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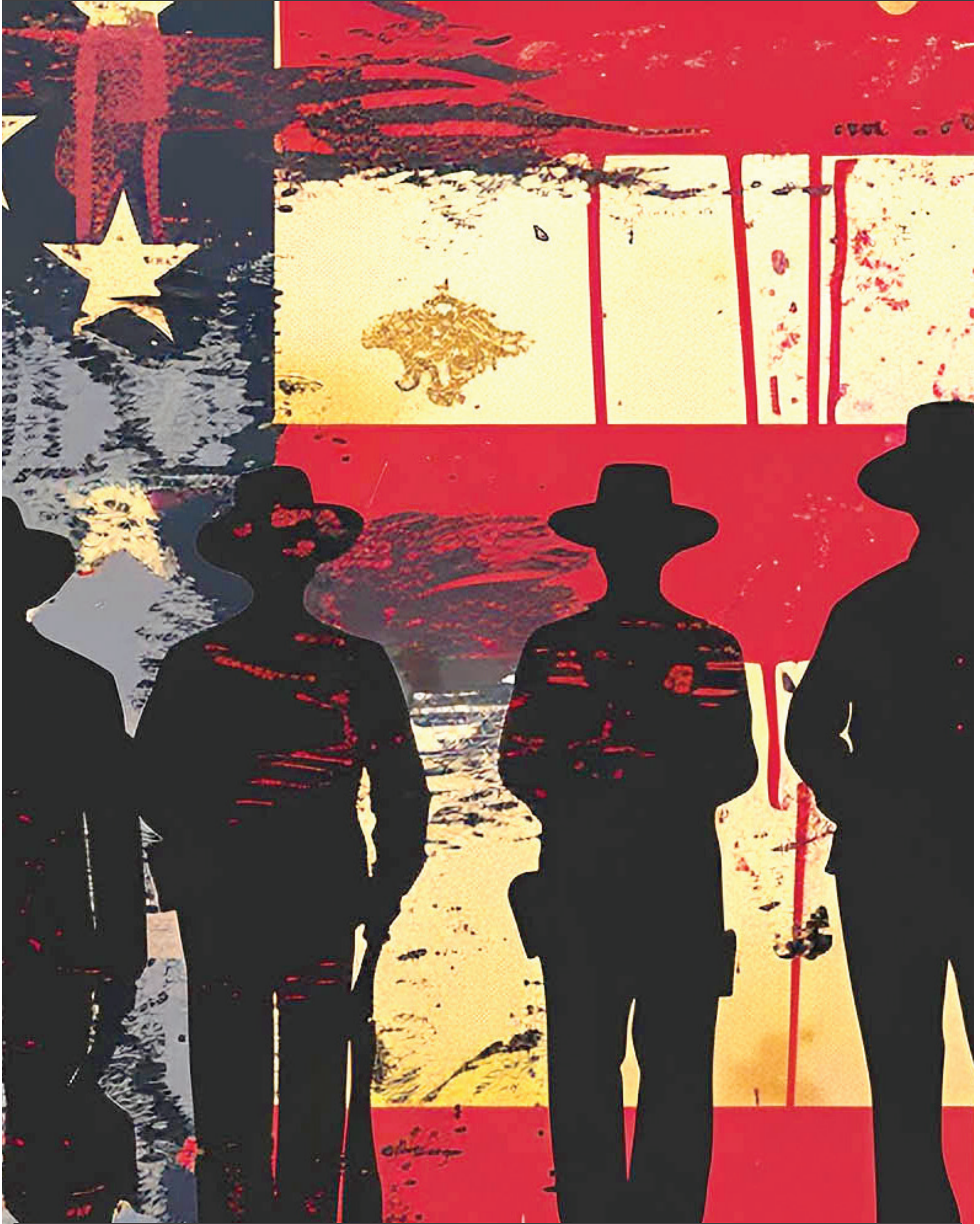
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October 11, 2024 - October 17, 2024

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FEATURED

Native Americans continue to fight barriers to voting

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Voting, A9



FEATURED

Sexual abuse settlement inflates Ninnekah property taxes, infuriates residents

Ninnekah, A12



Destruction of The Daily Record of Wilmington, said to be the only black-owned daily newspaper in the United States at the time, by white supremacists.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY

Immigrants

Trump's Campaign Against Immigrants Echoes Earlier White Supremacist Tirades

MILTON COLEMAN
The Oklahoma Eagle

Donald J. Trump's latest rant against immigrants - that murder is "in their genes" -brings his campaign rhetoric closer than ever to the strategically crafted propaganda that powered the White supremacist insurrection in Wilmington, N.C., in 1898. Both Trump's rant and the earlier rhetoric are marked by unapologetic racism.

Cont. A5, Immigrants

The Oklahoma Eagle

Jake Simmons, Jr.: Oil Broker & Civil Rights Advocate

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



African American oil broker and civil rights advocate Jake Simmons, was born on January 17, 1901, in Indian Territory at Sawokla, which later became Haskell. He emerged from a Creek freedman heritage to broker multimillion-dollar deals between large oil companies and emerging African nations. His maternal great-grandfather, Cow Tom, formerly a slave of a Creek Indian, served as an interpreter for the Creek in dealing with the U.S. government after the Civil War and afterward as a leader for many of the newly freed Creek slaves. Simmons's father owned a large ranch in the Haskell area. The senior Simmons's prosperity captured the attention of Booker T. Washington on one of his trips to Oklahoma. Washington stayed an evening at the ranch and sold both father and son on the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Jake Simmons, Jr., graduated from Tuskegee in 1919. After Tuskegee he married Melba Dorsey and worked

in Detroit. By 1920 he had divorced Melba and moved back to Oklahoma, marrying Willie Eva Flowers.

In the 1920s Simmons began brokering oil deals in eastern Oklahoma. During the hard times of the depressed 1930s he turned to real estate, selling farms around Muskogee to African Americans in East Texas who had made money in the new oil boom. The poor quality of the land in East Texas, as well as the area's pervasive discrimination and violence, helped Simmons convince many African Americans to move to Oklahoma. In the 1960s Simmons began brokering large deals with African countries, beginning with Liberia. He worked as a partner for Phillips Petroleum Company and later for Signal Oil and Gas Company.

Always active in civil rights, Simmons pursued an early court case against separate schools in a 1938 suit under his wife's name,

Simmons v. Muskogee Board of Education. In March 1939 the Supreme Court dismissed the Simmons' appeal from the U.S. District Court. Simmons acted as a leader in the local NAACP and served as state conference president from 1962 until 1968. He also served as a member of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Commission, presided over the Negro Business League, and participated in the influential National Petroleum Council. Jake Simmons, Jr., died in Tulsa on March 24, 1981. His children, Jake Simmons III, a former undersecretary of the U.S. Interior, Donald, an economist who took over Simmons Royalty Company, Blanche, a social worker, and Kenneth, a Harvard-educated professor of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, all benefited from their father's strong leadership.

JAKE SIMMONS, Jr. (right) and E. Melvin Porter, 1964 (2012.201.B1028.0119, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

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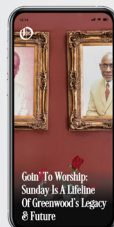
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Destruction of The Daily Record of Wilmington, said to be the only black-owned daily newspaper in the United States at the time, by white supremacists.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY

Immigrants

From A3

Trump built his political base and won the presidency in 2016 on the issue of immigration. The incendiary views he voiced were not about immigration policy. Instead, they were directed towards immigrants themselves, particularly those newcomers to America who do not look like he does and whose family immigration histories are not the same as his.

And yet, many of the things involving immigrants Trump now complains about loudest are policies and practices that have directly benefited members of his own family from the time of Wilmington through his time in the White House.

Trump's paternal grandfather, Friedrich Trump, arrived in the U.S. alone from Germany in 1885 as a 16-year-old - an "unaccompanied minor" in immigration law parlance. More than a century and a half later, under Trump's presidency, unaccompanied minors were among the border crossers most harshly punished by Trump's immigration policies.

Friedrich Trump was allowed to join an older sister, Katharina, who had migrated earlier, thereby benefiting from the 'family unification' principle underlying many immigration practices then and now.

