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North Tulsa Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Faces Challenges

John Neal, The Oklahoma Eagle

According to U.S. census tract estimates cited in the Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan, North Tulsa is losing Black residents by the thousands.

PHOTO THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE
The Oklahoma Eagle reported statistics and data from the Kirkpatrick Heights / Greenwood Master Plan, highlighting concerns of gentrification, declining population, proportional representation, and the availability of affordable housing. As reported by The Oklahoma Eagle, the longstanding issues have been marginally addressed by planners, lacking the detail required to settle concerns.

Revitalization

Will The Plan Accelerate Gentrification?

This is the second in a series of three articles examining the development and implementation of the Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan. According to U.S. census tract estimates cited in the Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan, north Tulsa is losing Black residents by the thousands.

Cont. A5, Revitalization

Ernie Fields: Trombonist, pianist, arranger, bandleader

By MICHAEL LAPRARIE, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



A "territory band" leader, Ernest Lawrence "Ernie" Fields made his mark on a touring circuit that stretched between Kansas City, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Dallas in the 1930s and 1940s. Born in Nacogdoches, Texas, on August 28, 1904, and raised in Taft, Oklahoma, he settled in Tulsa after graduating in 1924 from the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He soon began leading The Royal Entertainers, which became one of Tulsa's most popular dance orchestras during the 1920s. Fields initially refused offers to join other bands, believing that touring was an unacceptable lifestyle. Ironically, the Great Depression forced him to take his own band on the road in the early 1930s.

The Ernie Fields Orchestra became one of the most popular groups among African Americans

in the Southwest. Playing exciting big band jazz at nightclubs and open-air pavilions, the band eventually caught the attention of record producer John Hammond. Under his guidance Fields went to New York in 1939 and recorded "T-Town Blues" for Vocalion, a nationally distributed record label. With this minor hit under his belt he began nationwide tours, culminating in a 1942 engagement in Harlem's legendary Savoy Ballroom.

World War II interrupted the band's initial success. Fields began entertaining troops, playing for more than one hundred camp shows and twelve overseas broadcasts. After the war he kept a scaled-down version of the band together and continued to feature popular Oklahoma City singer Melvin Moore. Although the band regularly packed venues

with dancers and teenagers in the Southwest, nationwide success seemed elusive. In 1959 Fields finally earned widespread recognition. His mambo-style version of "In The Mood" shot into the top ten on the Billboard pop charts, and after thirty years in the music business Ernie Fields had a gold record.

He retired from the music business in the late 1960s, settling permanently in Tulsa and residing there until his death on May 11, 1997. In 1989 he was inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame. His daughter Carmen pursued a successful career in broadcast journalism. Ernie Fields, Jr., followed his father's footsteps into music business and worked as a saxophonist, producer, and talent agent at the end of the twentieth century.

ERNIE FIELDS Ernie Fields, Jr. Collection, OHS

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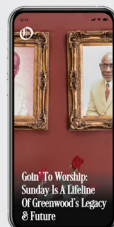
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North Tulsa Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Faces Challenges

John Neal, The Oklahoma Eagle

Planners are proposing 750-1000 residential units in the first ten years. Mixed-use, townhomes, and apartments comprise most planned residential units. The concept plan depicts 90 percent of these units as in the 900-1200 square foot range. Residential units this size in Tulsa easily command monthly rents of \$1,000 or more

PHOTO THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

The Oklahoma Eagle reported statistics and data from the Kirkpatrick Heights / Greenwood Master Plan, highlighting concerns of gentrification, declining population, proportional representation, and the availability of affordable housing. As reported by The Oklahoma Eagle, the longstanding issues have been marginally addressed by planners, lacking the detail required to settle concerns.

Revitalization

For Tulsans, the rapidly changing geographic composition of North Tulsa is a significant concern

From A3

The vital objectives of the Master Plan are to stem that outflow, and stabilize and revitalize north Tulsa neighborhoods. The Tulsa Development Authority (TDA), through its PartnerTulsa staff, is finalizing a legal process to begin implementing the plan. And yet, enforcing the master plan faces substantive obstacles.

After reviewing concerns expressed by north Tulsans in the stakeholder input process of the development of the Master Plan and from information in the Plan's documents, The Oklahoma Eagle will detail those obstacles in this article.

The rapidly changing geographic composition of north Tulsa is at the center of the obstacles. The northside is undergoing shifting populations, demographic changes, and potential market difficulties.

Against that background, the Master Plan could accelerate gentrification in north Tulsa and fall short of providing sufficient affordable housing in the plan's study area. As the revitalization plan points out, gentrification and affordable housing are central concerns for north Tulsans.

Additionally, twenty one months after the Plan's adoption, the 70 acres pinpointed for development - involving three sites in north Tulsa - have seen no change. Senior PartnerTulsa spokesperson

“I was concerned at first because the timeline was too spread out.”

Erran Persley, City of Tulsa's new Economic Development Officer

Jonathon Butler told The Oklahoma Eagle staff in an interview that “much work is going on behind the scenes.” However, plan documents reflect some important early timeline milestones have been missed. And the project implementation has not been as rapid as some north Tulsa stakeholders had hoped.

The Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan was formally adopted in December 2022. Adoption was preceded by a sixteen-month planning process that drew heavy participation from hundreds of north Tulsans.

In an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle, Erran Persley, City of Tulsa's new Economic Development Officer, said that the city is seeking to move up the timeline for bringing the Master Plan into fruition.

“I was concerned at first because the timeline was too spread out,” Persley said.

He added that he recently discussed the Kirkpatrick Heights project with Garry Clark, the new CEO of PartnerTulsa, and Clark pledged to move up the pace of the project. Persley said Clark seeks to have the CDC for the project legally structured and ready to go by late November 2024.

“And I'm excited about the work the whole (Kirkpatrick Heights) team has done,” Persley added.

The Master Plan designates improvements

North Tulsa Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Is Underway

Sep. 6, 2024

The City of Tulsa in late July awarded \$2 million to spur the development of new housing, retail, and office space in north Tulsa.

[- Read More](#)

to three sites between Kirkpatrick Heights and MLK Jr. Boulevard, north of I-244. Potentially challenging is the development of 45 acres dubbed the Core, in which the plan intends “to rebuild a vibrant and resilient mixed-use community.”

Gentrification concerns

North Tulsa and the smaller master plan “study area” have seen steady population outflow – the Master Plan and the “Existing Conditions Report” appendix document this trend.

During 2010-2020, while the City of Tulsa had a modest population growth, north Tulsa's population declined by five percent, and the study area north of Highway I-244, where the improvements are planned, decreased by approximately eight percent.

Cont. A6, Revitalization

Voter List

State Officials Tout Voter List Maintenance Efforts

Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

Oklahoma has removed more than 450,000 voters from its rolls since January 2021. Gov. Kevin Stitt declared in a statement last week.

“The State Election Board and the Secretary of State's office continue to go above and beyond in their responsibility to ensure only eligible Oklahomans can vote in our election,” Stitt said in the Sept. 18 statement. “Their progress reassures me that we will continue to lead the nation in election integrity efforts.”

State law requires election officials to

remove voters if they die, are convicted of a felony, register to vote in another state or are inactive over several years. This routine maintenance keeps voter rolls from becoming bloated and prevents fraud.

“Voter fraud is exceptionally rare in Oklahoma and not a major issue here,” State Election Board Secretary Paul Ziriach told Oklahoma Watch in 2019. “But for someone who wanted to commit fraud, the less updated your voter records are, the easier it is to do that.”

Perhaps the most controversial provision is the inactivity clause. If a registered voter does not participate in four consecutive general election cycles, the state sends them an

address confirmation notice. If the voter does not respond within 60 days or the notice is returned undeliverable, the state cancels their voter registration.

Some voter advocacy groups have criticized this practice as “use it or lose it” voter registration that disproportionately impacts minority groups. But the state defends it as a useful practice that helps keep its voter lists up to date as possible.

Election officials use a variety of sources, including monthly reports from the Oklahoma State Department of Health and county courts, to keep its lists up to date. Cross-checking voter lists in other states can help identify duplicate registrations.

Because states are tasked with running their own elections, there's no federal voter database. There have been efforts to create an interstate voter database, most notably the Electronic Registration Information Center. Oklahoma passed a bill in 2021 authorizing the state to join ERIC, but reversed course in 2023 after Republicans nationwide soured on the organization's leadership.

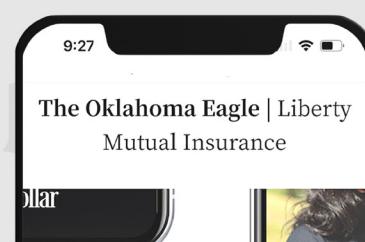
Oklahoma's voter registration deadline is fast approaching on Oct. 11. To register to vote or confirm your registration status, visit the OK Voter Portal.

Have thoughts, questions or story ideas? Let me know at Kross@Oklahomawatch.org.

The Oklahoma Eagle

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Revitalization

From racial gentrification to affordable house, Tulsa's Black population seeks solutions

From A5

Moreover, the report states, "There are an estimated 11,000 fewer Black people living in the broader north Tulsa area in 2020 compared to 2010." Similarly, in study area census tracts just north of the highway, there was a decrease "of nearly 900 Black individuals" in a much smaller geographic area.

A principal concern expressed by study participants was racial and economic gentrification in northside neighborhoods. The Existing Conditions Report, citing statistics for the same decade, reflects a proportional decrease in the north Tulsa Black population from 41% to 34% and in the study area north of downtown from 78% to 58%.

Concurrently, the white population percentage increased in all these areas. The Master Plan repeatedly states that racial and economic gentrification is a "legitimate concern" of north Tulsans.

The Master Plan aspires to use the mixed-use district to draw some Black people back into north Tulsa. However, because the downtown population immediately adjacent to the Core development tract is growing at a 25% clip, a more likely scenario is a population expansion from downtown to the Core. That downtown tract was 82% white in 2020, with much higher incomes.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing was another principal concern of north Tulsans participating in the planning process. The plan describes the residential units as "a variety of low to medium-density housing types that are not currently being developed in north Tulsa."

