as first responders do because these kids trust these teachers, and they’re hearing a lot of this stuff,” West said. “There’s things that [kids are] dealing with today that weren’t even really thought about. (...) These are people who are specifically trained to help deal with some of those situations.”

Overall, the numerous clauses narrowing the scope of the bill and the fact that the bill allows but does not require a school chaplain program seem to have made it easier for some Republican lawmakers to swallow.

“I’m happy that it’s got the local control piece that each individual school district would vote whether or not they would want to do this, but I do have my reservations,” said Rep. Mark McBride (R-Moore).

McBride, who chairs the House Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on Education, said his own experience with a tornado devastating his hometown of Moore in 2013 showed him that mental health care is important.

“We needed every kind of counselor we could get,” McBride said. “I just think we’ve got to be real careful in what that looks like going forward. [The Satanic Temple] is a concern of mine.”

### Treat: ‘I don’t know anything about’ SB 36

But despite the efforts made to make the bill more palatable, its fate in the Senate is unclear.

Although the bill originated in the Senate, lawmakers in that chamber have yet to vote on the chaplain language because the bill’s original content dealt with the Open Records Act. If the House amendments are accepted, SB 36 would need only a Senate floor vote to advance to the governor. If the amendments are rejected, the bill could be assigned to a conference committee for further negotiation.

Sen. Nathan Dahm (R-Broken Arrow) is the Senate author of SB 36, but he did not respond to messages seeking comment on the proposal. As senators wait to see if Dahm accepts the House amendments to the bill, some

do not seem to have given the matter much consideration owing to this year’s high-profile and contentious budget negotiations.

“I have no idea at this point,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC) when asked about the bill’s potential fate. “I don’t know anything about it.”

Senate Education Committee Chairman Adam Pugh (R-Edmond) declined to comment on SB 36, noting that the language did not advance through his committee.

Other senators also said they were not familiar with the bill’s language but said they could be supportive of it.

“I’m open to chaplains being available if school districts choose to bring them in,” said Sen. Dewayne Pemberton (R-Muskogee). A retired educator, Pemberton sits on the Senate Education Committee.

Another Senate Education Committee member, Kristen Thompson shared a similar thought.

“It gives local school districts the opportunity to make the decisions that’s best for their students,” said Thompson (R-Edmond).

### Fate of ‘released time course’ bill also uncertain

As the Senate figures out what to do with SB 36, the fate of another bill that has traveled a similar legislative path also remains unclear.

HB 1425 began in 2023 as a bill expanding teacher whistleblower protections to school support employees. After it passed the House with that language, Sen. Dave Rader (R-Tulsa) amended the bill in a Senate Education Committee meeting to reflect its current version.

As amended, HB 1425 uses language from a 1952 Supreme Court case to propose requiring districts to adopt a policy allowing public school students to attend off-campus “religious or moral instruction” courses. If the bill becomes law, it would put into statute that students can be released from classes for any subject on which they are not tested by the state to be bussed to another location up to three times per week for religious instruction. (Students could not be excused from classes on subjects like English, history, science and math.)

The bill would exempt school districts from all liability concerning the so-called “released time course,” and districts would also be prohibited from supporting the class in any way other than providing elective credit for it.

On the Senate floor, Rader said his proposal is meant to clarify that districts must comply with a provision of the Parents’ Bill of Rights that requires districts to excuse students for “religious purposes.”

“This bill will clarify the existing mandate. It

gives the framework — it gives the guidelines by which a district can set this (policy),” Rader argued. “This will help eliminate some confusion. It will help the district set those parameters. It will help the parents understand just what it is that can be asked for their child to be involved in a program like this.”

Rep. Clay Staires (R-Skiatook) is the bill’s new House author. Staires said he plans to accept the Senate amendment to his bill for the same reasons Rader articulated when he proposed the amendment.

“I think this is a great bill for Oklahoma. It’s a great bill for parents. It’s an awesome bill for public schools,” Staires said. “How many parents are going man, ‘I love my public school. I don’t want to leave my public school, but I wish that we could have some piece in this of religious education.’”

The bill also seems to have the support of a national organization. LifeWise Academy, an Ohio-based nonprofit, has advocated for Oklahoma’s bill and similar bills in other states, and the group has offered to provide transportation services and Bible classes for students.

A recent NBC News article explained the leader of LifeWise’s goal to “inject the word of God into the hearts of the next generation.”

In response, the organization said its program improves school attendance and student behavior.

Staires, a former educator, said narratives around his proposal have ignored the fact that Supreme Court precedent allows students to attend religious courses off campus during school hours. While saying attention has been paid to the proposed requirement for districts to grant students “elective credit” for completion of an approved course, Staires argued that most students leaving campus for instruction would likely be elementary students.

He noted the bill’s requirement that local school boards establish rules for what courses qualify for elective credits

“Personally, I’m wondering how would that work,” Staires said. “I wouldn’t know how because that’s up to the local school board. What I’m saying I don’t know is I don’t know how the local school boards will determine the criteria for a credit. That’s up to them. But even if they don’t give a credit, schools can still do it.”

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



(LEFT) SEN. NATHAN DAHM (R-BROKEN ARROW) sits at his desk on the Senate floor on Tuesday, April 25, 2023. PHOTO MICHAEL DUNCAN.



(RIGHT) REP. CLAY STAIRES (R-SKIATOOK) votes nay on the House floor on Tuesday, April 25, 2023. PHOTO MICHAEL DUNCAN.





SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION RYAN WALTERS (left) talks with Rep. Mark McBride, R-Moore, (right) at a meeting of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education at the State Capitol on January 10, 2024. McBride is chairman of that committee. PHOTO DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN, PUBLIC LIBRARY

PR Contract

# Ryan Walters' PR Contract *Should Be Banned*, GOP Lawmaker Says

Jennifer Palmer  
Oklahoma Watch

Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters would be barred from spending state funds on a national publicity contract with Washington, D.C.-based Vought Strategies under spending limits a Republican lawmaker said he would introduce as part of the fiscal 2025 state budget.

Their services aren't an appropriate use of public money because they prop up Walters' political aspirations, former state auditor Gary Jones, House Speaker Charles McCall, and others said.

Walters hired Vought Strategies to book media interviews and write op-eds for \$200 per hour. The initial contract is for four months with three one-year extensions possible, for a potential total of at least \$210,000.

It could be substantially more. Vought's bid for \$5,000 per month, dated Nov. 9, was made part of the contract as an attachment. Also incorporated in the contract is a more detailed pricing proposal dated Nov. 14 totaling \$5,000 per week.

The contract says the more recent version supersedes earlier versions.

The Oklahoma Department of Education paid Vought Strategies \$20,000 for September to January, before the contract went into effect, and agreed to \$30,000 for the initial contract period of March through June, public records show.

Rep. Mark McBride, R-Moore, wants to end that type of agency spending. McBride proposed spending limits tied to the fiscal 2025 budget, including one to prohibit the Education Department and Board of Education from spending state money on third-party services related to advertising, securing media interviews, public relations, or public

“

**There's a big difference between hiring a PR firm to do public relations for the state and hiring one to promote yourself on a national level.**

Okl. State Rep. Mark McBride, R-Moore

promotion.

Additional spending limits proposed by McBride, who is serving his final term in the House due to term limits and is chairman of the Appropriations and Budget Education subcommittee, relate to federal education funding.

McCall, R-Atoka, said in March he supports placing spending limits on Walters' agency.

“My view of it is you should not be spending state funds, taxpayer dollars, for personal promotion,” McCall said. “I'm sure the House, this cycle, will certainly commit to a limits bill, including the education budget, to specifically prohibit that type of expenditure going forward. But I'm certainly very surprised to hear that money is being used for that anywhere in state government.”

Even Gov. Kevin Stitt, a staunch supporter of Walters, in response to questions about the Vought contract, said all taxpayer spending should be scrutinized and that it's a fair point to ask questions of every agency that hires PR firms.

Walters has said the contract is needed to help with teacher recruitment. None of the email pitches obtained by Oklahoma Watch and FOX 25 in a joint investigation published March 13 address that topic. Vought Strategies pitched interviews about fentanyl and the southern border, drag queens in the classroom, teacher unions, library books and his appointment of Chaya Raichik, the far-right social media influencer behind Libs of TikTok, to a library advisory committee.

“There's a big difference between hiring a PR firm to do public relations for the state and hiring one to promote yourself on a national level,” McBride said.

The contract went through the state's competitive bidding process but failed to attract any competition. The purpose of competitive bidding is to prevent favoritism and corruption,

and save taxpayers money.

The Department of Education issued a request for proposals in October for national media communications. After a three-week window to submit bids (one week shorter than recommended), Vought submitted the only proposal.

The agency's only vendor qualification was 10 years of experience placing national media bookings.

Education department staff pushed for approval of Vought, even though her firm lacked the necessary insurance, emails obtained under the Oklahoma Open Records Act revealed.

“The agency is urgently in need of these services,” the department's procurement officer, Rebecca Thompson, wrote in a Feb. 12 email to the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services, known as OMES.

The agency's legal counsel, Bryan Cleveland, had objected because Vought Strategies didn't have any liability insurance. At one point, the entire contract was put on hold. Ultimately, Vought provided a certificate demonstrating a \$1 million policy for workers' compensation and employer's liability. That fell short of the state's requirements, but the agency accepted the additional risk.

The contract calls for a liability policy limit of \$5 million.

A different contract was awarded at about the same time under similar circumstances. Precision Outreach was the only bidder for a contract to produce videos and social media posts. The company, based in Texas, had already worked for the agency, producing the anti-teacher-union video shown at a State Board of Education meeting May 25 that infuriated teachers and parents in the room, some of whom walked out in protest, as well as a video that implied transgender students are a threat to school safety. The agency paid Precision

Cont. A10



## PR Contract

# Questionable connections between Walters and other political entities

From A9

Outreach \$22,500 last year for that work. On March 4, the Department awarded Precision Outreach a contract estimated at \$50,000 to create 10 social media posts and two videos per month for \$7,500 a month, according to records obtained by FOX 25 (KOKH-TV). It's for the same timeframe as Vought's contract.

### Contracts go to Political Pals

Mary Vought, president and founder of Vought Strategies, is a political pal of Walters' right-hand man and campaign manager, Matt Langston.

Also connected to Langston is Jess Fields, head of Texas-based Precision Outreach.

"I personally do think it's very questionable the association of these groups with Matt Langston," McBride said.

Langston is the agency's chief policy advisor and Walters' campaign manager.

Walters' campaign has paid Langston's company, Engage Right, a total of \$21,500 since 2022, expenditure reports show. The most recent payment was \$5,000 on March 4.

Vought and Langston have traveled in the same political circles since at least 2011, when they both worked for U.S. Senator Ron Johnson.

Vought recently joined The Heritage Foundation, the conservative think tank behind Project 2025, a framework for ultra-conservative policy changes written for the potential return of President Donald Trump. One of the main tenets of Project 2025 is eliminating the U.S. Department of Education by moving some programs to other federal agencies and shuttering others.