Trump has used his bully pulpit to denigrate such policies as "chain migration." It's a policy that must be ended to "MAKE AMERICA SAFE," he tweeted at one point. "And chain migration--think of that," he complained on another occasion. "So you come in, and now you can bring your family, and then you can bring your mother and your father," [ABC News](#).

Yet, Trump did not complain when his wife, Melania, who came to the U.S. as an immigrant from Slovenia, indulged in her own form of chain migration. She brought her parents to America to join her and put them on a path to citizenship, which they obtained in 2018.

Pointing Finger At "They" and "Them"

In Trump's ideology, public presence, and self-centered campaign, the immigrant problem is the people--sometimes explicitly stated, sometimes merely "they" or "them"--but always people who don't look like him and are so-born that they can never be anything other than whatever he bad-mouths them to be.

In one speech, "they" were "murderers" - 13,000 of "them," - he claimed, in America only because of the alleged 'open borders' policies of Vice President Kamala Harris.

"Many of them murdered far more than one person, and they're now happily living in the

PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

United States," Trump told interviewer Hugh Hewitt. "You know, now a murderer, I believe this, it's in their genes. And we got a lot of bad genes in our country right now," [MSN.com](#).

The Wilmington insurrectionists said much the same in their "White Declaration of Independence," proclaimed just hours after they subverted the election, even as they were about to force city leaders to resign at gunpoint and replace them with others they chose, and after effectively overturning democracy created by the Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

The framers of the Constitution "did not anticipate the enfranchisement of an ignorant population of African origin," they claimed, and "the men of the State of North Carolina who joined in forming the Union did not contemplate for their descendants a subjection to an

inferior race.... [UNCW.edu](#).

"We...do hereby declare that we will no longer be ruled, and will never again be ruled, by men of African origin."

A couple of days later, a local White-owned newspaper, the Wilmington Messenger, applauded the end of "Negro domination" and effectively declared Wilmington great again:

"We must hope that by far the greater part of the negroes in this city are anxious for the restoration of order and quiet and the 'old order'--the rule of the White people," [Newspaper.org](#).

*

Immigration, the words, and the people are an inextricable component of Trump's relentless 'we-me-and-I' against 'they-and-them' political propaganda, and also a perhaps less considered throughline in the comparisons of the Wilmington insurrection to the one at the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Demonizing Immigrants of Color

On the one hand, immigrants of color and their families are always the demons in Trump's lie-laced rhetorical indictments.

Examples abound. They include: the 'Birtherism' lie about Barack Hussein Obama, the 'Mexican rapists' lie that launched his campaign, and the s---hole African countries lie while in the White House. More recently, in addition to the lies about the Haitians in Ohio, the lies about Venezuelans emptying out of jails and mental institutions and taking over Colorado's third largest city. And the very personalized and vitriolic lies about Harris, the native-born American daughter of immigrant parents.

On the other hand, the single largest group of generic 'immigrants' at the time of Wilmington was not those coming from Europe, like Trump's grandfather. He arrived in the U.S. from Bavaria in 1885 under many of the same policies and processes that his grandson vehemently disparages.

Instead, the largest group was some four million ethnic African Americans, most born on U.S. soil and refugees from the Civil War, who in their own time had migrated into the entire U.S. citizenship on a path paved by the Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution of the United States--including the right to vote.

Their success stoked White grievance and ignited political wrath throughout the South then in so many

Cont. A6, Immigrants



Alexander Manly, Editor Daily Record. c.1880s.

A scene of the segregated South, taken in 1938 at the Halifax County Courthouse in northeastern North Carolina.

PHOTO JOHN VACHON/FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION



Immigrants

From A5

ways akin to the way that Black, Brown, and Asian immigrants seem to do with Trump, Vance, and their supporters.

History Lessons

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the Harvard University historian, argues that now is an excellent time to look back and learn.

“Few American historical periods are more relevant to understanding our contemporary racial politics than Reconstruction. Think of the fundamental questions that the period study forces us to consider,” he writes in “Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow.”

“Who is entitled to citizenship? Who should have the right to vote? What is the government’s responsibility in dealing with terrorism? What is the relationship between political and economic democracy?”

There has been considerable debate in the years since Trump left office regarding the legal aspects surrounding the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol that followed Trump’s “Stop the Steal” rally, as well as his role in it and comparisons to Wilmington.

Several leaders of the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers have been convicted of seditious conspiracy for their role in the violence, and Trump himself is facing federal charges of denial of voting rights based on an 1870 law initially targeting Ku Klux Klan terrorism.

Looking Forward

Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder also argues the urgency of looking ahead.

“On January 6, we witnessed an attempted coup that might have seemed wholly unprecedented and disruptive, but make no mistake: It was actually the culmination of an effort years in the making, one that has only accelerated in the months since,” Holder writes in “Our Unfinished March: The Violent Past and Imperiled Future of the Vote--A History, A Crisis, A Plan.”

“That’s why, in its aftermath, legislatures across the country, Republican elected officials, and conservative media outlets haven’t been devoted to figuring out how to prevent an uprising like that from happening again. Instead, too many have been working strategically and methodically to make sure that next time, the coup can succeed.”

*

For Trump, Vance, and their followers, the immigration issue in this campaign, as in the past, is less about policy and overwhelmingly about people, as were the Wilmington events were also primarily about people.

At the time of the Civil War, the United States was essentially a Black and White nation, about 86 percent White and 14 percent Black. Native Americans, on and off reservations, plus Chinese and Japanese, totaled about 1 percent.

One-third of the then nation, 12 of the 36 states, formed an “unrecognized breakaway republic,” in diplomatic terms, that became known as the Confederate States of America, which launched and subsequently lost a war against the United States of America, another sovereignty, so to speak.

The formerly enslaved were the likes of refugees of war who sought and obtained asylum, as many of those crossing all U.S. borders seek to do now.

Even before the war, their movement about the country of those like them was governed less by the still young federal government and more by the states, who controlled their borders, and chattel slavery, too.

“Whether to protect slavery, to eliminate Black labor competition, or simply for racism’s sake, lawmakers across the country and in Congress legislated against Black mobility...,” Michael A. Schoeppner, a history professor at the University of Maine at Farmington, writes for the JStor online site.

“Free Black migrants, both African American and foreign-born...faced closed or regulated borders from Florida to Oregon... Black migrants who violated state bond laws or Black exclusion provisions turned out to be the first illegal immigrants in American history.”

Meanwhile, some two million people immigrated here from abroad during the 1860s, and that number more than doubled to five million during the 1880s. By 1866, immigrants were 13 percent of the U.S. population, about the same as the Black population at the time.

The immigrants, mainly from Germany and Ireland, looked like those who had come and settled on the Native Americans’ land earlier. Yet, they posed a 19th-century DEI challenge of sorts because their “origin stories, last names, and religious beliefs set them apart,” Laura Reston wrote in The New Republic.

Many were Catholic, for instance, and some established Whites questioned their would-be patriotism, arguing that they were likely to be more loyal to the Pope than to the United States, and suggesting they were threats to national security.

There also were claims that many of them lacked the social skills and intellectual know-how to assimilate to the American way of life, similar to the allegations that, for example, Haitians are imposing alien culture on Middle Americans in Ohio.

Yet, the freedmen/immigrants posed more vexing challenges. Not only did most of them not look the same as either of the others. There also were so many of them they could vote in local elections, and that’s precisely what they did, especially in North Carolina.



“The Vampire that Hovers Over North Carolina,” Norman Ethre Jennet, The News & Observer cartoonist. PHOTO THE NEWS & OBSERVER, SEP. 27, 1898

RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER, NOV. 10, 1898

The White Declaration of Independence

Believing that the Constitution of the United States contemplated a government to be carried on by an enlightened people; believing that its framers did not anticipate the enfranchisement of an ignorant population of African origin; and believing that the men of the State of North Carolina who joined in forming the Union did not contemplate for their descendants a subjection to an inferior race;

We, the undersigned citizens of the city of Wilmington and county of New Hanover, do hereby declare that we will no longer be ruled, and will never again be ruled, by men of African origin. This condition we have in part endured because we felt that the consequences of the war of secession were such to deprive us of the fair consideration of many of our countrymen.