The Master Plan reports that 1,765 housing units are in the study area, with a median home price of approximately \$159,000. The March 2023 Tulsa Citywide Housing Assessment White Paper puts the median home price in the broader north Tulsa community at \$110,000.

The same Assessment report states that the "safe and decent rent minimum" for multi-family units in Tulsa is \$987. But lower rents are typical in north Tulsa. Private market sources report that the average rent in central north Tulsa is around \$750. This information is necessary



The Oklahoma Eagle reported statistics and data from the Kirkpatrick Heights / Greenwood Master Plan, highlighting concerns of gentrification, declining population, proportional representation, and the availability of affordable housing. As reported by The Oklahoma Eagle, the longstanding issues have been marginally addressed by planners, lacking the detail required to settle concerns.

because the Master Plan does not estimate the rent or purchase prices of the residential units. The planners are proposing 750-1000 residential units in the first ten years. Mixed-use, townhomes, and apartments comprise most planned residential units. The concept plan depicts 90 percent of these units as in the 900-1200 square foot range. Residential units this size in Tulsa easily command monthly rents of \$1,000 or more.

In an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle, Tulsa mayoral candidate Monroe Nichols said he believes that a certain level of gentrification is to be expected to occur in the development of the Kirkpatrick Heights/Greenwood project.

"There is probably a slight argument for some level of gentrification, right?," he said. "But the question is, what is the broader plan for affordable housing? Because Kirkpatrick house is fine. What are we doing in addition to that? I think saying there's no silver bullet project that's going to solve every problem."

Income and housing

Housing cost information must also be coupled with household incomes to determine the affordability of the proposed housing stock in the new mixed-use district. The median income in the study area is \$28,574, or about 60% of the Tulsa citywide average.

Affordability is federally defined as housing that costs no more

than 30% of household income, plus utilities or roughly 33% for households at or below the median household income.

Thus, for housing to be affordable, a median household income in the study area should devote no more than \$785 in rent payments, including utility costs. This falls far short of the \$987 the City of Tulsa cites as the minimum necessary for "safe and decent" housing. Applying this formula is more complicated for home purchases but yields a similar result.

While the Master Plan describes housing planned in the Core as a mix of housing stock ranging from affordable to luxury homes, it does not specify a number or percentage of affordable residential dwelling units. A quick check with PartnerTulsa

revealed no target existed when this article was written.

Without assistance or mitigation measures to reduce costs, most residential units in the proposed mixed-use district will be beyond the means of residents living in the study area surrounding it.

The situation will only worsen with time if current housing market trends continue. The Tulsa Citywide Housing Assessment found that Tulsa median home sale prices increased by more than 40% from 2018 to 2022, while rents increased by 22% over the same four years.

Community Development Corporation

The Master Plan adds, "North Tulsans have justifiable concerns about not only affordability for existing and future generations but about the adverse consequences of real estate being bought up by investors from outside the community."

Affordable housing must be provided for median-income or below households to rent or purchase homes in the Core. This can be done in various ways, including binding developer agreements, housing assistance programs, and gap funding supplementing construction costs from government or philanthropic sources.

PartnerTulsa is working with the Advisory Committee to establish a non-profit Community Development Corporation (CDC) to implement the Master Plan. CDCs have been used successfully for decades in many U.S. cities. They blend social and economic justice goals using government and philanthropic grants with private sector investment.

Key to their success has been community representation on the board to be appointed by the Tulsa Development Authority and affordable housing. Once established, they become a non-government entity and must be relied upon to implement the Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan faithfully.

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY JOHN NEAL a staff contributor at The Oklahoma Eagle and former city planner. The third and final article in this series discusses issues in the Master Plan with Jonathon Butler, a senior PartnerTulsa community development official.



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Pandemic Effects

Post pandemic support services still necessary, but threatened

From A7

stakeholders hold a common opinion on how schools and other institutions can best support struggling students: hire and retain more staff.

Oklahoma Public School Resource Center executive director April Grace said many schools across the state need more training for their teachers and more special education teachers.

“Teachers are coming into the profession from so many different on-ramps right now and a variety of experiences,” Grace said. “One of the things we get a lot of requests for are training and support around classroom management.”

The Potts Family Foundation report echoed a similar idea.

“Industry, including childcare, continues to struggle with hiring and retaining staff as wages are low and hours are long with little to no acknowledgement of the tremendous work early childcare providers give to our children day in and day out,” another anonymous person was quoted as saying in the report.

Grace, the former superintendent of Shawnee Public Schools, said she felt the pandemic coincided with other, deeper issues in education, such as the teacher shortage, to create greater challenges for many schools, particularly those in economically disadvantaged areas.

“Not everyone has the resources to have a behavior intervention specialist,” Grace said. “So [districts are] trying to find out, ‘How do we write a successful plan to help retrain or curb this child’s behavior so that learning can happen?’ And we know that that can also create distractions in a classroom.”

But as federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funding expires, some school districts, such as Oklahoma City Public Schools, are beginning the 2024-2025 academic year with larger class sizes and fewer educators on staff than they had the year before.

“That’s a hard one, because when we start getting back out of that ESSER, that changes things up without a question,” Lowe said. “Keeping teachers in the classroom is a hard

“**Industry, including childcare, continues to struggle with hiring and retaining staff as wages are low and hours are long.**

Anonymous quote, The Potts Family Foundation report

deal. It’s nothing unique to Oklahoma.”

The PFF report also noted that many families are struggling as pandemic-era programs end at a time when inflation has raised the basic costs of living.

“Parents/caregivers and providers indicated the vast majority of families are unable to meet basic needs all of the time,” the researchers wrote. “This is especially true for families who benefited from additional family supports (e.g., rent assistance, unemployment support, etc.) that were offered during COVID. Discontinuation of these supports and the financial ‘social benefits gap’ leave some families under resourced and unable to meet basic needs.”

The first regular session of the 60th Legislature will convene in February. Earlier this year, the second regular session of the 59th Legislature adjourned with little action taken on such topics, despite a number of bills sitting in limbo that sought to address the childcare shortage. State common education funding, however, increased by \$25 million one year after it increased by \$625 million.

Lowe, who could be in line to become the new chairman of the House’s education appropriation subcommittee, said any tools in existence to help teachers deal with the pandemic’s toll should be made available to Oklahoma teachers.

“I don’t want to ever downgrade what our teachers are doing. They’re working hard. They’re trying hard. They’re discouraged at times,” Lowe said. “Shoot, I was a teacher. I can tell you there’s days I was discouraged, too. But they’re the people that will make a difference in lives, and we’re going to support those people. We’re going to give them the tools they need.”

Lowe said he had spoken to many teachers in his rural district southwest of the Oklahoma City metro.

“They’re excited to get [these kids] in the classroom and do their dead-level best to get them back to where we need to be,” Lowe said. “I have to look at that and think, ‘Thank you, teachers, but also know, with that, we’re getting ready to ask you to do more. (...) We appreciate what you’re doing, but we know what’s coming at you.’”



BENNETT BRINKMAN became NonDoc’s production editor in September 2024 after spending the previous two years as NonDoc’s education reporter. He completed a reporting internship for the organization in Summer 2022 and holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Oklahoma. He is originally from Edmond.

Minimum Wage Hike

OK governor delays vote on minimum wage hike until 2026

Sean Murphy
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Oklahomans will vote on gradually increasing the minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour but not until 2026, angering supporters who are questioning the timing set by Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt.

Stitt signed an executive order this week setting the vote for June 2026, which is the next scheduled statewide general election after November. The governor said in a statement he waited until then, rather than calling a special statewide election, in order to save taxpayers the roughly \$1.8 million it would cost for a standalone election.

The minimum wage in Oklahoma is currently \$7.25, which mirrors the federal rate, although 34 states, territories and districts currently have wages higher than that, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Supporters of the Yes on State Question 832 campaign turned in nearly 180,000 signatures

in less than 90 days back in July, nearly twice as many as the roughly 92,000 signatures of registered voters needed to qualify the question for the ballot.

Amber England, a spokesperson for the campaign, said she doesn’t buy the governor’s argument.

“This was a political maneuver, and if he can tell you that with a straight face, that’s interesting,” she said. “I think that the governor delaying this for two years is a slap in the face to hardworking Oklahomans who would have seen more money in their paychecks as early as January had he set an election date immediately.”

The Oklahoma State Election Board did not receive a proclamation from the governor’s office in time to place the question on the November ballot, said Misha Mohr, a spokeswoman for the agency.

The last initiative petition to make it to the ballot — a proposal last year to legalize marijuana — was placed on a standalone ballot in March 2023 and was shot down.

A spokesperson for Stitt did not respond to a question about why the governor called a special election for the marijuana question.

In a red state with a Republican governor and strong GOP majorities in both chambers of the Legislature, activists in Oklahoma have turned to the initiative petition process and to voters to get many progressive ideas passed into law. This includes changes to the state’s criminal justice system, allowing medical marijuana and expanding Medicaid health insurance to low-income residents.

In response, the Legislature has passed legislation making it more difficult to qualify state questions for the ballot.

The plan to increase the minimum wage is fiercely opposed by organizations that represent important constituencies of the governor, including The State Chamber of Oklahoma, which represents businesses and industries across the state, and the Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association.

Among the concerns from those groups is that after the minimum wage reaches \$15 per

hour in 2029, it would automatically increase annually based on the increase in the cost of living as measured by the U.S. Department of Labor.

“Between now and the election, we will continue to educate Oklahomans on this harmful, job-killing question that will ultimately hurt the people it’s supposed to help,” said Chad Warmington, president and CEO of The State Chamber.

England said Oklahoma has one of the highest percentage of low-wage workers in the country, with about 320,000 workers earning below \$15 per hour.

“There’s more than 100,000 parents in Oklahoma right now trying to raise their children and live on an income that is less than \$15 an hour,” she said. “The impact of this policy is that 320,000 Oklahomans will get a pay raise.”

SEAN MURPHY is the statehouse reporter for The Associated Press in Oklahoma City. He has covered Oklahoma news and politics since 1996.