Until February, Vought was married to Russell Vought, a close ally of Trump who served in his administration. Russ Vought has been a key advisor to the House Freedom Caucus, a faction of hard-right Republican lawmakers. He's president of The Center for Renewing America, a think tank preparing for a second Trump term that is developing policies aligned with Christian nationalist ideas, according to Politico.

Fields, the owner of Precision Outreach, unsuccessfully ran for a House seat in Texas in 2016. Fields' senior campaign advisor was Langston. Fields' campaign paid more than \$100,000 to Axiom Strategies, where Langston was vice president, and \$9,000 to Matt Langston directly, FOX 25 reported.

### Claims of Contract Extension Were Untrue

In a March interview with FOX 25 reporter Wendy Soares, Education Department Spokesman Dan Isett said some email pitches pre-date the March 6 contract because the department had an earlier contract. They didn't. The department used its discretionary spending authority to hire Vought temporarily.

When asked about rules that bar bidders from communicating with the agency until a contract is finalized, Isett told FOX 25 he had an email from central purchasing saying the agency could legally continue working with Vought while competitive bidding was underway. OMES conducted a thorough search of its emails at the request of Oklahoma Watch and didn't locate an email that fits that description.

The Department of Education has only partially responded to Oklahoma Watch's

PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

**Pre-award communications shared with Vought Strategies during competitive bidding process.**

requests under the Oklahoma Open Records Act that would provide answers to questions about the contract. A March 13 request for contracts and payment records has been partially filled; a request filed April 26 for communications with Vought Strategies remains unfilled.

Isett did not respond to Oklahoma Watch's request to interview Langston, Vought or David Martin, the department's director of accountability, who oversaw some aspects of the contract. Vought did not return an emailed request for an interview or clarification on payments.

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



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## Church Of The Living God

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

Minister RJ Smith

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

## CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard

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

## Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

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

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

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## GTOMi

Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.  
Traveling Outreach Ministries

609 E. Zion Street  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
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Sr., Pastor  
918-810-3882

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## 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  
vernnamechurch@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.

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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

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821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021

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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"

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Tulsa, OK 74106 - (918) 835-1525

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Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

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



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

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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



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"Come And Experience The Spirit"

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



Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis,

Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.

Wednesday Services 10:00 a.m. Spirit Seniors 5:30 p.m. Support Groups 6:30 p.m. Community Dinner 7:00 p.m. Bible Study  
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Ministries: Administration, Children's Church, Children's Choir, Spirited Kids, Guest Services, Intercessors, Men's Fellowship, Outreach and much more...

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# How School Choice Is Healing *The Scars Left By Brown v. Board*



DENISHA ALLEN is senior fellow at the American Federation for Children and Founder of Black Minds Matter. PHOTO PROVIDED

## School Choice

**Denisha Allen, senior fellow at the American Federation for Children, discusses the impact of *Brown v. Board* and the benefits of school choice for Black students.**

## *Black Minds Matter*

Denisha Allen  
Word In Black

This month marked the 70th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board* decision, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled school segregation as unconstitutional. It is no surprise we've yet to achieve the full vision of *Brown v. Board*. However, scars borne from *Brown* are healing thanks to education freedom.

As a longtime advocate for school choice, I've seen firsthand the lingering impact of well-intended but flawed policies. *Brown's* mandate for desegregation stripped away much of the Black leadership in our schools. Thousands of Black teachers and administrators who were pillars in their communities found themselves without classrooms or were demoted. This loss was profound, affecting more than just those educators; it disrupted the mentorship and representation that is critical for young Black students.

Today, there have been a number of research studies that speak to the benefits of Black teachers for Black students.

Growing up, I saw the impacts of having Black leadership in my community. Teachers who looked like me, who could share in my experiences and understand my challenges, were rare.

I struggled in my traditional public school. But then I went from making D's and F's to A's and B's because of a Black-founded private school I was able to attend on a school choice scholarship.

This isn't just my story, but a common thread in the narratives of many Black families, where schools often feel punitive rather than like places of learning and growth. This is why I am so passionate about school choice today. It's more than just a policy preference—it's a lifeline. It's about putting the power back into the hands of parents and communities to choose schools that not only offer high academic standards but also embrace and reflect our cultural heritage. School choice is helping us rebuild what was lost over decades.

In 2020 I founded Black Minds Matter, where we maintain the only directory of Black founded schools in the country. To date we have more than 500 schools in the directory led by Black school leaders who are changing students' lives.

I'm proud to be an advocate of a growing movement of Black school founders who are rising up and creating spaces where our children are not just seen and heard, but where they thrive. We're not just filling gaps; we're constructing new pathways of success

Cont. A13

## Must Reads

### **What Books Are Must-Reads to Keep Your Black Card?**

*Books allow us to expand our perception and conception of what's possible for us, for our people, and for humanity*

Staff  
Houston Defender

During our sojourn in these (dis) United States of America, there have been two things individuals and institutions committed to the myth of white supremacy have consistently fought tooth and nail to block us from accessing: voting rights and books.

Each allows us to voice what's most important to us and those we love. Both our voting rights and books, especially books, allow us to develop our voice and our vision to see beyond the "right now" and into the "not yet."