We believe that, after more than thirty years, this is no longer the case.

The stand we now pledge ourselves to is forced upon us suddenly by a crisis, and our eyes are open to the fact that we must act now or leave our descendants to a fate too gloomy to be borne.

While we recognize the authority of the United States and will yield to it if exerted, we would not for a moment believe that it is the purpose of more than 60,000,000 of our own race to subject us permanently to a fate to which no Anglo-Saxon has ever been forced to submit.

We, therefore, believing that we represent unequivocally the sentiment of the white people of this county and city, hereby for ourselves, and representing them, proclaim:

1. That the time has passed for the intelligent citizens of this community, owning 95 per cent of the property and paying taxes in like proportion, to be ruled by negroes.
2. That we will not tolerate the action of unscrupulous white men in affiliating with the negroes so that by means of their votes they can dominate the intelligent and thrifty element in the community, thus causing business to stagnate and progress to be out of the question.
3. That the negro has demonstrated, by antagonizing our interest in every way, and especially by his ballot, that he is incapable of realizing that his interests are and should be identical with those of the community.
4. That the progressive element in any community is the white population, and that the giving of nearly all of the employment to negro laborers has been against the best interests of this county and city, and is sufficient reason why the city of Wilmington with its natural advantages has not become a city of at least 50,000 inhabitants.

“The White Declaration of Independence,” PHOTO THE NEWS & OBSERVER, NOV. 10, 1898

At the time, Wilmington was the state’s largest city and the seat of New Hanover County. The populations of both were majority Black, and the state’s population was nearly 40 percent--Black, its highest ever.

Their success was a model for some. But it was a cause for despair and grievance for others, similar to many current concerns.

Some White people were “willing to accept some black advancement, so long as Whites held the reins of power,” Duke University history professor Timothy B. Tyson wrote in “The Ghosts of 1898: Wilmington’s Race Riot and the Rise of White Supremacy,” a 2006 series of special reports for the Raleigh News & Observer.

“But Black economic gains also provoked many poor Whites who competed with them, and wealthy Whites persistently encouraged animosity between poor Whites and Blacks in a divide-and-conquer strategy.”

“Negroes were given preference in the matter of employment...,” Harry Hayden, at the time a reporter for the Wilmington Morning Star, wrote. “And this economic condition was aggravated considerably by the influx of many Negroes, and Wilmington was really becoming a Mecca for Negroes and a City of Lost Opportunities for the working class Whites.

“Several Negroes were members of the city’s Board of Aldermen, Negro policemen patrolled the beats within the town limits. Negro firefighters were crowding out White fire laddies, finally disrupting the latter’s volunteer fire department, which had been staffed by high-class German and Irish citizens. Negro lawyers were practicing in the state, city, and federal courts.”

Two days after the coup, a local White-owned newspaper, the Wilmington Messenger, applauded the end of “Negro domination” and effectively declared Wilmington great again.

“We must hope that by far the greater part of the negroes in this city is anxious for the restoration of order and quiet and the ‘old order’--the rule of the White people.” it editorialized.

“If they are not, they are too simple to be reasoned with and know not their condition and what is best for them. ...The tables are turned now and forever. Never more shall Sambo and Josh ride rough-shod over the White man who befriended and helped them.”

The leaders of the coup issued a “White Declaration of Independence” that included a promise to make Black jobs in town White again.

Building An Anti-immigrant Base

Trump’s anti-immigration rhetoric has helped him develop a present-day political base not unlike that of the insurrectionists in Wilmington, New York University historian Steven Hahn, author of “Illiberal America: A History,” wrote in the New York Times recently:

“When Trump questioned Barack Obama’s legitimacy to serve as president, a project that quickly became known as ‘birtherism,’ he made use of a Reconstruction-era racist trope that rejected the legitimacy of Black political rights and power.

“In so doing, Trump began to cement a coalition of aggrieved White voters. They were ready to push back against the nation’s growing cultural diversity--embodied by Mr. Obama--and the challenges they saw to traditional hierarchies of family, gender, and race.”

University of Georgia professor Cas Mudde has described such ideological trappings to The Atlantic as “xenophobic nationalism,” a derivative of the ‘them-against-us’ rhetoric of the Nativist movement that flourished in response to 19th-century immigration from Europe.

Trump’s self-identity seems to fit that bill. “You know what I am? I’m a nationalist. Nationalist! Use that word! Use that word!” he proclaimed at a rally in Houston in 2018.

He has made race a core element of his political brand. Washington Post columnist Philip Bump wrote:

“‘Make America Great Again’ was always inherently about turning back the clock in the United States to unwind changes that included

diversity. Over time, it became impossible to disentangle Trump’s views on race from his politics...Trump’s comments about crime and policing and the border and Democrats were interlaced with appeals to racial resentment.”

Trump has made Obama and Harris, two ultra-prominent, darker-skinned, and native-born Americans with foreign-born parents, living personifications of his signature campaign propaganda, and perhaps even more.

“For Trump, it almost seems that the fact of Obama, the fact of a Black president, insulted him personally...Trump truly is something new--the first president whose entire political existence hinges on the fact of a Black president,” Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote shortly after Trump came into office

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/>

As political piñatas, they are much to Trump, not only as the freedmen/immigrants were to White supremacists in Wilmington, but also as the infamous “welfare queen” was to Ronald Reagan’s 1976 campaign and convicted armed robber and rapist Willie Horton was to George H.W. Bush’s campaign in 1988.

But now is a different time, and the former president and Republican Party leader is a distinct and more desperate politician than in the past, New York Times columnist Jamelle Bouie wrote just last month:

“Where once Donald Trump attracted only the right-wing fringe of American politics, now he leads it. Where once he kept some distance from agitators and provocateurs... now they’re at the center of his campaign. And where once he merely inspired extremists to act, now he points them directly at the objects of his rage.”

Epilogue

Trump has promised that if returned to the presidency, he will deport millions of immigrants--a pledge cheered in boisterous chants of “Send them back” and on placards reading “Mass Deportations Now” during the Republican convention. It, too, has a Wilmington-era counterpart.

A vibrant colonization movement then encouraged free ethnic Africans to self-deport, and many in the party of Lincoln--including President Lincoln himself--were among its supporters.

“While he strongly opposed the institution of slavery, he didn’t believe in racial equality, or that people of different races could successfully integrate,” journalist Farrell Evans writes on the History online site. “And unleashing nearly 4 million Black people into white American society--North or South was a political nonstarter.”

A year before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln issued another executive order that freed 3,100 enslaved in the District of Columbia and authorized reparations payments of up to \$300 to former slaveholders for every person set free. It also offered up to \$100 each to any formerly enslaved who would self-deport to Liberia or Haiti.

There were relatively few takers there and then; not so later.

“In the weeks and months following the coup, more than 2,000 Blacks fled the city. And a black majority city almost overnight became a white supremacist stronghold,” Zucchini said in a 2020 interview on NPR.

“The effect of the coup and the aftermath was that blacks did not hold elected or appointed offices in Wilmington or eastern North Carolina for another 70 years.”

They self-deported, migrating with a hope for better lives in the land of their birth, later that Richard Wright nevertheless would later describe as “alien soil,” yet places where they could thrive, under, he wrote, “the warmth of other suns.”



ABOVE **Oklahoma primary education classroom**, which will be required to comply with the mandate of Ryan Walters, Oklahoma's Superintendent of Public Education, who has stated that "Without basic knowledge of it [Bible], Oklahoma students are unable to properly contextualize the foundation of our nation which is why Oklahoma educational standards provide for its instruction."
PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

LEFT **Books including the Holy Bible** are stacked on the table in front of Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters at the Oklahoma Board of Education meeting on June 27, 2024.
PHOTO JAKE RAMSEY/OKLAHOMA WATCH

Bibles

State Education Department Seeks Bids for 55,000 Classroom Bibles

From Cover

According to the bid documents, vendors must meet certain specifications: Bibles must be the King James Version; must contain the Old and New Testaments; must include copies of the Pledge of Allegiance, Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights; and must be bound in leather or leather-like material.

A salesperson at Mardel Christian & Education searched, and though they carry 2,900 Bibles, none fit the parameters.