Jail, Horrifying Video

Attorneys Cite Horrifying Details from Jail Video in Refiled Lawsuit Over Shannon Hanchett's Death

Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

Cleveland County detention officers and Turn Key Health Clinics staff refused care, falsified records and mocked Shannon Hanchett as she descended into an ultimately fatal mental health crisis in late 2022, according to an amended complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma on Sept. 9.

The filing comes weeks after the U.S. District Judge Bernard Jones granted the defendants' motion to dismiss the wrongful death lawsuit brought by Shannon Hanchett's widower Daniel Hanchett, ruling on Aug. 19 that there was insufficient evidence to show jail staff were deliberately indifferent. In his ruling, Jones gave Daniel Hanchett's attorneys 21 days to file an amended complaint outlining new evidence.

Referencing closed-circuit video footage that remains shielded from the public under a federal protective order, the 73-page filing details Hanchett's deteriorating mental and physical health as jail staff refused to provide care. As county officials sought to withhold access to the footage, the initial complaint filed in January was based on medical records.

A Norman police officer arrested Hanchett, a 38-year-old mother of two who ran a popular bakery in downtown Norman, at an AT&T store on Nov. 26 on a misdemeanor obstruction charge.

While the officer noted in their arrest report that Hanchett was exhibiting signs of mental illness, they took her to the Cleveland County Detention Center. Her family opted not to post her \$1,000 bond because they feared that she might be a danger to herself or others, according to an investigation by The Marshall Project and The Frontier.

Just before 8 p.m. on Nov. 26, 2022, jail staff locked Hanchett in a temporary holding cell with no mattress, sink or toilet, the complaint alleges. While the cells are designed to hold detainees for no more than a few hours as they're processed into the jail, Hanchett remained there for more than three days, according to the lawsuit.

Hanchett paced the small holding cell in the days following her arrest, talking to herself for hours and refused to eat, the plaintiff claimed. A light shined constantly in the cell and Hanchett did not sleep. At 4:57 p.m. on Nov. 27, about 21 hours after she was locked in the cell, video footage shows her urinating on the cell floor, according to the plaintiff.

The lawsuit also said detention officers passed by periodically with jugs of water but offered none to Hanchett and that a similar scene played out several times over the next nine days, causing Hanchett to become severely dehydrated.

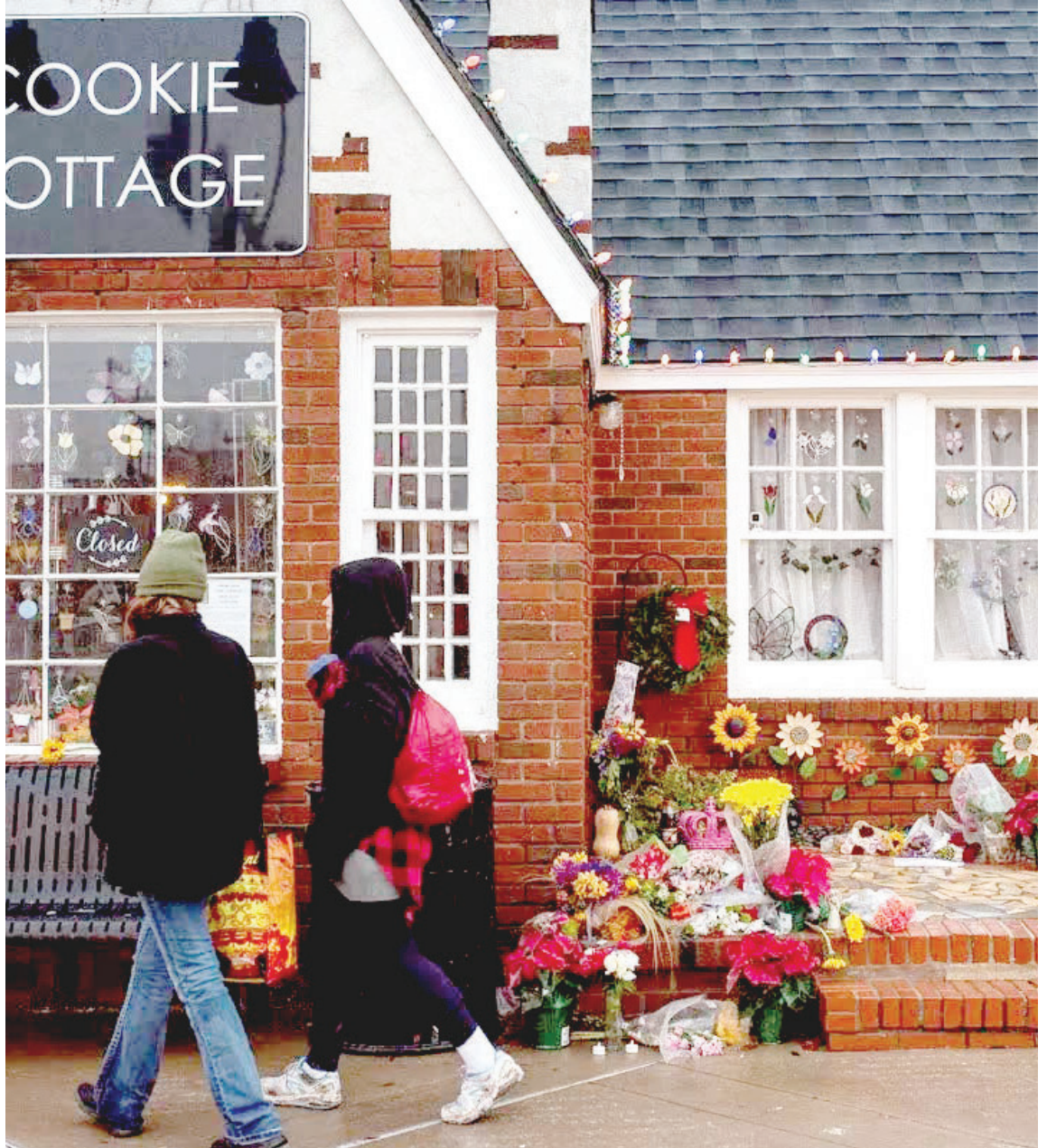
In the late evening of Nov. 30, more than three days after she was booked into the jail, staff removed Hanchett from cell B130 to make space for another detainee, the lawsuit said. Instead of

Hanchett, arrested on a misdemeanor obstruction charge, Nov. 26., and exhibiting signs of mental illness, was placed in a temporary holding cell with no mattress, sink or toilet for more than three days.

TK HEALTH

TK Health provides comprehensive health care services to diverse inmate populations, with services tailored to each client's need.

Their top focus is quality of care and quality levels of service, while providing accountability for use of taxpayer resources.



Two women walked past the Cookie Cottage, Shannon Hanchett's bakery in Norman.

PHOTO FILE PHOTO

moving Hanchett to a more permanent cell, staff took Hanchett back to the holding cell after the detainee was processed, the lawsuit alleges, also claiming that jail staff did not open that door again for five days.

Hanchett's condition worsened as the days progressed. According to the lawsuit, by Dec. 3, she could no longer sit up on her own. She spent most of the time in a state of catatonia on the cell floor, lying in her own waste and rotting food, the plaintiff said.

When jail staff entered Hanchett's cell around 12:30 a.m. on Dec. 5, she struggled to stand up on her own, the lawsuit claimed. Several hours later, the filing alleged, a Turn Key Health Services nurse falsified a document stating that Hanchett refused to have her vital signs taken.

On Dec. 6, more than a week after being booked into the jail, Hanchett met via video conference with a psychologist but was too weak to sit up for the call, according to the lawsuit. The call ended after a few minutes.

On Dec. 7, with her health deteriorating rapidly, two Cleveland County detention officers attempted to remove Hanchett from the holding cell, the lawsuit said. Unresponsive and too weak to move on her own, a detention officer grabbed Hanchett by the arms and dragged her naked across the entire length of a concrete hallway, the complaint alleges.

Despite not being able to move on her own, medical staff continued to refuse to transfer Hanchett to the hospital. She was instead moved to the jail's medical unit, where staff and detainees mocked her, according to the complaint.

"She is unable to sit up in the wheelchair, so they tilt the wheelchair back so that she will not fall out of it," the lawsuit reads. "Nurse Natasha Kariuki and Nurse Jewel Johnson appear to share a joke and laugh as she passes by them. Even a nearby inmate joins in the laughter."

At 9:17 p.m., less than three hours before her death, nurse Tara Doto wrote that Hanchett refused water. The lawsuit alleges that video footage does not show this exchange.

Jail staff discovered Hanchett unresponsive just after midnight on Dec. 8, less than eight hours before she was scheduled for a court-ordered mental health evaluation, according to the lawsuit. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

A state medical examiner's report ruled the cause of death as heart failure with psychosis and severe dehydration as significant contributing factors.

The amended complaint seeks to hold Cleveland County officials and Turn Key Health Clinics liable for unconstitutional living conditions and deliberate indifference, said Daniel Smolen, a Tulsa-based civil rights attorney representing Daniel Hanchett. Smolen claims that financial incentives and a lack of staff training contributed to several deaths of mentally ill detainees at jails staffed by Turn Key Health Clinics personnel over the past decade.

"She was treated in a truly inhumane way," Smolen said. "It [the video footage] really shows how preventable her death was."

Jones had not set a deadline for the defendant's response as of Tuesday afternoon. In previous filings, Cleveland County officials and Turn Key Health Clinics claimed that medical personnel evaluated Hanchett on numerous occasions and contacted personnel at the Griffin Memorial Hospital to set up a mental health evaluation.

A related lawsuit challenging Oklahoma's mental health response in jails remains pending. In March 2023, attorneys representing four plaintiffs deemed incompetent to stand trial filed a class-action lawsuit alleging the state unconstitutionally allows mentally ill detainees to languish in jail as they await treatment. That case remains at an impasse as the attorney general's office and Gov. Kevin Stitt disagree over whether to settle.

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

License Revoked

Oklahoma revokes license of teacher who gave class QR code to Brooklyn library in book-ban protest

Nadia Lathan
Associated Press

Oklahoma's education board has revoked the license of a former teacher who drew national attention during surging book-ban efforts across the U.S. in 2022 when she covered part of her classroom bookshelf in red tape with the words "Books the state didn't want you to read."