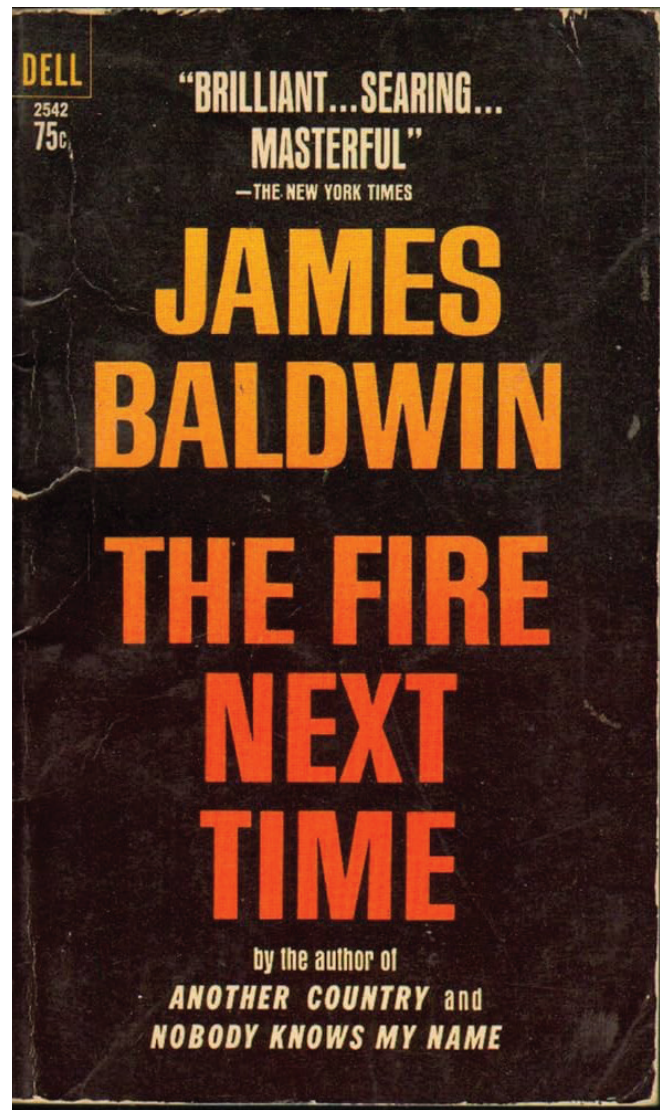
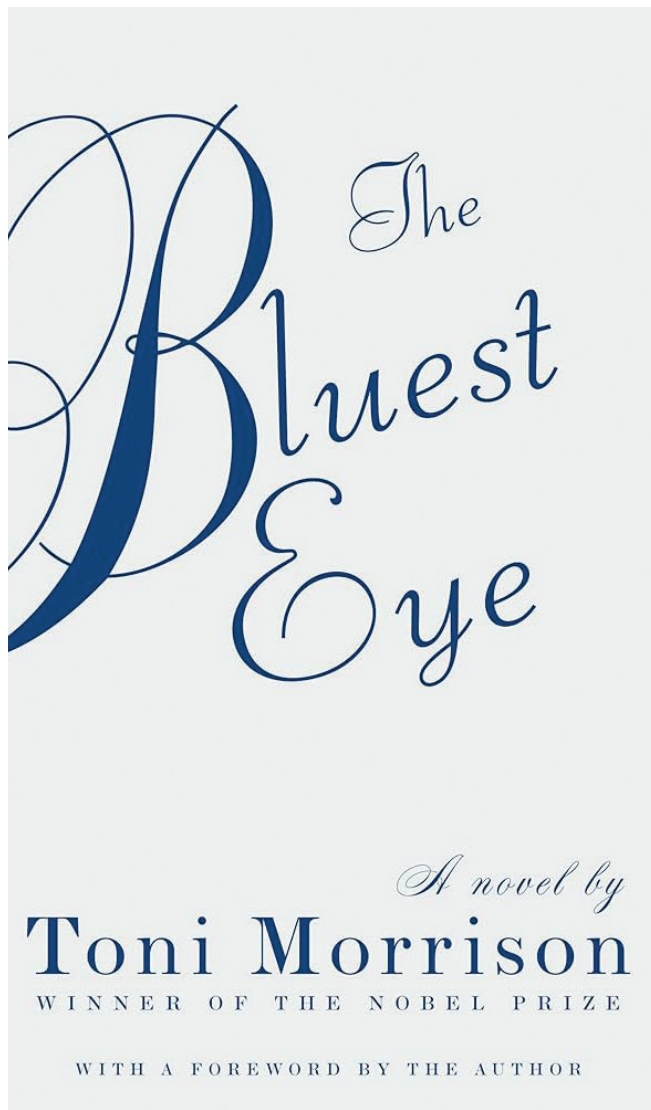
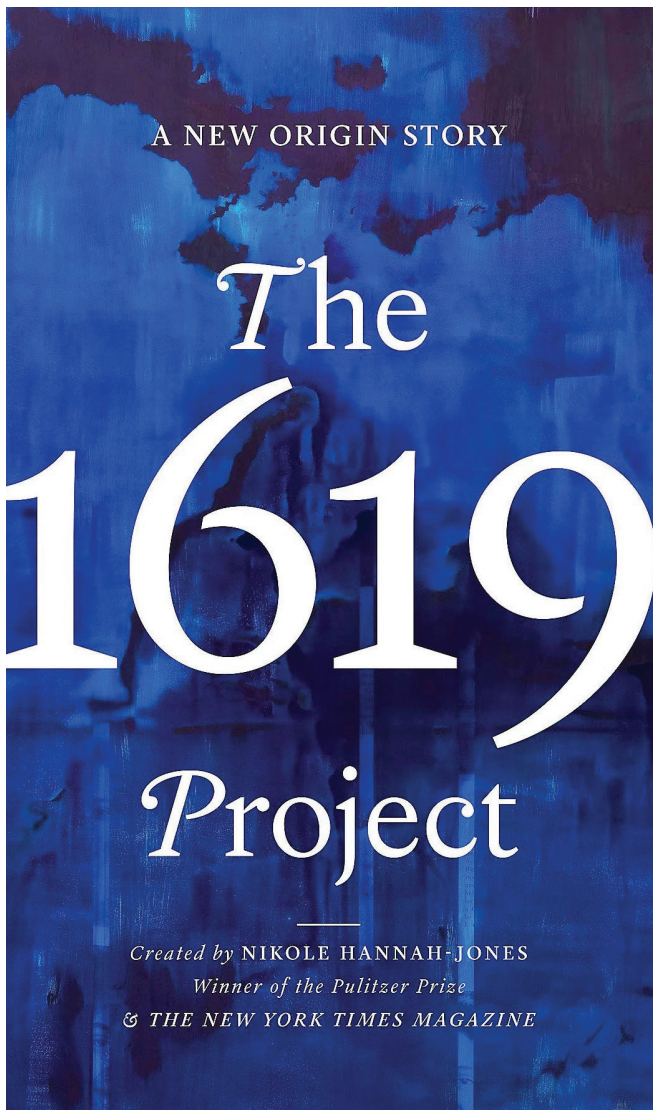
Books allow us to travel the world and the multiverse, expanding our perception and conception of what's possible for us, for our people, and for humanity.