But one Bible fits perfectly: Lee Greenwood's God Bless the U.S.A. Bible, endorsed by former President Donald Trump and commonly referred to as the Trump Bible. They cost \$60 each online, with Trump receiving fees for his endorsement.

Mardel doesn't carry the God Bless the U.S.A. Bible or another Bible that could meet the specifications, the We The People Bible, which was endorsed by Donald Trump Jr. It sells for \$90.

"The RFP on its face seems fair, but with additional scrutiny, we can see there are very few Bibles on the market that would meet these criteria, and all of them have been endorsed by former President Donald Trump," Oklahoma Appleseed Center for Law and Justice Executive Director Colleen McCarty said.

Former Oklahoma Attorney General Drew

Edmondson said the request for proposals might violate state law.

"It appears to me that this bid is anything but competitive," Edmondson said. "It adds to the basic specification other requirements that have nothing to do with the text. The special binding and inclusion of government documents will exclude almost all bidders. If the bid specs exclude most bidders unnecessarily, I could consider that a violation."

Separation of church and state concerns aside, much less expensive Bibles are readily available. Paperback versions of the New King James Version are available online for \$2.99 each, less than 5% of what the Trump-endorsed Bible would cost. There are many free Bible apps, too.

Though Walters has frequently said he wants Bibles in every classroom, he has also clarified publicly that he wants them in classes where the Bible might apply to academic standards, such as history or literature. The request for 55,000 copies doesn't fit either scenario; there are only 43,000 classroom teachers in the state, and many fewer teaching just history or literature.

If the Bibles cost \$60 each, and the state buys 55,000, that's \$3.3 million.

Walters: No 'Extra Things'

On Sept. 26, Walters asked for \$3 million to purchase Bibles for Oklahoma classrooms as

“

It appears to me that this bid is anything but competitive...

It adds to the basic specification other requirements that have nothing to do with the text. The special binding and inclusion of government documents will exclude almost all bidders.

Drew Edmondson, former Oklahoma Attorney General

part of his agency's fiscal year 2026 budget request to the Oklahoma Legislature.

"We have talked about ensuring that our history courses include the role the Bible played throughout American history," Walters said. "We've talked about the efforts of left-wing groups and the teachers' unions to drive the Bible out of school. I believe it's important for historical context for our kids to understand the role the Bible played."

He said the request was in conjunction with \$3 million the agency was already putting forth to provide Bibles in the classroom. In a discussion with the board at the meeting, Walters said he wanted to issue an RFP and wanted the King James version of the Bible.

"We don't want extra things in there; historical documents are fine," Walters said. "If it's the King James version and the Constitution, the Magna Carta, things like that, that are also in statute that can be used in the classroom, that's fine. But we don't want commentary around the Bible because this is to serve as a historical reference document."

Bidding Opened to Fast-Track Classroom Bibles

Walters said finding a Bible vendor should go through the competitive bidding process because that would be the cleanest, easiest way to choose.

The board did not discuss purchasing Bibles

Cont. A8, Bibles

The Second Book of **SAMUEL**

CHAPTER 15 *Disobedience of Saul*

1. Samuel said to Saul: "It was I the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now, therefore, listen to the message of the LORD.

2. Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will punish what Amalek did to the Israelites when he barred their way as they came up from Egypt.

3. Go, now, attack Amalek, and put under the ban everything he has. Do not spare him; kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys."

4. Saul alerted the army, and at Telaim reviewed two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah.

5. **Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.**

6. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

The Book of Samuel is a book in the Hebrew Bible, found as two books (1–2 Samuel) in the Old Testament. The book is part of the Deuteronomistic history, a series of books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) that constitute a theological history of the Israelites and that aim to explain God's law for Israel under the guidance of the prophets.

According to Jewish tradition, the book was written by Samuel, with additions by the prophets Gad and Nathan, who together are three prophets who had appeared within 1 Chronicles during the account of David's reign. Modern scholarly thinking posits that the entire Deuteronomistic history was composed circa 630–540 BCE by combining a number of independent texts of various ages.

COPY, THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS' (USCCB'S) MISSION

Bibles

For Oklahoma Educators, Walter's plan is a solution in search of a problem

From A7

with the current budget year appropriation. However, the state issued the solicitation Monday, and it's open for just two weeks. The Office of Management and Enterprise Services typically recommends at least four weeks.

Dan Isett, a spokesman for the Education Department, said their intention with the RFP is to get Bibles distributed to classrooms as quickly as possible.

Isett said the \$3 million is coming from payroll savings.

"OSDE has realized significant personnel and administrative cost savings that can be directed toward this program," he said.

At least 130 people have resigned or been fired since Walters took office in 2023, according to The Oklahoman.

'Trump Has Praised Our Efforts'

In June, Walters announced a mandate that a Bible should be in every Oklahoma classroom, though it's unlikely he would have the authority to enforce that. The Oklahoma Supreme Court affirmed that school districts maintain local control over curricula. Some superintendents across the state have said they do not intend to add the Bible to their

Bixby Public Schools

Bixby Public Schools is a public school district in Bixby, Oklahoma, a suburb south of Tulsa, Oklahoma. As of 2022, the K-12 district serves over 7,000 students and is made up of 9 schools.

curriculum.

"We will not be forcing our teachers to do this," Bixby Superintendent Rob Miller said on News Nation on Aug. 12. "As a Christian myself, the idea of diminishing the word of God to a mere classroom prop is a little repulsive to me, so we will not be complying with that directive of having a physical Bible in every classroom."

Walters has been touting his Bible plan to local and national groups. In these interviews, he talks more about Christianity than history.

In one interview this week, Walters claimed Democrats plan to teach kids to hate their country as well as Christianity and Judaism and said his Bible initiative is an antidote to that.

"We are going to be so proud here in Oklahoma to be the first state in the country to bring the Bible back to every single classroom and every state should be doing this.... President Trump praised our efforts. President Trump has been the leader on this issue."

Walters is a frequent guest on conservative podcasts, radio shows and TV stations. His agency has a \$60,000 per year contract with D.C.-based Vought Strategies to book him for national interviews weekly.

Walters endorsed Trump, and many onlookers surmise he's angling for a cabinet position if Trump wins in November.

Trump licenses his name, image and likeness to be used in the Greenwood Bible's marketing. The company's website says it has no connection to the Trump campaign.

Financial disclosure forms filed by Trump at the Office of Governmental Ethics show he does benefit from Greenwood Bible sales through a Trump company, CIC Ventures LLC. His latest disclosure, obtained by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, shows Trump received \$300,000 in royalties from the God Bless the U.S.A. Bible.

Oklahoma Democratic Party Chair Alicia Andrews said Walters is attempting to endear himself to Trump via the RFP for such a specific Bible.

"For (Walters) to craft this RFP, to specifically identify this Bible, this document that the state taxpayers would spend money on, either is a dereliction of duty, a dereliction of stewardship or maybe it is a ... signal to former President Trump: 'Hey, hey, I'm on your team, sir,'" Andrews said.