The decision Thursday went against a judge who had advised the Oklahoma Board of Education not to revoke the license of Summer Boismier, who had also put in her high school classroom a QR code of the Brooklyn Public Library's catalogue of banned books.

An attorney for Boismier, who now works at the Brooklyn Public Library in New York City, told reporters after the board meeting that they would seek to overturn the decision.

"I will not apologize for sharing publicly available information about library access with

my students," the former teacher posted on X. "My livelihood will never be as important as someone's life or right to read what they want."

Brady Henderson, Boismier's attorney, and the office of Oklahoma State Superintendent Ryan Walters did not immediately respond to phone messages seeking comment Friday.

Boismier, a fervent reader with a passion for fantasy novels, had been teaching English for nine years when she was involuntarily thrust into the center of Walters' campaign for statewide office in August 2022. She received threats on social media and was accused of being part of a broader movement led by teachers to influence children's political beliefs. Boismier resigned soon after.

She said at the time that she had hoped to spark a discussion about Oklahoma legislators' book restrictions and a new law prohibiting lessons on critical race theory and other concepts about race and gender. Instead, she was summoned to a meeting with school administrators after a

parent complained.

Walters, who was a candidate for Oklahoma's top education office when Boismier was teaching, had called on the board in 2022 to revoke her teaching license in a letter he shared on social media.

"There is no place for a teacher with a liberal political agenda in the classroom," Walters had wrote. He accused her of providing "banned and pornographic material" to students.

Walters said at Thursday's meeting that Boismier violated rules that prohibit instruction on topics related to race and gender. He told reporters that she "broke the law."

Boismier has maintained that she did nothing wrong.

Teachers in public schools across the country continue to face scrutiny at the local and state level as lawmakers in Republican-led statehouses push forward with book bans and restrict curriculum on issues related to race, gender, and sexuality such as in Iowa and Utah.

NADIA LATHAN is a corps member for The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on uncovered issues.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY (BPL)

The Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is the public library system of the New York City borough of Brooklyn.

It is the sixteenth largest public library system in the United States by holding and the seventh by number of visitors.

Landlord Debarred

MEGA LANDLORD *Debarred, Oklahoma Properties Failing*



PHOTO HEATHER WARLICK/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Essie Johnson, 79, sits in her apartment at Elm Terrace Apartments on Sept. 8, 2024.

Heather Warlick
Oklahoma Watch

Overgrown grass at Elm Terrace Apartments caught the attention of some do-gooders in the Duncan community last year when a group of citizens got together to clean up the landscaping and grounds at the low-income apartment complex. About 80 people came to help with the clean-up project that Saturday.

That was a beautiful day, said Essie Johnson. The 79-year-old great-grandmother has lived at Elm Terrace Apartments for 15 years and had never seen the community come out to help before.

“It was good to know that people gave a darn about us,” she said.

She doubts the company that manages Elm Terrace gives a darn. The project-based low-income apartment complex has been falling apart for years. It’s always something, Johnson said. Most recently, her air conditioner stopped working. She was given a window unit by the on-site manager, but not until after a month of complaining, she said.

The federal Project-Based Rental Assistance program, or PBRA, provides 1.2 million low-income American families with affordable housing through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. More than 5,500 PBRA properties have financing insured by the Federal Housing Administration. Many others are financed through bonds issued by state and local housing authorities and finance agencies such as the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency.

Elm Terrace is a project-based complex that dozens of Oklahoma families with very low incomes call home. Tenants there receive assistance from the federal government to pay their rent. The apartment’s management company receives assistance for maintenance and upkeep.

But the complex frequently fails inspections required to keep taxpayer money flowing via subsidies from HUD.

Elm Terrace’s most recent inspection, published online in August, resulted in a score of 22%, the second-lowest of 278 project-based complexes listed by HUD in Oklahoma. That’s down from a 31% inspection score Elm Terrace received in December.

Oklahoma’s lowest inspection score for multifamily project-based housing on the August report was 7%, earned by James M. Inhofe Plaza in Tulsa.

Those two lowest-scoring project-based apartment complexes are both operated and managed by Millennia Housing Management, a Cleveland, Ohio-based mega-landlord that was

Elm Terrace’s most recent inspection, published online in August, resulted in a score of 22%, the second-lowest of 278 project-based complexes listed by HUD in Oklahoma. That’s down from a 31% inspection score Elm Terrace received in December.

MILLENNIA HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Founded in 1995, Millennia owns / operates more than 280 apartment developments in 26 states, housing more than 86,000 people and employing more than 1,100.

recently debarred by HUD after several deadly apartment disasters during the past few years.

Ten other Oklahoma project-based apartment complexes received failing scores, according to HUD’s Aug. 30 report.

Project-based apartment complexes are owned either by private entities with subsidy contracts or by local or state housing authorities. All project-based complexes receive funding directly from HUD and are required to adhere to HUD regulations. People who rent in project-based apartments have housing vouchers, commonly known as Section 8.

People with housing vouchers can instead opt to rent from private landlords and private apartment complexes that accept the vouchers, but demand for Section 8 housing is higher than supply as evidenced in a study showing half of people holding Section 8 vouchers are able to find housing that accepts them before they expire in 60 days.

Management Company Under Fire

Inspection reports for Elm Terrace and James M. Inhofe Plaza noted refrigerators and stoves missing, electrical problems, ceiling leaks, mold, roaches and bed bugs, improperly installed carbon monoxide detectors and more.

Residents at James M. Inhofe Plaza, which houses elderly and disabled housing voucher recipients, complained to local news media when they spent the Fourth of July without air conditioning. Management had failed to repair it for more than a month.

“These are minimum standards,” said Eric Hallett, the coordinator of housing advocacy for Legal Aid Services Oklahoma. “But they’re what you would want a person to have: walls without holes and working windows and a ceiling that keeps out the rain, and working switches.”

Millennia manages more than 270 complexes in 26 states, with some market-rate rentals but mostly low-income multifamily complexes like Elm Terrace Apartments and disabled and senior-living units like James M. Inhofe Plaza.

Millennial owns some of the properties it manages, but Pate said the owners of Elm Terrace Apartments are a mystery. Neither she nor Elm Terrace’s maintenance worker knows the owner’s name. Public records show the owner, 206 E Elm, LLC, was registered with the Oklahoma Secretary of State in 2004.

Since the community clean-up day, the tall grass and weeds have grown back around Elm Terrace. The largely deserted complex shows other apparent signs of disrepair, with blinds hanging broken in some windows and other windows boarded up. Residents complain that air conditioners are broken, apartments have mold and are crawling with pests.

Disastrous maintenance problems at other Millennia complexes cast the company into a slew of negative media attention in recent years after gas explosions and fires in Millennia-managed complexes resulted in at least eight people dead and seven people hospitalized.

HUD sent an official debarment order to Millennia Housing Management Ltd. in December in response to those disasters and findings that Millennia mismanaged tenant and taxpayer money.

“This order immediately prohibits Millennia from participating in any new business with HUD, our Office of Multifamily Housing Programs – including the Section 8 program – and with any federal government agency or federal program for five years, ending on December 13, 2028,” HUD wrote.

The HUD debarment does not affect Millennia’s existing properties or contracts with HUD. According to HUD, debarment follows suspension and is the agency’s most serious compliance sanction. A debarred management company may not enter into any new HUD contracts for a period of time. Usually doled out in three-year penalties, HUD can impose a longer debarment period, as it did in the Millennia case, when it’s deemed necessary to protect the public interest.

The HUD spokesperson said the department is aware of the problems in Oklahoma’s Millennia-managed apartments, citing significant deferred maintenance issues and unacceptable property conditions.

Too Many Problems to Fix

Elm Terrace on-site manager, Sylvia Pate, started her job in February and has been slowly facilitating much-needed repairs throughout Elm Terrace while cleaning up the books, but said it’s no small undertaking. With only one maintenance staff member and many dangerous issues to correct, Pate said it would take time and patience to get the complex back in good running order.

Pat said that before she started, there were months when the complex didn’t have anyone to collect rent and keep the books current, much less facilitate repairs. She wasn’t surprised when she heard about the failing results of the complex’s most recent inspection.

Johnson has lived at Elm Terrace for 15 years and has seen many managers come and go.

“We got a new maintenance guy,” she said. “We got a good new manager. But there are so many problems that need to be fixed.”

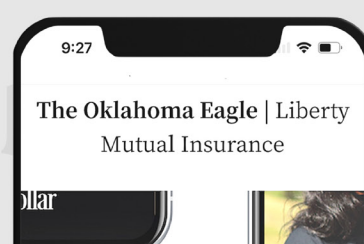
Johnson said Pate and the maintenance staff try to take care of the complex, but fixes for some of the complex’s most pressing problems, such as the burned-out apartment unit on the

Cont. A11, Landlord Debarred

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Landlord Debarred

Service providers hesitant to provide maintenance due to delayed payments

From A10

other side of Johnson's kitchen, get pushed off for another time.

Millennia Housing Management emailed a statement to Oklahoma Watch regarding the conditions found at Elm Terrace and James M. Inhofe Plaza.

"If distressed apartment developments are not preserved, they may be converted to market-rate developments or demolished, thereby diminishing the affordable housing stock," the company wrote. "The Millennia Companies has worked to preserve these distressed apartment communities with the goal of maintaining the affordability of this housing well into the future by investing in communities and neighborhoods that have not experienced this kind of investment for years."

The company did not address Oklahoma Watch's question about how it plans to tackle repairs at the complex.

Hallett said that since Oklahoma lacks so many affordable housing units, housing authorities are less picky about inspections as long as tenants are willing to accept their units.

He cited a recent class-action lawsuit against Vista Shadow Mountain, a 600-unit complex in Tulsa that routinely failed inspections but continued to take in new tenants. Hundreds of residents were forced to leave in 2021 when the Tulsa Fire Department found multiple code violations.

Vista Shadow Mountain was recently ordered to pay \$400,000 to be split among 229 former tenants displaced due to unsafe living conditions.