That said, certain books are must-reads

Cont. A13



Must Reads



# Baldwin, Morrison, Hurston, Haley & more... All Are Must-Reads

From A12

for every Black person. Failure to read them can result in your Black Card being revoked because they provide so much information and/or inspiration that we cannot chance moving correctly in this world without what those reads offer.

Here are books Defender readers say need to be on every Black person's list. If you have any to add, please send us those titles (with author names).

Let's read!

### Jawanza Clark

- "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" by Alex Haley and Malcolm X
- "The Fire Next Time" by James Baldwin
- "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou
- Anything by Toni Morrison—preferably "The Bluest Eye" and "Beloved"

### Anthony Love

- "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos of Community?" by MLK Jr.
- "Autobiography of Malcolm X" by Alex Haley and Malcolm X
- "The Fire Next Time" by James Baldwin
- "Dust Tracks on a Road" by Zora Neale Hurston
- Any Toni Morrison book

### Kwabena Nkromo

- "The Destruction of Black Civilization" by Chancellor Williams
- "The Souls of Black Folks" by W.E.B.

### DuBois

- "Two Thousand Seasons" by Ayi Kwei Armah
- "Segu" by Maryse Conde

### Ingrid Traylor Williams

- "Roots" by Alex Haley
- "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" by Alex Haley and Malcolm X
- Anything by Toni Morrison or J. California Cooper
- "The 1619 Project" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. DuBois

### Mshinda Nyofu

- "Introduction to Black Studies" by Dr. Maulana Karenga
- "Autobiography of Malcolm X" by Alex Haley and Malcolm X
- "Stokely Speaks" by Stokely Carmichael & Charles V. Hamilton

### Denise Bates

- All of the above and...
- "The Warmth of Other Suns" by Isabel Wilkerson
- "How the Word Is Passed" by Clint Smith
- "The Bluest Eye," "Jazz," "Song of Solomon," etc. by Toni Morrison
- "The 1619 Project" by Nikole Hannah Jones

### Zuberi Robert Woods

- "Message to the People." By Marcus Garvey

### Vanessa Latrice

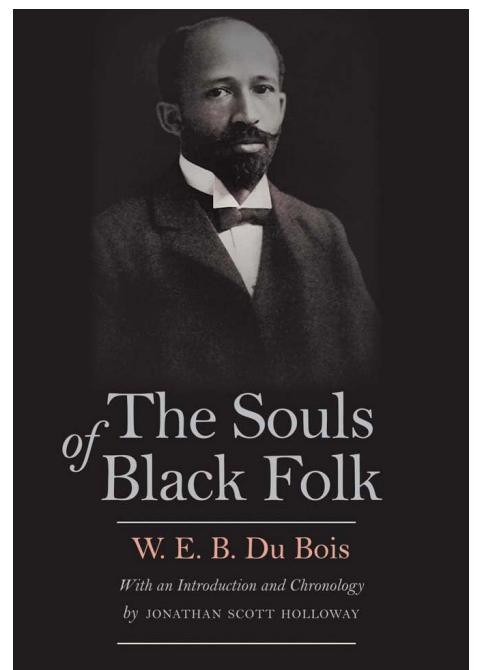
- "Miseducation of the Negro" by Carter G Woodson

### Marvin Ferguson

- "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. DuBois

### Aswad Walker

- "The Philosophies and Opinions of Marcus Garvey," edited by Amy Jacques Garvey
- "Parable of the Sower" by Octavia Butler
- "Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church" by Albert B. Cleage Jr.
- "Futureland" by Walter Mosley
- "Song of Solomon" by Toni Morrison
- "The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality" by Cheikh Anta Diop
- "Assata: An Autobiography" by Assata Shakur
- "Reclaiming Stolen Earth: An Africana Ecotheology" by Jawanza Eric Clark
- "The Debt" by Randall Robinson
- "The Reckoning" by Randall Robinson
- "The Warmth of Other Suns" by Isabel Wilkerson
- "Introduction to African Civilizations" by John G. Jackson
- "The Easy Rawlins Series" by Walter Mosley
- "Of Water and the Spirit" by Malidoma Somé
- "The Healing Wisdom of Africa" by Malidoma Somé
- "My Glorious Brothers" by Howard Fast
- "Zealot" by Reza Aslan
- "Tribes" by Joel Kotkin
- "White Rage" by Carol Anderson



### School Choice

# School choice has given Black education entrepreneurs the opportunity to lead by example again

From A12

that resonate with our community's needs and aspirations. Every day, I witness talented educators determined to make a difference. I am inspired by the resilience of our communities and the drive that our children deserve the best.