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Court Justices

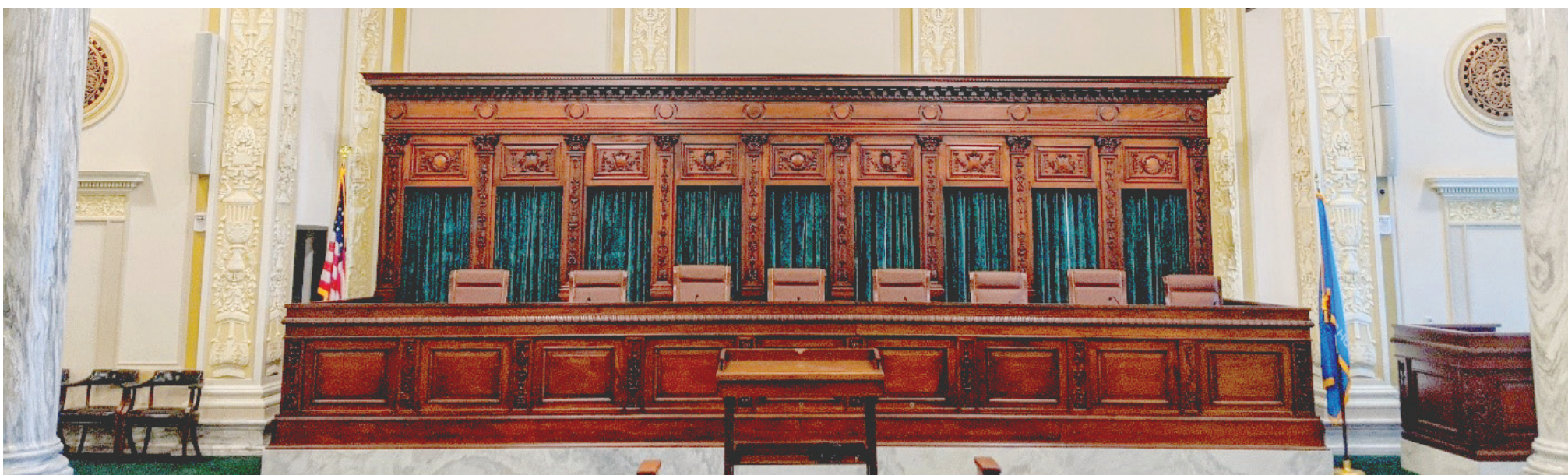


PHOTO OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court of Oklahoma is a court of appeal for non-criminal cases, one of the two highest judicial bodies in the U.S. state of Oklahoma, and leads the judiciary of Oklahoma, the judicial branch of the government of Oklahoma.

Democrat-appointed Okla. Supreme Court Justices Targeted In Election Ads

PAUL MONIES Oklahoma Watch

A political nonprofit connected to a conservative think tank is embarking on an advertising blitz to convince Oklahoma voters not to retain three of the four justices on the Oklahoma Supreme Court appointed by Democratic governors.

People for Opportunity, formed in 2021, has bought TV ads in several Oklahoma television markets. Three of its board members work for the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, which has advocated for getting rid of the nominating process for

judges in Oklahoma.

The TV ads paint Oklahoma Supreme Court Justices Yvonne Kauger, Noma Gurich and James Edmondson as "activist, liberal" judges.

The three justices are before voters in a judicial retention election on the Nov. 5 ballot. If they aren't retained, Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt would appoint their successors from a list compiled by the Judicial Nominating Commission.

No appellate court justice has ever lost a retention election, and it's rare for the races to attract much attention, let alone campaign ads on TV. People for Opportunity is banking on the low name recognition of the justices to make its case to voters.

Kauger was appointed by former Democratic Gov. George Nigh in 1984. Edmondson was appointed by former Democratic Gov. Brad Henry in 2003, and Gurich was appointed by Henry in 2011. Stitt, in his second and final term, has appointed three justices. Former Republican Govs. Frank Keating and Mary Fallin each had one Supreme Court pick.

Dave Bond, a spokesman for People for Opportunity, said the group hopes to get its message out to voters in a relatively quiet November general election for statewide races. There's just two state questions on the ballot and one statewide race, for the Oklahoma Corporation Commission.

"I do think voters have a little more

bandwidth this election cycle in particular to give more thought to who their state Supreme Court justice is going into the election," Bond said. "I think it is a unique election cycle in that regard."

Political advertising disclosures filed with the Federal Communications Commission show People for Opportunity reserved ad space at all four of the major network affiliate TV stations in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Not all of the disclosures include the amount spent on the ads, but the group is spending \$81,000 at ABC affiliate KOCO-TV and \$20,000 at Fox affiliate KOKH, both in Oklahoma City.

Bond said he didn't have an estimate

Cont. A11, Court Justices



Andrea Martinez, chairwoman of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, stands outside the tribe's polling location in Schurz, Nev., during the state's 2024 primary election on June 11, 2024.

PHOTO CHRISTOPHER LOMAHQUAHU/NEWS21

Voting

Native Americans continue to fight barriers to voting

CHRISTOPHER LOMAHQUAHU
& ESHAAN SARUP
NonDoc

A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER BEING RECOGNIZED AS U.S. CITIZENS, NATIVE AMERICANS AROUND THE COUNTRY STILL FACE OBSTACLES IN EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE.

WOLF POINT, Mont. — Louise Smith sits at her daughter's dining room table on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, poring over photographs and newspaper clippings — the everyday scraps that weave a tapestry of her 101 years of life.

She revisits the decades she spent as an Indian Health Service nurse; her retirement to care for her husband, Buck, before he died; and how, late in life, she was named the grand marshal at a parade marking this year's 100th anniversary of the Indian Citizenship Act.

With an umbrella in hand to shield her from rain, she rode the parade route in a convertible clad with a banner that read: "Montana's Oldest Native American Voter."

The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 took effect nine months after Smith was born, recognizing Native Americans as U.S. citizens and, on paper, extending the privileges of citizenship to them. Yet for decades, states continued to block Indigenous people from voting.

Utah considered anyone living on tribal lands nonresidents and ineligible to vote. Other states, including Arizona, barred people under guardianship from registering to vote and used a court case that likened the relationship between tribal nations and the U.S. to that of "a ward to his guardian"

to enforce that ban against Native Americans.

It wasn't until Smith was in her 40s that the federal government overruled state laws and guaranteed Indigenous people the right to vote by way of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Even now, Smith still casts a ballot every election.

"It's important," she says, "because you want to know who you're voting for or what they're supposed to do for you after you get them in."

"We all should be voting, you know?"

Today, though, experts warn that some states are once again restricting Native Americans' access to voting — even as a few, including Nevada, work alongside tribal nations to expand their ability to participate in democracy.

"We've consistently been bringing new cases every year," said Jacqueline De León, a senior staff attorney at the Native American Rights Fund, which provides legal assistance to the nation's 574 federally recognized tribes and has brought numerous lawsuits over voting rights violations. "There's more cases than we have the capacity to cover."

Those cases include a battle to ensure Native Americans in Thurston County, Nebraska — where more than 50 percent of residents are Indigenous — have an equal shot at representation on the Board of Supervisors.

And one in North Dakota, where lawyers for years have fought state officials over electoral maps that courts say discriminate against Native Americans.

And yet another in Arizona, where the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Gila River Indian Community sued over a law requiring voters registering for federal elections to provide proof of residency using a physical address. A judge last year struck down the requirement after advocates noted homes on

EXPERTS WARN
that some states are once again restricting Native Americans' access to voting — even as a few, including Nevada, work alongside tribal nations to expand their ability to participate in democracy.

Native American Rights Fund (NARF)
Since 1970, the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) has provided legal assistance to Native American tribes, organizations, and individuals nationwide who might otherwise have gone without adequate representation.

tribal land often have no address.

Some experts blame these recent efforts on changes to the federal Voting Rights Act. In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a section of the act that forced some counties and states to get clearance before changing election procedures, a mandate intended to protect against discrimination.

Since that ruling, efforts to suppress the vote have increased, said voting rights attorney Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, who directs the Indian Legal Program at Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law.

"Now you can pass all kinds of laws without being precleared," she said. "There's been an erosion of voting rights over time ... and it's really up to Congress to do something."

In 2021, President Joe Biden directed a steering group to study voting barriers Indigenous voters face, and the resulting report included several recommendations for state and federal lawmakers — including a push to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Named for the late congressman and civil rights leader, the bill includes provisions specific to Indigenous voters.

In July, a congressional committee published another report that found Indigenous voters "continue to face persistent and substantial barriers to the right to vote in federal, state and local elections." Its author, U.S. Rep. Joseph Morelle, D-N.Y., said he hoped a better understanding of the problems would compel Congress to take "strong action" to protect Indigenous voting rights.

Advocates describe the Lewis Voting Rights Act as a revitalization of the landmark 1965 law and argue it would restore needed protections against discriminatory practices

Cont. A10, Voting

For Republicans, legislation is the weapon of choice



ABOVE, FROM LEFT **Fort Peck Indian Reservation employees Ona Windchief and Colleen Birdsbill** discuss voter history with Wayne Martell, tribal executive board member, at the tribal headquarters in Poplar, Mont., on June 26, 2024.
PHOTO CHRISTOPHER LOMAHQUAHU/NEWS21

LEFT **Louise Smith**, left, and her daughter, Edna Wetsit, go through family photos at their home in Wolf Point, Mont., on Tuesday, June 25, 2024.
PHOTO CHRISTOPHER LOMAHQUAHU/NEWS21

Voting

From A9

that target Native Americans and other voters of color. The bill, however, continues to languish in committee.