The Vista Shadow Mountain units failed inspections repeatedly, but Hallett said it wasn't until tenants started raising serious concerns for their well-being that action was taken to close the complex.

Languishing Without Support

"Maintenance can't get to all the problems because Millennia isn't paying for it," Johnson said.

Pate confirmed that some repair vendors in Duncan, such as HVAC professionals who are certified to fill freon in air conditioners, are hesitant to work for Elm Terrace because the complex has failed to pay them in the recent past.

Pate said she has paid hundreds of dollars out-of-pocket for items such as paint and tools so the maintenance staff can work properly. She is waiting for reimbursement.

Of the 88 units at Elm Terrace, 46 are occupied. Pate said she is preparing four more units to be rented. One building that houses 12 units in the complex is condemned.

Georgia Guerrero has lived at Elm Terrace for three years and knows most of her neighbors well, including Johnson, whom Guerrero calls Mama and her son calls Grandma. Guerrero's mother and sister live in a neighboring building, and her boyfriend lives next door.

Guerrero, an elementary school custodian, said she loves her apartment and takes pride in keeping it neat and tidy. But her living room ceiling is lined with large beams installed to keep the upstairs from falling in on her.

Guerrero's kitchen ceiling is patched from where it previously collapsed, nearly covering Guerrero with structural debris from water damage upstairs. Her bathroom ceiling and wall bear a similar patch job where the upstairs bathroom fell through.

Guerrero doesn't complain, though she said she is afraid of her upstairs neighbors who constantly threaten her; she is more afraid of losing her home, where she can afford to live close to her family.

She said they would move if there was another housing option for Guerrero's family nearby, and if they could afford to.

Duncan's other project-based apartment



The ceiling in Georgia Guerrero's bathroom caved in and was patched by apartment maintenance staff at Elm Terrace Apartments in Duncan.

PHOTO HEATHER WARLICK/OKLAHOMA WATCH



Georgia Guerrero shows the beams that have been installed on her ceiling to keep the upstairs from caving in at Elm Terrace Apartments in Duncan on Sept. 8, 2024.

PHOTO HEATHER WARLICK/OKLAHOMA WATCH

complex, Duncan Plaza, is for seniors over 62.

Landlord Failures Can End Leases

Complexes scoring less than 60% on their HUD-required home inspections are required to promptly repair all urgent issues found during the inspections and other similar conditions. Properties that don't comply can lose HUD funding and face debarment. Follow-up inspections are required in one year.

"Landlords are required to fix problems found by inspectors before tenants move in and after each annual inspection," said Oklahoma City Housing Authority's executive director, Mark Gillett.

Gillett said that if problems are not corrected, tenants have the right to move out and take their housing vouchers with them.

People who rent outside HUD-subsidized housing programs have a legal right under the Oklahoma Residential Landlord and Tenant Act to fix problems in their apartments and deduct the costs from the following month's rent if they follow the prescribed procedures.

If repairs for essential services such as heat, running water, gas, electricity or other necessities are not made within two weeks, according to the Landlord Tenant Act, a tenant may give written notice to the landlord terminating the lease based on breach of rental agreement.

That type of lease termination requires attention to policy, Gillett said, to ensure it is done legally.

People who rent HUD-subsidized housing do not have such legal remedies when it comes to making their own repairs, Gillett said. They must report unrepaired damages to their local housing authority or to HUD directly, depending on who owns the complex.



PHOTO HEATHER WARLICK/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Elm Terrace Apartments in Duncan recently scored 22% on HUD safety inspections, the lowest for multifamily project-based apartments in the state. The complex is owned by Millennia Housing Management, an out-of-state management company that has been debarred by HUD, and blocked from future subsidized housing contracts with the department.

According to HUD, if project-based multifamily apartment residents feel their concerns are not being adequately addressed, they should contact HUD's Multifamily Housing Complaint Line.

Johnson said her apartment is crawling with bed bugs and roaches. She tried home remedies to deter the bugs, spraying household cleaners to create a barrier.

Despite the pests, Johnson said she is content at Elm Terrace. She could likely qualify to move to Duncan Plaza, but she doesn't want to move from her home and her friends, like Guerrero.

Guerrero said she stops by Johnson's

apartment nearly every day to check in and do little things around the apartment to help her elderly neighbor. The residents depend on each other.

"We all take care of each other here," Guerrero said. "If we don't take care of each other, no one else will."

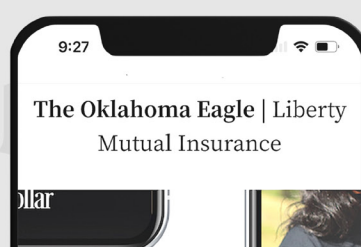
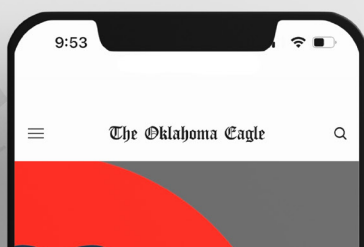
Reporter Jessica Pierce contributed to this report.

HEATHER WARLICK is a reporter covering evictions, housing and homelessness. Contact her at (405) 226-1915 or hwarlick@oklahomawatch.org.

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Arlington National Cemetery Visit Shows Trump's Continued Contempt Toward Black Veterans

BY KEVIN TAYLOR

Former President Donald J. Trump's visit to Arlington National Cemetery dramatized his contempt not just for the U.S. military generally but particularly for African Americans who have served our nation.

The incident occurred on Aug. 26, when Trump visited the hallowed grounds of ANC, located outside of Washington, D.C., at the request of a Gold Star family of a service member killed during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

To be clear, Trump's visit was part of a concerted re-election campaign effort supported by Congressional Republicans to pin blame on Vice President Kamala Harris during the frantic final hours of America's longest war.

The effort was underscored by a questionably timed release of a scathing congressional report of the war in Afghanistan by partisan investigators.

The Sanctity of Section 60

Various pundits have pointed out the disrespect that Trump showed to all veterans during that visit. Instead of following the rules of Section 60 – the section Trump visited, which prohibits pictures taken by persons besides the military photographer, Trump posed in that hallowed part of the burial ground for a thumbs-up with the family of the deceased.

One of Trump's aides got into a physical altercation with one of the ANC staffers who was trying to enforce the rules.

However, a key fact about Section 60 of the cemetery has gone unreported. That tract is not just the final resting place of Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans – many of whom are people of color. It is also the resting place of two of the most highly decorated African Americans to serve in the U.S. military. Gen. Hazel W. Johnson-Brown, and General Colin L. Powell.

According to the U.S. Army, which manages ANC and 29 other military cemeteries nationwide, Johnson-Brown is the first African American woman to attain a general officer rank in American military history. She joined the Army Nurse Corps in 1955 and served until her retirement in 1983. She was interred at Arlington in 2011.

General Colin Powell, a Vietnam veteran, was

the first African American to hold three of the U.S. government's highest positions: national security advisor (1987-1989), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989-1993), and secretary of state (2001-2005). He was laid to rest at Arlington in 2021.

These are two of the African Americans buried in the section Trump desecrated by his most recent visit. But they are, by far, not the only African Americans buried at ANC.

Freedman's Village

Arlington National Cemetery is built on 19th century land previously owned by formerly enslaved Blacks known as Freedman's Village. From 1863-1900, the community was home to schools, housing, job training, and healthcare for those freed from chattel slavery.

As reported by the African American History at Arlington National Cemetery, the burial grounds "contain over 3,800 Freedmen who were residents of other villages in the area or employed in some capacity by the U.S. government during the Civil War" plus countless others from the Spanish-American, Vietnam, and two World Wars.

Today, Freedman's Village comprises sections 4, 8, 20, and 34. They are steps away from Section 60.

Service and Sacrifice

Trump's disdain for America's military heroes and heroines is not new.

Standing in Section 60 in 2017 alongside retired Marine Corps Gen. John Kelly, who later became Trump's chief of staff, Trump said: "I don't get it. What was in it for them?" about the people buried there.

We expect the nation's Commander-in-Chief to fully appreciate the willingness of young women and men to volunteer to fight for our freedom and values and, when called upon to do so, to go into theaters of war to defend those rights and privileges.

Yet, in 2018, Trump refused to go to Suresnes American Cemetery, near Paris, France, where World War I veterans in that theater of war are interred.

Reportedly, he did not want to get his hair wet and was quoted as calling those buried at Suresnes "losers"

and "suckers."

I am sure the nearly 1,600 Gold Star Black mothers who tried with little success to join their white counterparts in going to visit the graves at Suresnes in the 1930s would take umbrage with his characterization of their brave sons.

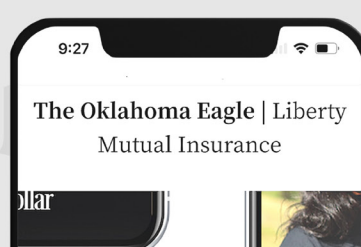
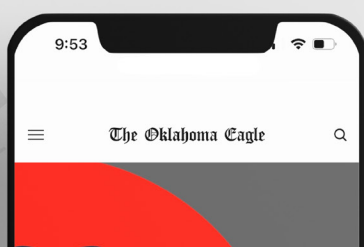
The American electorate must take umbrage, too. When voters go to the polls on Nov. 5, they should not forget that while seeking to lead the strongest fighting force in the history of the world, Trump was quick to disrespect veterans in one of the most vulgar ways possible. They should not allow the lives of those who have served our country to be taken in vain.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES
KEVIN TAYLOR, an African American pastor and corporate executive, occasionally contributes to The Oklahoma Eagle.

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THE UNTESTED WATERS OF BLACK LAKESIDE COMMUNITIES

New research shows lakes in communities of color were three times less likely to be tested for pollutants than lakes in white areas. **A17**



FROM INCARCERATION TO ADVOCACY: A FIGHT FOR VOTING RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

Kemba Smith Pradia's working to ensure all citizens, including the formerly incarcerated, get a voice — and vote — in democracy. **A15**



Why a Japanese American Lawyer Wants Reparations for Black Californians

Donald Tamaki, having won reparations for Japanese Americans in a landmark case, is applying that wisdom as the only Asian American member of the California Reparations Task Force. PHOTO KOEJ-FM

Reparations

Esteemed lawyer Donald Tamaki won reparations for Japanese Americans forced into internment camps during World War II.