School choice has given Black education entrepreneurs the opportunity to lead by example again—to show that schools can be more than just places of learning. They can be safe havens that celebrate our identity and empower our children. In these schools, our students see leaders who look like them, who share their experiences and who champion their success. This representation matters. It rebuilds the trust that was eroded by years of policies

that, though well-meaning, often missed the mark on what our children need to succeed.

The rise of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and the expansion of charter schools, homeschooling and online learning have all contributed to a broader and more accessible educational landscape. These developments are crucial, offering quality education to students who might otherwise lack access. For instance, the Black Mothers' Forum in Arizona is using ESAs to establish microschools, helping to break cycles of generational poverty and combat the school-to-prison pipeline.

As we move into 2024, the momentum of school choice is only increasing. It's creating fertile ground for further innovation in education.

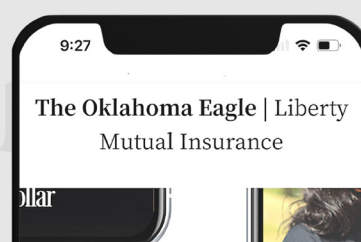
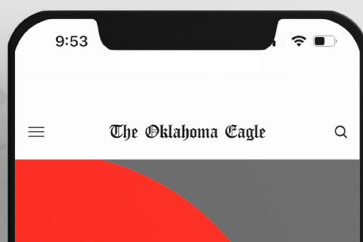
In reflecting on Brown v. Board, I acknowledge the doors it opened, but I also see the paths it unintentionally closed. But, today, thanks to school choice, we are not just choosing schools—Black educators are creating schools where Black students have a future to become leaders, innovators and changemakers.

This isn't just about education; it's about empowerment. It's about reclaiming our narrative and ensuring that our children have the tools to write their own success stories. As we continue to build and support schools that serve our communities, we honor the true spirit of what Brown v. Board aimed to achieve—a truly equitable and vibrant educational landscape for all. □

The Oklahoma Eagle

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MARRISA BARRETT AND ALBERT LEE celebrate their union on May 11 in a joyous ceremony at The Clare Michael. PHOTO PROVIDED

## *Albert Lee & MARRISA BARRETT* **Wedding**

BY GARY LEE

**M**arrisa Barrett and Albert Lee were married on May 11 in a joyous ceremony at The Clare Michael, a reception space, on Admiral in Tulsa. The bride wore a stunning pink gown, and the groom donned a classic tuxedo for the occasion.

The bride, a native of Alva, Oklahoma, attended Alba High School and Northwestern Oklahoma State University. She is a retail manager in Tulsa. The groom, a Tulsa native, is a 1985 Booker T. Washington High School graduate and attended the University of Iowa. He is an executive chef who has worked in hospitality in Tulsa and elsewhere.

Lee's sister, Erma Lee, officiated the ceremony before around 90 guests, including family and close friends of the bride and groom.

"Today is the beginning of a new life together for you," Erma Lee told the couple.

"It marks the commencement of new relationships with your families, your friends, and indeed to each other. You have invited these special guests to share in one of life's greatest moments as they recognize the worth and beauty of your love and add their best wishes

to the words that shall unite you today as husband and wife.

God knew your needs when He brought you together. He knew exactly what you needed to make you complete. And now, He wants you to commit yourselves to each other as the one He has chosen to complete you."

Ira Hill III, Marrisa's grandson, was the ring bearer. The bridesmaids were: Madison Hofen, Lacy Louthan and Jana Parker. The groomsmen were: Stephon Parsons and Andrew Haas.

A reception followed, featuring hors d'oeuvres, canapes, salmon, vegetable, and cheese platters, and, of course, wedding cake.

During the reception, Albert's best man and brother, Tony Lee, offered a toast.

"Albert, as the youngest of eleven, had the honor and privilege to be the proud recipient of hand-me-downs – think Pay-Less sneakers previously worn by five brothers and maybe a couple of sisters with large feet who also only had one pair of shoes," Tony shared.

"Albert grew up, went to college, became a chef, and made the life he has for himself and now Marissa.

Albert values community despite the challenges we all know too well, lasting relationships, and fashion.

"In high school, Albert worked for a local newspaper, shuffling horoscopes around, mostly Tuesdays Taurus became Wednesdays Sagittarius and in true Albert fashion (no pun intended), always managing to make an impression.

"He became a chef and ultimately honed his craft by working through some of the best establishments in Tulsa and blessing his family with his amazing cooking skills.

"Marissa, you look exquisite today. I think we can all agree that Albert is one lucky guy. You have brought so much to Albert's life. Since meeting you, he has broadened his horizons and embraced greater adventure. Thank you for bringing joy and stability.

I can see how incredibly happy you've made my brother and just how much you have helped Albert be the best version of himself."

Albert and Marissa Lee will reside in Tulsa.





RAYELLA BOOTON-BROWN was an educator who taught in Colorado, New York, and internationally in Taiwan. PHOTO PROVIDED

## Rayella Booton-Brown passes

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

### Noted Educator Taught Around The World

Rayella Booton-Brown (Feb. 21, 1933 – April 24, 2024) departed this earth passing her legacy onto her children and countless family and friends.

Booton-Brown is the daughter of Ray Andre Booton and Coella Delley Booton of Muskogee, Okla. After the passing of her father when she was six years old, her mother remarried to Dr. Cosby E. Ford.