Restrictions in Big Sky Country

Some 2,000 miles from the nation's capital, the Fort Peck Reservation is tucked amid expansive grassy plains and cattle pastures a five-hour drive from Montana's largest city, Billings.

The Assiniboine and Sioux peoples called this land home for centuries before European settlers arrived. While they once traded bison meat and horses, the tribes now rely on metal fabrication, production sewing and other industrial activities to bolster their economies.

The original inhabitants of Montana left their mark on politics, too. In 1932, Assiniboine woman Dolly Akers became the first Native American elected to the state Legislature. And each year since 1989, at least one American Indian has held a seat in the state House or Senate.

The state is home to about 73,000 Indigenous people, constituting 6.4% of the population, according to census data. Nevertheless, the Republican-controlled Legislature has joined other states in passing restrictive measures that advocates say harm Native American voters.

Dubbed "election security bills" by Republicans, the measures were approved in the wake of unproven allegations of fraud during the 2020 election. One eliminated same-day voter registration; the other did away with third-party ballot collection.

After advocacy group Western Native Voice and tribes including the Blackfoot Nation and the Fort Belknap Indian Community sued, the state Supreme Court in March found the laws unconstitutional, saying they made it "much more difficult ... for people living on reservations" to get to a polling place or mail an absentee ballot.

At the time of the ruling, Ronnie Jo Horse, executive director of Western Native Voice, said it reinforced "the principle of equitable access to voting services and the protection of the rights for all voters, especially those residing on reservations where voting barriers are much higher."

In an interview with News21, Horse said she'd like Montana lawmakers to make an effort to visit Indigenous communities to see firsthand the voting challenges they face.

"I'm hoping that representatives are more

“

Indian Country is facing tough battles in 2024, and the outcome of this election couldn't be more important ... From honoring tribal sovereignty, to improving health care delivery, to combating the missing and murdered Indigenous people crisis... we deserve elected officials who will fight for us and be our partner.

Cinda Burd-Ironmaker, Montana Democratic Party Native vote political director and a member of the Blackfoot Nation

open to coming to Native communities to really understand what the environment is and the lengths that we have to travel," she said. "If we can all come together and discuss things, there's more that we have in common than (not)."

Despite attacks on their voting rights, leaders on the Fort Peck Reservation are focused on getting people to the polls and encouraging the next generation to get more civically engaged.

Smith recalls taking young voters to the polls to encourage them to get involved in democracy and exercise a right their forebearers fought long and hard to secure.

"My friend and I used to take them in her car. Some don't have rides," she said, adding that even today, "I visit all my grandkids ... when it's voting time to ask them if they voted already."

Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board member Wayne Martell has done the same. "You have to go knock on their door, and you have to sit there, and you have to educate them," he said. "You have to educate them to how the policy personally affects them."

At 72, Martell has long seen how lawmakers and special interest groups create hardships for Indigenous people. He said voting is about giving his people the power to choose leaders who will make decisions in the best interests of Native Americans.

He points to health care as one example. After COVID-era Medicaid waivers ended, more than 100,000 Montanans — including more than 12,000 with a tribal affiliation — lost health coverage, according to state data. This November, Montana voters will decide their next governor, along with how the state's Medicaid situation will be handled.

Other state races, including that of Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, could be decided by such a small margin that Native American turnout would be the factor. In 2006, Tester won by about 3,500 votes, and campaign officials attributed that — and his re-election in 2012 — to Indigenous voters.

In March, the state Democratic Party launched a multimillion-dollar campaign focused on turning out the Indigenous vote.

"Indian Country is facing tough battles in 2024, and the outcome of this election couldn't be more important," Cinda Burd-Ironmaker, the party's Native vote political director and a member of the Blackfoot Nation, said in a news release announcing the initiative.

"From honoring tribal sovereignty, to improving health care delivery, to combating the missing and murdered Indigenous people

crisis," she added, "we deserve elected officials who will fight for us and be our partner."

Improving access in the Silver State

In stark contrast to Montana, Nevada's 28 tribal nations have made great strides toward making voting more accessible for members. In 2016, members of the Walker River and Pyramid Lake Paiute tribes filed a lawsuit alleging their constitutional rights had been violated because state and county officials failed to establish in-person polling places on their lands — forcing members to travel 70 to 96 miles round trip just to vote.

The tribes won — and soon after, the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada sought additional satellite polling places for nine additional tribes. Those efforts proved largely successful.

This November, Nevada tribes will have 16 local polling stations — including at the Walker River Paiute tribal courthouse in Schurz and the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribal administration building in Nixon.

"Because of the push from people — not only here on our reservation, but the surrounding Native communities — we've been able to create equal voting rights," said Walker River Chairwoman Andrea Martinez.

That push continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it became essential to provide Nevada's many rural residents — including Indigenous voters — the ability to vote safely.

A law enacted before the 2020 election ensured all registered voters automatically received a mail-in ballot. It also allowed someone other than the voter to collect and turn in a ballot — a process Republicans call "ballot harvesting" but advocates say helps disabled and elderly people and other voters who lack the means to get to a polling place.

Those provisions helped increase turnout among Native American voters in the state that year by 25% compared with the 2016 election, according to an analysis by the group All Voting is Local Nevada.

In 2021, the state's Democratic governor signed a measure making those pandemic-era provisions permanent and extending the deadline by which tribes could request a polling place on tribal land.

Then last summer, Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo signed yet another bill, requiring the state to allow Indigenous people living on tribal land to use an electronic system called EASE to register to vote or cast a ballot.

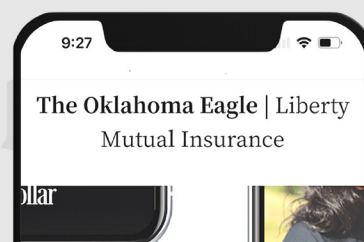
"Nevada has obviously been responsive to a lot of push by tribal communities to make

Cont. A11, Voting

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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





ABOVE: The Supreme Court of Oklahoma is a court of appeal for non-criminal cases, one of the two highest judicial bodies in the U.S. state of Oklahoma, and leads the judiciary of Oklahoma, the judicial branch of the government of Oklahoma. BELOW: Hallway leading to the supreme Court Door.

PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Court Justices

Right-wing claims highlight election cycle

From A8

on how much money People for Opportunity plans to spend on the judicial retention election ads. As independent expenditures, the group does not have to disclose its donors. It will have to file spending disclosures with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission on the same reporting schedule as other independent expenditures. The next reporting deadline is Oct. 28.

“We have folks around Oklahoma who partner with us to make sure that these messages are put out in front of voters,” Bond said. “They think that regardless of what voters decide to do in November, it’s important for them to have this information. The goal really is to encourage Oklahomans to do their own research prior to November 5th, to make sure they’re more familiar with these three members of their state Supreme Court.”

Several recent Oklahoma Supreme Court decisions have drawn the ire of conservative and religious groups, including one earlier this year striking down the state’s contract with St. Isidore of Seville, a virtual Catholic charter school. That decision was on a 6-1-1 basis, with one justice recusing. Last year, the court ruled in a 5-4 decision there was a limited right to abortion under the state constitution when it

came to preserving the life of the mother.

Bond highlighted what he called the anti-business opinions and rulings from the justices, as well as rulings on immigration enforcement and election security.

“We have noticed a growing level of interest among a lot of Oklahomans about what their state Supreme Court is doing,” he said. “They have seen over time, legislative majorities at the state Capitol pass a lot of things that the state Supreme Court has then thrown out for all sorts of reasons. And I think it has heightened the level of awareness that folks around the state have about the Oklahoma Supreme Court.”

It’s unclear if the three Supreme Court justices up for retention can counteract the TV ad blitz by People for Opportunity with just a month left until the general election. The rules for judicial fundraising differ from candidates for legislative or executive offices because judges are also bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct. None of the three justices have an active campaign account.