Now he's working to bring reparations to Black people in California — and perhaps the nation.

A Welcomed Ally In the fight for Reparations

Renata Sago
Word In Black

The first body of its kind, the Californian Reparations Task Force held hearings around the state to determine if the state should compensate descendants of enslaved Californians and what it might look like.

When Donald Tamaki got a call from the Governor's Office asking him to interview for a position on California's Reparations Task Force, at first he hesitated.

Tamaki is not Black. He has never identified as Black. And, to his knowledge, he is not a descendant of formerly enslaved African Americans. He is an acclaimed San Francisco-based lawyer whose parents were among 120,000 Japanese Americans forced into internment camps during World War II. He won a landmark Supreme Court case that forced the federal government to pay reparations for internment camp survivors.

Growing up in Oakland in the late 1960s, Tamaki witnessed the burgeoning Black Consciousness movements, in which Black activists fought for fair housing laws in California and against workplace discrimination against Black people.

The parallels between that movement's goals and the Japanese American struggle for equality in California — especially

WWII-era bigotry that branded them as "un-American" — helped convince Tamaki to join the groundbreaking, first-of-its-kind task force.

"There's no equivalence between 400 years of oppression and four years in a concentration camp that Japanese Americans went through, but the histories do intersect," Tamaki says.

"I realized after joining the task force that whatever prejudice that was directed at Asian Americans and Japanese Americans, in particular, was really just a subchapter in a racial pathology that really began long before Asian Americans arrived on these shores."

California is the first of the 50 U.S. states and territories to launch a reparations task force for Black descendants of enslaved people. Black Californians comprise a little over 5% of the state's population, with many residents having migrated from the South through the 1970s. The California Reparations Task Force has been charged with studying the feasibility of compensation for descendants of formerly enslaved African Americans.

Its nine-member body of elected officials, professors, and a theologian — all Black, with the exception of Tamaki.

Japanese Americans made up less than

Cont. A16, Reparations

Voting Rights

From Incarceration to Advocacy: A Fight for Voting Rights and Justice

Kemba Smith Pradia's working to ensure all citizens, including the formerly incarcerated, get a voice — and vote — in democracy.

Tracy Chiles McGhee
Word In Black

As millions lined up at polling stations to cast their votes to elect the first Black president of the United States, criminal justice activist Kemba Smith Pradia stood on the sidelines, unable to participate in the historic election dedicated to hope and change.

When Smith's 12-year-old son, excited and curious, asked her who she planned to vote for, she explained with a heavy heart that her right to vote had been stripped away years earlier.

At 22, Smith gave birth to her son Armani a few months after her 1994 incarceration. Her case ignited outrage from supporters who believed the punishment was excessive, given Smith's status as a first-time, nonviolent offender and a victim of domestic violence inflicted by her boyfriend, the criminal mastermind central to federal conspiracy charges.

Convicted for her proximity to a drug kingpin, Smith, then a student at Hampton University, was sentenced to 24 1/2 years in prison. She became a symbol of the devastating impact of the "war on drugs," spurred by mandatory minimum sentencing under federal guidelines in the 1990s. The policy aggressively targeted Black defendants, having a profound impact on Black women and their families.

Kemba Smith's story did not end with the slamming of prison doors. She was released in 2000 through clemency by President Bill Clinton, thanks to relentless advocacy from national organizations led by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Smith emerged not just as a survivor but as a passionate voice for those silenced by the criminal justice system, especially Black women, often the most erased from justice.

Smith was freed from the shackles of federal prison, but there were still obstacles and stigma — a narrative she had to rewrite despite the support and resources from her family and others during her reentry journey.

"I had to remind myself that I'm more than just a 'formerly incarcerated person.' I'm a mother, a daughter, a wife, and I refuse to let

Cont. A16, Voting Rights



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Reparations

It Is Never Too Late To Right A Wrong



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A15

1 percent of the US population from the 1940s to the 1960s, with the majority of them living in California. Their uprooting — from their own homes and communities to makeshift government camps in remote areas of Utah, Wyoming, and Oregon — began right after the attacks on Pearl Harbor.

Even though most of the families were either naturalized or native-born American citizens, the U.S. government didn't want to take chances that they might sympathize with the Japanese imperial government. So the Roosevelt administration forcibly relocated entire communities, sending them to live in hastily converted fairgrounds, racetracks, and livestock stalls.

"My family owned a four-flat hotel for immigrants right in the center of San Francisco's Japan Town," Tamaki says. "By the 1960s, Japan Town was reduced from 44 blocks to four." "The community was just evicted."

"I don't have the lived experience to be Black, but we do know something about racial profiling," he

says. "We do know something about being targeted."

In the 1980s, Tamaki helped reopen *Korematsu v. United States*, a case that led to a formal apology from the federal government for harm against the Japanese American political detainees and \$20,000 in restitution for living survivors. While Tamaki believes that it's difficult to determine how vindication looks, careful attention to civil rights issues is critical.

So far, the California Reparations Task Force has held 27 contentious hearings throughout California starting in 2021.

The discussions were based on the International Reparations Framework, which lays out five forms of reparations: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.

In June 2023, the Task Force released a 1,100-page final report detailing the history of discriminatory practices that harmed generations of Black Californians. The report provides national and regional analyses, and includes a range of recommendations, including things like minimum-wage hikes and

proposals to help communities deal with climate change. But it doesn't explicitly describe what a successful reparations program might look like.

"The report, in and of itself, was a compromise," Tamaki says. "Sometimes the discussion was hard (and) was probably very hurtful," Tamaki says. "What we did say is, 'Legislature, here's 115 recommendations. Legislate and come up with an approach spanning years. In good economies and bad.'"

For Tamaki, however, educating the public about what reparations are — and aren't — is critical.

"The most common objections to reparations, which, I'm sure you've heard them — the litany of 'It's too late.' 'This is all about slavery' or 'It's too much; the government can't afford this,'" he says. "Another one is 'It's not my fault. I was not an enslaver and discriminating against anybody. Why should I, as a taxpayer, have to pay for this?'" But, he says, it's a matter of justice for people who have suffered historical wrongs.

"What I realized is that the last two years won't mean anything unless the next two years and the years to follow mean something."

'Legislature, here's 115 recommendations. Legislate and come up with an approach spanning years. In good economies and bad.'

Donald Tamaki, member of the California Reparations Task Force

RENATA SAGO is an award-winning journalist and creative whose thoughtful storytelling explores race, class, politics, and sometimes humor. She has documented many topics — from wellness and the arts to the wealth gap and climate change — for media institutions in the United States and other countries.

Voting Rights

Voting Rights Restoration State Laws vary widely, often with lengthy waiting periods

From A15

society define me by my past," she says.

Even as Smith navigated life by finishing her education — including obtaining a law degree — and beginning a career in leadership roles, she still couldn't exercise one of the most crucial freedoms that democracy holds: the right to vote.

"It was inhumane for me to have to explain to my son how I couldn't vote, while everyone else was proudly wearing their 'I Voted' stickers," she says. "I couldn't shake the feeling that I was regarded as less than every other citizen in this country despite having served my time. I was a homeowner, paying taxes, raising a son, and contributing to my community. Yet, our country didn't consider me worthy to cast my vote to address the issues that mattered most to me."

Restoring voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals varies widely from state to state. In one of the most restrictive states, Virginia, where Smith was a resident, defendants convicted of a felony can only have their voting rights restored through an individual petition to the Governor. This process often involves a lengthy waiting period, leaving many formerly incarcerated people stripped of their rights long after they have served their time.

Smith determined that even if she couldn't vote herself, she would still help to get out the vote, working with organizations committed to empowering youth and the Black community.

"We need to bring human stories to young people, so they realize just how much who they elect impacts our communities. Nor can we just go to the same places to get people to vote; we need to reach every corner of our cities," she says.

Smith even acted as a delegate on behalf of



PHOTO BENNETT RAGLIN/GETTY IMAGES FOR FOR NATIONAL CARES MENTORING MOVEMENT

I had to remind myself that I'm more than just a 'formerly incarcerated person.' I'm a mother, a daughter, a wife, and I refuse to let society define me by my past," Kemba Smith says.

the NAACP, speaking before high officials at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, about felony disenfranchisement laws in the U.S.

Eventually, Smith's voting rights were restored in 2012, and although she was elated, she remained committed to voting rights restoration. In 2019, her strong advocacy won her a gubernatorial appointment to the Virginia Parole Board, where she served for more than two years.

Then came the good news. In 2021, Gov. Northam restored voting rights to more than 69,000 Virginians with felony convictions through automatic restoration. However, progress was halted in 2023 when Gov. Youngkin reversed the policy, again requiring individuals to apply to regain their voting rights upon release from prison. This was a

blow to those advocating for the voting rights of the most disenfranchised communities.

Now 53, Smith's commitment to criminal justice reform and voter engagement is forever rooted in her personal experiences.

"I was driven to gain redemption for the choices I made, and I knew I needed to be a face and a voice for those I left behind in prison," Smith says.

Through her memoir, "Poster Child: The Kemba Smith Story," published in 2013, and the film she executive produced, "Kemba," released in 2024 by BET+, she shares her harrowing journey through the criminal justice system and highlights broader issues of mass incarceration and felony disenfranchisement.

Beyond her storytelling, Kemba takes direct action to ensure marginalized voices

are heard. She co-founded the Kemba Smith Foundation with the mission of educating the public about drug policy and how easily individuals can become entangled in the system.

As we approach yet another historical presidential election, Kemba seeks to galvanize individuals to register and vote, educate others, and advocate for the rights of the disenfranchised — no less deserving of a voice in our democracy than any other citizen.

Tracy Chiles McGhee is a Writer and Constituency Engagement Advisor for Unerased | Black Women Speak.

TRACY CHILES MCGHEE is a Writer and Constituency Engagement Advisor for Unerased | Black Women Speak.