She began her schooling in Dallas, Texas, where she lived with an aunt and uncle for a period of time before returning to Muskogee. She graduated from Muskogee Manual Training High School in 1951.

The future educator continued her studies at the first institution of higher learning for African Americans founded by Booker T. Washington, Tuskegee Institute. While at Tuskegee, she married William L. Brown, an officer in the Air

Force, of Tampa, Fla., in 1952.

Together, they had four children: one daughter, Tanya (Marjani Dele), and three sons, Derek, Brandi, and William.

Even though she studied piano for many years, Booton-Brown found the field of nursing to be where she wanted to make a difference. Upon completing her studies with a bachelor's degree of science in nursing at Tuskegee, she moved east to attend Boston University, where she earned a master's degree in nursing.

Because she loved and wanted to care for people, she naturally chose a profession that would take her around the country and the world offering her care and support to others.

After completing her studies in Boston, she began teaching nursing at Syracuse University. She later taught science at an American school in Taipei, Taiwan.

In addition to her education and familial pursuits, she was a civil rights activist. In Muskogee, she stood up for elderly patients in a nursing home. In doing so, she won a legal case that led to improved conditions for the patients.

She also was an advocate for herself when she was faced with discrimination at a community college, where she served as dean of nursing and where she won her case there, too.

In 2001, she formed a nonprofit organization, Casa Agape Ministries, to serve people in her community of Tulsa, Okla.

After retiring, Booton-Brown, a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, moved to Marlboro, N.Y., to live with her son, William, and his wife, Susan. She passed away living in New York.

She leaves behind four children, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Her homegoing services, provided by House of Winn-Muskogee, were held at Grace Episcopal Church, 218 N. 6th St., in Muskogee, Okla., on May 18. Rev. Dr. Stephen Wiley, pastor of Praise Center Family Church, officiated. Internment was at Booker T. Washington Cemetery in Muskogee.

For more information, visit <https://www.houseofwinn.com/obituary/rayella-booton-brown>

## The District Could Become The State's First National Monument

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle

On May 15, Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) presented his bill, S. 3543, to establish a Black Wall Street National Monument in the Historic Greenwood District in Tulsa before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The bill is coauthored by Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.).

The bill is in response to where hundreds of lives were lost, livelihoods were uprooted, and property destroyed in one of the nation's most notorious race conflagrations, the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

"North Tulsa remains a place of light and hope as the community continues to show their strength to overcome adversity and work toward reconciliation, which is something our nation should never forget. I am grateful for the tireless efforts of so many in North Tulsa and in our state to make sure our children today and the generations yet unborn remember those lost, understand the stain of racism, and learn the powerful story of rebuilding and resilience," said Lankford.

"Over 100 years ago, a violent mob destroyed the thriving Black neighborhood of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in one of the worst incidents of racial violence in our history," said Booker.

"When I visited Tulsa in 2019, I felt pain and anguish for the hundreds of unarmed men, women,

and children who were murdered, the more than 1,250 homes that burned, and for the thousands of victims who survived this act of hatred. Even the darkest chapters of American history deserve to be told. It's imperative that we act now to ensure that future generations remember Greenwood's heartbreaking history and its legacy of unrelenting resilience. Establishing a national monument here will forever enshrine this community's legacy of sorrow, strength, and hope into the fabric of America's story."

Lankford and Booker initially introduced the legislation in the Senate in December 2023. Prior to this announcement, both were champions for the designation of the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park as an official member of the African American Civil Rights Network (AACRN) and the authorization by the National Park Service of the Greenwood Historic District as part of the National Historic Registry.

In a speech in 2016, Lankford was the first to recognize the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre in Congress. In that year, it was the 95th anniversary of the race massacre, which occurred on May 31 and June 1 in 1921.

On the 95th anniversary of the massacre in his remarks, he ended his speech "by challenging America to remember the riot; recognize there is more work to be done; respect those who survived and hope revive the community; and to continue to pursue race reconciliation."



SEN. CORY BOOKER (D-N.J.) is co-author with Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) of Senate Bill 3543 to establish the Historic Greenwood area, site of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, as a national monument. PHOTO PROVIDED

## Tulsa Chautauqua Recognizes 60th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act

Dr. Jerry Goodwin  
The Oklahoma Eagle



CHAUTAUQUA performers are (l-r) Rebecca Marks-Jimerson (Coretta Scott King), Dr. Jim Armstead (Thurgood Marshall), Doug Mishler (Earl Warren), Vanessa Adams-Harris (Rosa Parks), and Leslie Goddard (Lady Bird Johnson). PHOTO PROVIDED

Tulsa Chautauqua has announced its June program honoring the six-decade anniversary of the Civil Rights Act signed by Pres. Lyndon Johnson. The title of the week-long performances is "Lift Every Voice: 60 Years Since the Civil Rights Act."

The series of performances has been scheduled for June 4 – 8. The free shows will be held at the Tulsa Historical Society and Museum, 2445 S. Peoria Ave.

Each day will include two workshops (12 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.) and an evening performance (7 p.m.). The featured artists and their historical figures are Dr. Jim Armstead (Thurgood Marshall), Leslie Goddard (Lady Bird Johnson), Vanessa Adams-Harris (Rosa Parks), Rebecca Marks-Jimerson (Coretta Scott King), and Doug Mishler (Earl Warren).