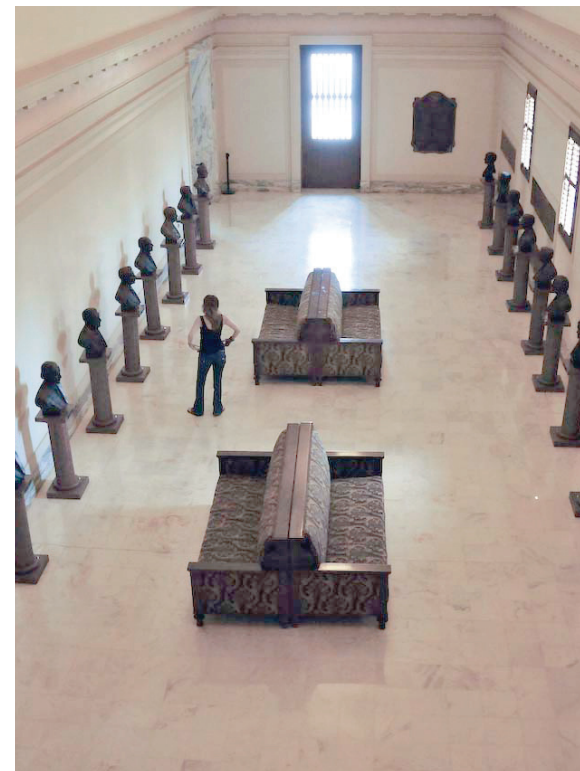
Federal tax filings show People for Opportunity spent \$1.5 million on advertising in 2022. It also made a \$60,000 contribution to the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a Washington DC-based fundraising and policy arm affiliated with the Republican Attorneys General Association.

FEDERAL TAX FILINGS SHOW

People for Opportunity spent \$1.5 million on advertising in 2022.

Supreme Court of Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Supreme Court was created by the ratification of the Oklahoma Constitution in 1907. The Supreme Court of Oklahoma is a court of appeal for non-criminal cases, one of the two highest judicial bodies in the U.S. state of Oklahoma, and leads the judiciary of Oklahoma, the judicial branch of the government of Oklahoma.



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Voting

Low engagement, a key focus for many organizations

From A10

voting easier,” said Steven Wadsworth, chairman of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, located northeast of Reno.

Stacey Montooth, executive director of the Nevada Indian Commission and a citizen of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, said all of these successes are due to leaders in Nevada – and the nation – recognizing the growing power of Native Americans.

Across the U.S., the Native American population grew by almost 12% from 2010 to 2020, according to census data. As for those who identify as Native American in combination with another race or ethnicity, that population nearly doubled.

More than 54,000 people who identify solely as American Indian live in Nevada. That’s about 1.7 percent of the population – enough to make a difference in a tight race.

In 2020, Biden beat then-President Donald Trump in neighboring Arizona by just 10,457 votes, and many credit increased turnout among Native Americans as a key factor. Yet the state’s 22 federally recognized tribes still face unique barriers to voting.

“The demands of each of those groups are very different – and they operate in

different spaces, in different places,” said Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes.

For example, election officials use a helicopter to fly equipment to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to ensure the Havasupai Tribe can cast ballots. And some Navajo Nation residents must travel nearly 150 miles round trip to vote.

Fontes acknowledged that in the past, officials sought to intentionally prevent Indigenous people from voting. Now, he said, the main issue is a lack of funding by the state and counties where tribal lands are located.

“They use words like ‘sacred’ when it comes to voting,” he said. “But they don’t want to pay for it.”

In Nevada, Montooth said the growing power of Native Americans and efforts to collaborate more closely with state officials have made a difference – “not just with voting services, but with all the essential services that the state of Nevada provides.”

“We’re at a point now where plans are not made, policies are not implemented, without someone saying: What about the first people of this land?” she said. “Things are definitely improving, but don’t be fooled. We still have a lot of work to do.”

That work includes ongoing battles over voting access.

In the past two years, the voting rights group Four Directions has had to fight for a polling location for Nevada’s Yomba Shoshone Tribe and equal voting access for the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes.

And other barriers remain. For example, a lack of internet connectivity in some Indigenous communities makes the new EASE system impossible for many to access.

One of the biggest obstacles, advocates say, is low engagement among Native American voters – younger ones in particular. A 2020 report by the Native Americans Right Fund found more than 1.5 million eligible Native American voters were not registered.

“It’s not surprising that people don’t see (the electoral process) as something that they want to participate in, because they’re being told in a million different ways that it’s not for them,” said De León, who co-authored that 2020 report. “We get hit with this label of ‘apathy,’ when in reality what we have is a bunch of compounding difficulties that are telling us the system is not for us,” she said. “All of these combined factors are what make it difficult for Natives to vote and, also, indicate how much power is at stake.”

““

We’re at a point now where plans are not made, policies are not implemented, without someone saying: What about the first people of this land?

Stacey Montooth, executive director of the Nevada Indian Commission and a citizen of the Walker River Paiute Tribe.

Four Directions

Four Directions, Inc., believes voting is within the sacred circle when it comes to preserving their way of life. The organization is committed to full enfranchisement as a crucial way to navigate a stronger future for Lakota Native communities. An official partner of the Coalition of Large Tribes, Four Directions has become a nationally renowned voting rights leader. The effort began in 2002 when Rosebud Sioux Tribal members Oliver and Barb Semans organized Native voter registration drives on South Dakota’s Indian reservations.



Ninnekah Public Schools board member Brock Perryman speaks to someone in the audience during a board meeting on Monday, Oct. 7, 2024.

PHOTO SASHA NDISABIYE

Ninnekah

LOSE-LOSE SITUATION: Sexual abuse settlement inflates Ninnekah property taxes, infuriates residents

SASHA NDISABIYE
NonDoc

NINNEKAH — Community members left Monday night's Ninnekah Public Schools board meeting disappointed and irritated over a tax hike arising from the \$7.5 million settlement of a lawsuit alleging district leaders failed to stop the decade-long behavior of former girls basketball coach and convicted sexual predator Ronald Gene Akins.

"I think it was crap," Ninnekah resident Kelly Smith while the board conducted an executive session. "I feel like they didn't answer questions like they should."

Upsetting an already frustrated crowd, the board's president announced there would be only four pre-approved speakers during public comments and that any other citizens would not be recognized by the board. That spurred almost an hour of disorganized conversation, interruptions and high emotions as multiple people attempted to express their frustrations and ask their questions.

Board members told attendees the school's insurance will cover \$1 million of the settlement, while another \$500,000 will be taken from the school's general fund. NPS Board of Education President Brock Perryman said the general fund currently contains \$815,000, which means more than half will be used toward the settlement. The depletion barely allows the school to stay operational, according to Perryman, and it still leaves a whopping \$6 million owed over three years to 14 victims of Akins' abuse.

Akins pleaded guilty to three counts of sexual battery, two counts of rape by instrumentation, four counts of lewd or indecent acts to a child under 16 and one count of attempted rape in 2023. Reporting by The Oklahoman shows a pattern of abuse and inaction. In 2015, a girl from a previous school where Akins coached reported abuse to Grady County law enforcement. The investigation never led to charges, and no Title IX investigation was conducted at the previous school, according to the civil lawsuit filed by some of Akins' victims.

The Ninnekah High School victims alleged that former district Superintendent Todd Bunch, a high school principal, an athletic director and a Title IX coordinator knew about Akins' sexual misconduct toward the girls he coached, but the lawsuit alleged that they failed to report suspicions of child abuse to law enforcement and the state Department of Human Services as required by law.

The school district denied liability



FROM LEFT Oklahoma House Representatives Dick Lowe, Sherrie Conley, Mark Vancuren, and Rhonda Baker listen to multiple presenters of the Tuesday, October 1, 2024, interim study on sexual abuse in schools.

PHOTO SASHA NDISABIYE

in settling the lawsuit, but Perryman acknowledged during Monday's meeting that a trial verdict could have held even more severe consequences for the small district just south of Chickasha.

"We basically had an option of this offer or taking it to court," Perryman said. "That was our decision. If you look at taking it to court, you're under risk of tens of millions of dollars, which would basically mean bankruptcy. If you look at (...) schools like Kingfisher — \$5 million, one student. There's a town over in eastern Oklahoma — \$1.5 million, one student. It was a decision that we felt was sound, where even though it's going to be tough on the community, it's tough for three years."