The Untested Waters of Black Lakeside Communities

Willy Blackmore
Word In Black

Nothing says that you've made it quite like living right by the water. And while it's most often white people who are living out that fantasy in lakeside communities across the country, there are some waterfront towns with significant Black populations (or otherwise non-white) — but what a new study has found is that the water in such communities is far less likely to be subject to water-quality monitoring.

The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, is believed to be the first to look at water-quality monitoring on lakes as an environmental justice issue. On the whole, the researchers found that lakes in white communities were three times more likely to be monitored than those in communities of color (the study looked at all non-white racial groups together, and also compared Hispanic and non-Hispanic communities).

"Where we sample can matter as much as what we sample," Matt Kane, program director of the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Biological Sciences, which helped fund the research, said in a statement. "These findings reveal the need to expand sampling and monitoring to get an accurate picture of water quality across the country that can serve as the basis for management and policy decisions."

Nationally, the study found that 18% of lakes had a surrounding population that was more than a quarter non-white, and considered those communities of color in the study. Half of those lakes are concentrated in the Southeast, which suggests that many of those communities may be Black, too. In total, many lakes are not monitored: Just 10% of the 137,072 lakes looked at in the study were tested for water clarity, but only 7.5% of those lakes that were tested are in communities of color. In the Southeast, just 3% of the lakes in communities of color were tested.

"Of all lakes that were sampled, lakes in POC and Hispanic communities were sampled less frequently and for fewer years than lakes

New research shows lakes in communities of color were three times less likely to be tested for pollutants than lakes in white areas.



PHOTO GETTY/MATT NIEBUHR

in White and non-Hispanic communities," the researchers wrote.

While water-quality monitoring is not the same as, say, testing for pollutants or other more significant environmental hazards, the lack of very basic testing in most lakeside communities of color doesn't exactly inspire confidence. The researchers point to other studies that suggest Black people and other racialized communities who do live near the water often live near less pristine water — in the Saginaw River watershed in Michigan, for example, people of color were more likely to live near areas with poor water quality compared to white residents, according to a 2014 study.

A 2023 Pew Research Center survey found that 63% of U.S. adults believe the federal government is not doing enough to protect the quality of lakes, rivers, and streams. But when it comes to fixing things, the survey also found less than half — 46% — of all U.S. adults believe the federal government should play a major role in addressing disparities in health risks from pollution and other environmental problems across communities. However, perhaps pointing to the disproportionate impact of toxic water and air, 63% of Black Americans, more than any other racial or ethnic group, say it should play

a major role.

"We encourage local, state or regional environmental monitoring programs to include equity in their sampling designs by selecting which lakes to sample, based not only on natural features (such as lake size or land use) but also on social features such as race and ethnicity of the nearby communities," said one of the study's leads, Kendra Spence Cheruvilil, a professor at Michigan State.

Cheruvilil and her colleagues wrote that without action, marginalized communities will continue to lack information about potentially negative impacts of local environmental hazards on their health and quality of life."

Of course, water quality is a matter of public health and equity, too. Without proper monitoring of these lakes, harmful pollutants can go undetected, putting Black families at risk. The water where Black children play, where folks fish, and which supports local ecosystems could be contaminated, and communities might not even know it. And when it comes to environmental health, no one should be left treading in uncertain waters.

WILLY BLACKMORE is a freelance writer and editor covering food, culture, and the environment. He lives in Brooklyn



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Erran PERSLEY

Tulsa's Economic Development Director

BY KIMBERLY MARSH AND GARY LEE

Tulsa's Economic Development Director Erran Persley, who began his new role in March 2024, spoke with The Oklahoma Eagle Managing Editor Gary Lee and Eagle contributor Kimberly Marsh about his plans for equitable economic growth across the city.

As Economic Development Director, Persley will serve as the lead facilitator between the city government and economic development partners such as the Tulsa Regional Chamber and the Tulsa Authority of Economic Opportunity (PartnerTulsa) to ensure the City of Tulsa's economic goals are achieved.

This is part of The Oklahoma Eagle's 918 occasional series in which we spotlight impactful leaders of the community and ask them nine questions. Persley's perspective is so vital that we added a bonus question.



PHOTO FACEBOOK

Q: What are your priority projects for economic development in Tulsa?

Persley: One big project that we closed, working with Daniel Regan at the airport, was the NorSun project. That was the \$600 million investment, 300 job project that went to the airport. I do a lot of behind the scenes work on bringing those projects to fruition, working with PartnerTulsa, the Tulsa Regional Chamber and the airport. We're now working on another to bring in another foreign company. I can't give details. But it would possibly be bigger than the NorSun deal for the city...

Q: How do you plan to ensure economic benefits reach all parts of Tulsa, including north Tulsa?

Persley: This is probably my biggest goal and challenge. As we attract new companies to Tulsa, how do we ensure that the benefits reach all sections of our city? How do I connect people in north Tulsa or west Tulsa to jobs in a purposeful way? In fact, City Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper and I had a discussion that if we're building a lot of things at

the airport right, how can I make sure we have a system that gets the people from far out north Tulsa to those jobs out by the airport? Economic development can't just be to attract and recruit companies. How does everyone benefit? How does the community grow from that company being in their space? I think that I have to put in more time and attention into figuring that part out.

Q: Are you integrating the other chambers, the cultural chambers and the Black Wall Street Chamber, the Greenwood Chamber, Hispanic Chamber, into the work that you're doing?

Persley: I've been actively engaging with the Black Wall Street Chamber. I've been purposeful about going around the city, not just staying downtown or at the airport. Some places don't get as much attention as others or as much face time as others. I've been cognizant of touring north Tulsa, talking to community groups, and understanding their needs. I plan to meet with all chambers, including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, before the end of the year.

Q: What are your thoughts on workforce preparation for Tulsa's economic future?

Persley: We need to train our existing workforce and recruit new talent to fill gaps. Years ago, I heard Wayne Gretzky, the great hockey player being interviewed, and they asked him, 'why are you such a great hockey player?' and he said, 'I learned to go where the puck is going to be and not where it is.' That is my approach to economic development. We need to look at future sectors and prepare our workforce for those areas. Tulsa has great potential. It's a cool, quirky city with an abundance of opportunity. Our challenge is to grow the city while maintaining its unique character.

Q: How do you plan to address the persistent disparities between Tulsa's Black community and the rest of the city?

Persley: Sadly, this is a universal problem in most places, and it requires addressing the issues in a purposeful way. It's one thing to know there is a problem, but it's a whole different thing to actually change policies and procedures to address it. Hopefully, that's the road that we're on right now.

Q: What can Tulsa do to mitigate the impact of corporate chain and big box store closures?

Persley: We need to develop communities the right way, to find new ways to build up entrepreneurship in the community. My view is you need to find ways to build up entrepreneurship in the community and help people in the community to own businesses so that, number one, they are committed to community. I went to see a great program that trains young men and women to be developers, to give them the tools they need. That's great, but when they graduate what do we (as a city) do to help to make that transition into developing a property? That bridge is not there, and I'm hoping that one of the first steps is going to be the new Kirkpatrick Heights - Greenwood project. There will be an opportunity for us to do development in a different kind of way, where people in the community can actually be part of the actual development of whatever that ends up being.

Q: How does housing fit into your economic development strategy?

Persley: Sometimes we forget that economic development is not just recruiting companies and helping companies to stay here. We have a big emphasis on affordable housing, sometimes with a big A, but what we don't talk about is workforce housing. I've got companies that are coming here, and their question is, where are my people going to live when I bring them into this city? Housing is a crucial part of economic development, and we need good housing stock throughout the community, not just one side of town, where there are grocery stores that are viable and all things needed for truly living, breathing communities across the city.

Q: From what you know of the Kirkpatrick Heights-Greenwood Master Plan, are you comfortable with the direction that it's going?

Persley: The ultimate goal is for the Tulsa Community Development Corporation (CDC) to control and develop that property. Initially, I was concerned about the timeline being too spread out, but after meeting with Garry Clark, the new CEO of PartnerTulsa, I learned he has a much tighter deadline. My focus has been on ensuring the CDC controls and develops this property. I'm now sure that we share the same goal and will do everything we can to make that happen.

Q: Is there a better way to both integrate the work developers are doing here and make it more equitable for people of color in the communities here?

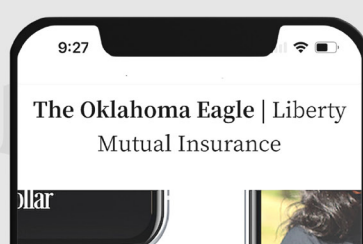
Persley: This needs to be done upfront as new companies come in. I see my role as interviewing these companies as much as they're interviewing us. I ask them how they'll add to our community, help build it up, invest in local programs, and use local contractors. Sometimes the same small group of people get invited to the table and we have to expand who's invited to those conversations, including small developers from around the city.

Q: What would you like to be known for achieving in Tulsa in the next five years?

Persley: I would like for people to say that I expanded economic development throughout all parts of the city, offered opportunities for everyone to be part of Tulsa's growth, and did so in a focused and purposeful way. If I can get people who aren't typically part of the system, not only engaged and employed, but helping make decisions about how the city moves and grows, that would be success.

Our Mission

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



Bradley Named An Obama Foundation Leader



PHOTO PROVIDED

Carlisha Williams-Bradley, founder and executive director of Women Empowering Nations, has been selected as an Obama Foundation Leader.

Williams-Bradley

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Selected To Further Inspire, Empower, And Connect Emerging Leaders Across The Globe To Make A Lasting Impact In Their Communities

The Obama Foundation Leaders program has selected Carlisha Williams-Bradley, founder and executive director of Women Empowering Nations, as one of 205 leaders. The named individuals represent government, non-profit, and for-profit sectors and have demonstrated a commitment to advancing the common good, according to the foundation.

The program trains participants around the world in leadership development and civic engagement to help build their skills and scale

their work across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The individuals have been selected from 70 different nations and territories.

Bradley will be one of 100 leaders from the United States. Other leaders will be representing the following countries/regions: 36 from Europe, 35 from the Asia-Pacific region, and 34 from Africa. The individuals have been selected from 70 different nations and territories.