The week schedule is as follows:

- Tues., June 4 – First workshop, Vanessa Adams-Harris; second workshop, Rebecca Marks-Jimerson; and evening performance, Earl Warren
- Wed, June 5 – Leslie Goddard, Doug Mishler, and Vanessa Adams-Harris
- Thur., June 6 – Jim Armstead, Vanessa Adams-Harris, and Leslie Goddard
- Fri., June 7 – Rebecca Marks-Jimerson, Leslie Goddard, and Jim Armstead
- Sat., June 8 – Doug Mishler, Jim Armstead, and Rebecca Marks-Jimerson

## Events

MAY 25 - JUN. 1

The 4th Annual Black Wall Street Legacy Festival 2024 will be held on Greenwood. Grammy Award-winning artist Anthony Hamilton will be the headliner entertainment on June 1. For more information, visit <https://www.blackwallstreetlegacyfest.com/>

MAY 31 - OCT. 26

The Original Black Wall Street Merchant Marketplace is open in the Greenwood Business District, 122 N. Greenwood Ave., on Saturdays from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. In addition to vendors, live music, line dancing classes, yoga classes, sound body and soul meditation and sound bath sessions, and free health care screenings will be offered. For more information, visit [www.theoriginalbwsmarketplace.com](http://www.theoriginalbwsmarketplace.com) or send an email to [hello@tulsacountyliving.com](mailto:hello@tulsacountyliving.com)

May 31 – Aug. 14

Oasis Fresh Market, 1725 N. Peoria Ave., is sponsoring free breakfast and lunch for kids and teenagers under 18 years old from Mon.-Fri. during the summer. Breakfast will be served from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. and lunch will be available from 12 p.m. – 2 p.m. Extracurricular activities will be offered to the kids and teenagers. For more information, call (918) 935-2092 or send an email to [storemanager@oasisfreshmarket.net](mailto:storemanager@oasisfreshmarket.net).

JUNE 1 - JULY 13

Bristow Train and Depot and Museum, 1 Railroad Pl., 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. For more information, visit [www.okhumanities.org](http://www.okhumanities.org) or call (918) 367-9335.

JUNE 1

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. For more information, contact [larissa.mcneil@tulsalibrary.org](mailto:larissa.mcneil@tulsalibrary.org).

JUNE 2

OmaleyB and other artists will be performing at "Soulful Sounds on Greenwood: A Porch Performance" at the Mabel B. Little Heritage House at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. For more information, contact (918) 596-1020 or visit [www.greenwoodculturalcenter.com](http://www.greenwoodculturalcenter.com).

JUNE 3 - 28

Young Entrepreneur Summer Program will be sponsored by the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 8:30a.m. – 4:30 p.m. The program combines literacy, art, and entrepreneurship providing an avenue for children to meet Black authors, explore new books, and create their own book. Students are required to have completed K-5 grade. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. For more information, contact (918) 596-1020 or [mhburdex@greenwoodculturalcenter.com](mailto:mhburdex@greenwoodculturalcenter.com).

JUNE 7

T. E. G. International Jazz Fest presented by Spirit Bank at Guthrie Green, 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. The free public event is sponsored by the Taylor Entertainment Group.

JUNE 8

Omega Psi Phi Xi Omega Chapter is sponsoring the Dr. Nathaniel Goodman 18th Annual Scholarship Tournament at Page Belcher Golf Course, 6666 S. Union Ave. An additional sponsor is Uplifting Bridge Builders Foundation, Inc. For more information, contact (918) 289-9247 or [www.tulsaques1923.com](http://www.tulsaques1923.com).

JUNE 8

Thirteenth Annual Nubian Heritage Arts Village Drum Festival will be held at Reed Community Center, 210 E. Latimer Pl., 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. This year's theme is "Like the Phoenix Rising... The Return of the Village Drum Festival – 2024." Vendors, arts and crafts, and entertainment will be provided. Admission is free. For more information, contact (918) 227-9946.





# TULSA MAYFEST

THE 51ST ANNUAL TULSA MAYFEST FESTIVAL

# 2024



# TULSA MAYFEST

Sam Levrault  
The Oklahoma Eagle

The 51st annual Tulsa Mayfest Festival, hosted by The University of Tulsa, welcomed artists of different mediums to Tulsa to present their work to the local community. Musicians such as Majeste Pearson (left) Brianna (below) welcomed audience to their sets as they created the soundtrack for wandering vendors tents including Black Moon Tulsa (right), a collective of Black Artists in the Tulsa area.



IN CLOCKWISE ORDER STARTING ABOVE  
"PLAY ME, TULSA", a public piano project returned to Tulsa Mayfest in 2024. Select public school departments designed and painted an upright piano debuted to the public during the festival. After Mayfest, each piano is relocated to an outdoor public space available for the community to enjoy.

Local author **CHARITY BARTON** poses with her children's book, "We Did That!" The book focuses on Black History in the form of an activity book for kids.

**STEPH SIMON** performed on the Main Stage at Guthrie Green. A local rapper, Simon is known for his work with the Fire in Little Africa project as well as TMC records.

**DAMION SHADE**, a multi-genre Tulsa artist plays for audiences at the 101 Garden on the Roark Stage.

ALL PHOTOS **SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA**





# TULSA MAYFEST

BRANJAE JACKSON performs as part of COUNT TUTU at Tulsa Mayfest on May 10, 2024.  
PHOTOS SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA



CLOCKWISE STARTING ABOVE  
TONY MASON took the stage at Guthrie Green during the Tulsa Mayfest 2024.

Families perused the tents and would often chat with artists about the work and shops, including CHARLES CALEB BURGESS, as shown.

CASII STEPHAN at Tulsa Mayfest on May 12, 2024.

GUTHRIE GREEN hosted one of various stages hosted at Tulsa Mayfest in the Tulsa Arts District.

BRIANA performs at Tulsa Mayfest on May 11, 2024.

ALL PHOTOS SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA







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