"It is an incredible honor to be selected as an Obama USA Leader," said Bradley.

"This opportunity represents not only my own personal growth, but also the continued expansion of Women Empowering Nations' mission to equip young women with the leadership skills and global exposure they need to create meaningful social change. I am excited to learn from this community of changemakers and bring back new insights to further empower the next generation of women leaders."

As part of the six-month program, the Obama Leaders will convene virtually each week for interactive sessions designed to help them drive change by honing their leadership skills, building

deep relationships with their peers, and engaging with thought leaders and members of the Obama Foundation community.

The leaders will also have an opportunity to participate in various virtual experiences and special events, including one-on-one conversations with experienced mentors in the Foundation's global network.

Bradley has dedicated her career to advancing the leadership of young women through Women Empower Nations (WEN), a non-profit organization she founded in 2009. Over the past 15 years, WEN has impacted the lives of over 9,000 girls in more than 40 countries, providing leadership development, global exposure, and career acceleration opportunities.

Her efforts are focused on empowering the next generation of women to rise into leadership roles that drive systemic change and social impact. Through programs like the Girls Leading Our World (GLOW) Cohort, WEN equips young women with the tools to lead and succeed in their professional pursuits. Specifically, the non-

Cont. A20, Williams-Bradley

Langston University-Tulsa Launches "Langston Vibes" Radio Show



PHOTO LOREM IPSUM

"Langston Vibes" radio program will increase Langston University's visibility in the Tulsa community by highlighting events and activities in Tulsa.

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Langston University-Tulsa Campus is announcing the launch of its new radio show, "Langston Vibes." The hour-long broadcast will be on radio station KBOB 89.9 FM on Fridays,

4 p.m. - 5 p.m. The talk-show format will be co-hosted by Dr. Sherri Smith-Keys, associate vice president for clinical affairs/executive director of LU-Tulsa, and Dr. Daryl D. Green, dean of the School of Business.

"Langston Vibes" will aim to increase Langston University's visibility in the Tulsa

community by highlighting events, activities, and initiatives happening on the Langston campus and in the community. The program will feature interviews with alumni, administration, faculty, staff, students, and corporate partners, offering an informative and entertaining look at Oklahoma's only HBCU.

"Our inaugural program is set to become a staple of the Tulsa community, providing a unique platform for sharing the incredible stories and achievements of Langston University," said Smith-Keys in a press release.

The initial program will include serious and scholarly topics to be overseen by Smith-Keys and the lighter side of what is happening in the community to be managed by Green.

"Listeners can expect a perfect blend of news, stories, and inspiration, making their drive home enjoyable and enlightening," said Green.

"It [will be] more than just a radio show. [It will be] a platform to showcase our university's vibrant achievements, talent, and, specifically, our business school."

For more information, contact Ellie Melero at emelero@langston.edu.

Langston University

Langston University is Oklahoma's only Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The university consists of six academic schools offering a variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. LU provides students with a world-class education that includes hands-on learning through impactful research and beneficial internships. LU has campuses in Langston, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Ardmore. For more information, visit Langston University.

Langston University-Tulsa

Tulsa is one of Langston University's urban campuses. It is located at 914 N. Greenwood Avenue and is situated in the historic Greenwood District. Langston University became the first public university to provide courses in Tulsa in 1979. In 2009, after sharing a campus with Oklahoma State University-Tulsa for several years, the university officially opened the LU-Tulsa campus. The campus offers a bachelor's degree in nursing, bachelor's and master's degrees in rehabilitation counseling, and a master's degree in visual rehabilitation services. For more information, visit [Langston University - Tulsa](http://LangstonUniversity-Tulsa).

Events September

Sep. 20 - 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://theoriginalbwsmarketplace.com) or send an email to hello@tulsacountyliving.com.

Sep. 20 - Oct. 19

Cheyenne-Roger Mills County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, 101 S. L. L. Males Ave., 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 or call (580) 497-3318.

Sep. 20 - 22

Párlá Citywide Creative Festival sponsored by the J'Parlé Artist Group, Inc.

Sep. 20 - 29

"A Raisin in the Sun" play is to be presented by Black Broadway Tulsa at Maya Angelou Theater, 3101 W. Edison St., 8 p.m. - 10 p.m. For more information, visit Black Broadway Tulsa - Tickets.

Sep. 21

Tulsa Catholic Women's Conference will feature speakers, fellowship, and prayer. The conference will be held at the Cox Convention Center. The Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma are sponsors of the program. For more information, visit www.tulsacatholicwomen.com.

Since
1921
Our Mission

“
To amplify
our core
value of
equity,
through
journalism
and
editorial

Williams-Bradley



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The Obama Foundation Leaders program, has selected Carlisha Williams-Bradley, founder and executive director of Women Empowering Nations, as one of 205 leaders. The named individuals represent government, non-profit, and for-profit sectors and have demonstrated a commitment to advancing the common good, according to the foundation.

From A19

profit offers direct opportunities to internships, scholarships, and fellowships that fast-track their career paths.

In addition to her work with WEN, Bradley has distinguished herself as a public servant and award recipient. She served on the Oklahoma State Board of Education representing Congressional District 1 from 2019 to 2022.

She has received numerous accolades for her commitment to social justice, education reform, and the development of women, including the 2024 Charles V. Willie Advocate Award from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, 2024 BMe Vanguard, 2020 Champion of Student Success, 2020 Tulsan of the Year, among other honors.

The Obama Foundation Leaders USA Program, now in its second year, was inspired by the leadership values and approach of former President Barack and Michelle Obama. The program draws on the Foundation's 'Hope to

Action' curriculum to support leaders in engaging diverse perspectives, building collective power, and making tangible, sustainable progress toward a better world. The Leaders USA Program has a particular focus on strengthening democratic culture.

Bradley is one of two Oklahomans selected. The other participant is Abigail Mashunkashey, director of communications for the Osage Nation. More than 6,000 applicants from across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the United States were received.

Obama Foundation Leaders Program

The mission at the Obama Foundation is to inspire, empower, and connect people to change their world.

We seek to build an active democratic culture where people are equipped and motivated to make change, not just at the polls or in the halls of power, but in their communities, in the places where they live, work, and play.

Around the world, [the organization is]

empowering rising leaders to more powerfully participate by connecting them with the skills, resources, and networks to maximize their potential and take their local impact global. [The nonprofit is] forging pathways to essential opportunities for young people, through education, mentorship, and career development, no matter where [they are] from [around the world and in the country]. For more information, visit <https://obama.org/programs/leaders/>.

Women Empowering Nations

Women Empowering Nations provides exposure, development, and mentorship to underrepresented girls to accelerate their path to social impact leadership. Through comprehensive programming that provides leadership coaching and global exposure, WEN cultivates a pipeline of young women poised for leadership roles that will drive positive social impact on a global scale. For more information, visit <https://www.wenations.org/>.

Events

Sep. 21

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 focus of the program features brass instruments. For more information, visit <https://www.tulsasymphony.org/flint/>.

Sep. 25 - 27

"Life Stages – Mental Health Across a Lifetime" will be the theme for the Zarrow Mental Health Symposium, which will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. For more information, visit <https://www.zarrowSYMPOSIUM.org/>.

Sep. 26

American Bank of Oklahoma and Tulsa Tech are presenting "Loan Readiness and Credit Repair Strategies." The program is scheduled to be held at Tulsa Tech Peoria Campus, 3850 N. Peoria Ave., 6 p.m. – 7 p.m. Refreshments will be provided. Additional community partners sponsoring the program are Apex Title and Closing Services, Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, and Greenwood Women's Business Center. For more information, call (918) 371-7300.

Sep. 28

Alzheimer's Diversity Outreach Services welcomes Vence L. Bonham Jr., acting deputy director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) and is director of the Health Disparities Unit in NHGRI's Social and Behavioral Research Branch at Langston University-Tulsa, 914 N. Greenwood Ave. For more information, visit www.alzoutreach.org.

Sep. 29

Oklahoma Birth of Legends 2 is scheduled for this year at Guthrie Green, 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. "The Marriage Between Hip-Hop and R&B" themed event will feature live entertainment, food trucks, and vendors. For more information, visit <https://www.guthriegreen.com> or call (918) 209-1565.

Women's Conference To Recognize Leaders

Dr. Jerry Goodwin
The Oklahoma Eagle

Color Me True has scheduled a Women's Conference for Oct. 5. The program will be held at the Central Library in the Pocahontas Greadington Room, 400 Civic Center, from 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

"The program will be elegant, enlightening, encouraging, and prayerfully empowering," said Minister Mary L. Williams, conference host.

Scheduled guest speakers are the following: Candace Barnes; Minister Willetta Burks,

administrator of the Gary Burks Foundation, prayer leader, and teacher; Kenya Dennis, minister, teacher, and author; Sadiqa LaNear, testimonial; Denise McClellan, minister and author; Barbara Ross, minister and women's leader; and Minister Pamela Ware, prayer warrior.

Additional participants will be prayer warriors: Michella Allen, Minister Ramona Conner, Yvonne Jackson, Tacoya Powell, Minister Star Ramirez, Adrenna Sango, Tanyail Wiley, Danta Wilson, and Ray'chel Wilson.

For more information, contact mwilliamsj19@icloud.com.



COLUMN ONE, TOP **Mary Williams** is executive director of Color Me True and host of the Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN ONE, BOTTOM **Candace Barnes** will be a featured speaker at Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN TWO, TOP **Willetta Burks**, prayer leader and teacher, will be participating at the Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN TWO, BOTTOM **Kenya Dennis**, a minister and author, is one of several speakers at the Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN THREE, ROW ONE **Sadiqa LaNear** will be offering a testimonial at the Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN THREE, ROW TWO **Denise McClellan**, a minister and author, will be a guest speaker at Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN THREE, ROW THREE **Barbara Ross**, minister and a women's leader, will be appearing at the Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED



COLUMN THREE, ROW FOUR **Minister Pamela Ware**, a prayer warrior, will join six other speakers at the Color Me True Women's Conference. PHOTO PROVIDED