Lacking funds to pay the full settlement, school board members voted in September to raise property taxes for all property owners within Ninnekah Public Schools boundaries to pay off the remaining \$6 million of the settlement. The Grady County assessor told a KFOR reporter that there are 2,235 property owners within the district, all of whom will have around \$1,000 in additional property taxes over the next three years.

Ninnekah residents' consternation over how to pay for a hefty lawsuit settlement is similar to recent frustrations in Kingfisher.

In November 2023, Kingfisher Public

Schools agreed to pay \$5 million to settle a lawsuit filed by former football player Mason Mecklenburg, who alleged that systemic hazing — which included sexual assault — was ignored by district leaders and even encouraged by a long-time football coach. The settlement set a record for the largest in Oklahoma public school history — until the Ninnekah settlement occurred June 29.

Similar to the Ninnekah settlement, the Kingfisher Times & Free Press reported that KPS agreed to pay \$1.25 million from the school's general fund, and the district will have to pay the remaining \$3.75 million over the next three years from its sinking fund, which could necessitate a tax increase.

In Ninnekah on Monday, some attendees claimed the board's decision to raise property taxes was made without the knowledge of affected property owners. Many attendees of Monday's meeting agreed there was a lack of communication and transparency when the board was weighing options to pay the remainder of the settlement.

"We know it was hard," said third-generation resident Alva Charleson. "We were in the dark about the process, about what you were facing, what you were offered, and the community was really not involved in that."

In response, Perryman told the crowd

that, legally, the board members involved in the settlement could not speak to or involve the public in the decision-making process.

"You didn't give none of us a chance to vote on this," shouted one community member during public comment. "You took it on your own to raise our taxes. That's not fair."

Asked their opinions on the situation during a break Monday night, the board members looked at each other until Russell Thompson broke the silence.

"We're property owners, too," Thompson muttered. "We're right there with them."

Attorney Cameron Spradling represented the 14 female plaintiffs in Ninnekah and has led numerous lawsuits against Oklahoma school districts that have failed to protect children in accordance with federal Title IX law.

"There's this common denominator," he said Wednesday. "They take Title IX money — state and federal funding — and they do nothing with it. They don't do a goddamn thing with it. What do they do? They think it's just largesse for their accounts. (...) This guy (Akins), he was the girls' basketball coach from sixth grade through their senior year. So the amount of grooming, the amount of sexual misconduct, it intensified the number of years you had him (as a coach)."

Spradling offered little compunction Wednesday for Ninnekah residents frustrated with the tax burden.

"I said to my clients, 'There's going to be a lot of screaming, but it is what it is.' My biggest part about this is I wanted this to be a fucking message that just because you are a small school district with 950 people in your town, if you fuck up, you pay just as big as Perry pays or Kingfisher pays or even more," Spradling said. "And it's going to hurt bad. But you know what? You voted those fuckers in there. They knew they had Todd Bunch for over 20 years. They knew they had a criminal on their hands, and they didn't anything about it. They turned a blind eye to it, and now they whine. That is what gets me."

Residents burdened by an approved \$20 million bond for gymnasium

Spradling, who also represented Mason Mecklenburg for his lawsuit in Kingfisher, said he has noticed a pattern wherein school districts facing litigation over failure to stop misconduct often propose and pass bond projects before settling their lawsuit.

At Monday's meeting, one woman voiced displeasure with Ninnekah Public Schools doing exactly that.

Ninnekah voters approved a 2023 bond to

Cont. A13, Ninnekah

Ninnekah

MANDATORY REPORTING, greater accountability, required to mitigate sexual abuse in schools

From A12

build a new gymnasium facility to house boys and girls basketball teams and coaches' offices. The construction of the facility, as well as the district's bond repayment with property tax revenue, spans more than 10 phases adding up to nearly \$20 million.

Although many residents claimed at the meeting they were unaware of the gymnasium proposal, voters approved it with a 76.8 percent majority, although only 228 voters cast ballots on the proposition.

"Many people are upset about the passing of the bond because of a lack of information provided by the school," said former Ninnekah teacher Judy Bradslat. "Can we push the bond off until this settlement is done so we know where we're at? Because we didn't know how much this was going to be. Now we do, and most of us are wondering and concerned about how we're going to pay this. We don't want to lose our properties, our homes or our farms because of this."

Board members did not have a definitive answer to whether delaying the bond could be an attainable solution.

"This is a lose-lose situation here," Perryman said. "We will look into some other things and see if there's any other options. Right now, I don't have all the answers."

With many ideas thrown around during the meeting, some residents proposed a more drastic measure.

"I just want the school to sell all the assets and be done," Smith said. "It's a very dark hole. The kids don't get the education here that they deserve anyway."

Smith said the community doesn't want to see the school shut down, but at this point she believes it's the best option. With the impending tax hike, Smith said her father could no longer retire.

"And that's going to be across the board, because this is an older community," Smith said.

Lawmakers recognize 'epidemic' of sexual abuse in schools

On Oct. 1, Rep. Sherrie Conley (R-Newcastle) hosted an interim study — a discussion of policy issues that may be requested by any member of the Senate or House of Representatives — titled Sexual Abuse in Schools: Solutions for Protecting Oklahoma Youth.

Conley told attendees she had started looking into cases of sexual abuse in schools and now has a list of more than 200 names of perpetrators in the state of Oklahoma.

Conley referenced the Ninnekah case when highlighting Oklahoma school districts that have disregarded child sexual abuse.

"If there were 14 young women that came forward, how long had that basketball coach been doing this?" Conley said.

The study featured multiple speakers and presenters, including Ashley Rolen, a survivor of sexual abuse experienced as a Little Axe Public Schools student. Over the years, Rolen has been heavily involved in investigating sexual misconduct within her former school district and advocating for students whose cases went unreported or were ignored by administrative professionals and school boards.

During her presentation, Rolen talked about the traumatic aftermath of her assault, the school's lack of action, professionals failing to report her case to proper authorities, and the systematic failures that allowed her

“

We need all of you to see that this is an epidemic happening within our school systems and that no child is safe from a sexual predator in the classroom and/or the locker room, from rural to suburban to urban communities

Ashley Rolen, a survivor of sexual abuse experienced as a Little Axe Public Schools student.



Prevent Child Abuse America is the nation's oldest and largest organization committed to preventing child abuse and neglect before it happens. We promote programs and resources informed by science that enable kids, families, and entire communities to thrive—today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.



offenders to go without consequence.

"We need all of you to see that this is an epidemic happening within our school systems and that no child is safe from a sexual predator in the classroom and/or the locker room, from rural to suburban to urban communities," Rolen said. "There are pedophiles being passed around Oklahoma, all in an effort to save face for a school district, rather than being pulled from our school system and turned over to the police to protect children and hold people accountable. This is not a game."

Rolen finished her presentation by urging legislators to change Oklahoma law to make the prosecution of sexual predators easier and to encourage a "safe place for survivors to come forward."

Following Rolen, attendees heard from Ryan Stephenson, assistant executive coordinator for the District Attorneys Council, along with Adam Panter and Lori McConnell, the district attorney and assistant district attorney for Lincoln and Pottawatomie counties. The legal professionals presented a case study on former Shawnee Public Schools coach Ron Arthur, who was sentenced to five years in prison in February 2024 for a felony charge of soliciting sex from a minor by use of technology.

Arthur began his education career in 1993 and taught at three different Oklahoma school districts where he faced multiple internal school investigations into his alleged sexual misconduct. Although multiple students came forward and alleged abuse from Arthur over the span of almost three decades, Arthur was not reported to the authorities and faced no consequence from the school districts or the state board, McConnell said.

"I believe that there's a lack of accountability, and this is absolutely true through the school's records, which, as I've mentioned, are very replete of all the people who knew about what's happening,"

McConnell said. "In Ronald Arthur's case, I can name off the top of my head 10 names of people who knew what was happening and did nothing about it."

After going through each current Oklahoma state statute regarding sexual abuse in schools, Stephenson suggested three legislative actions that could mitigate sexual abuse in schools:

- Expanding the statute of limitations for the prosecution of willfully failing to report child abuse;
- Requiring mandatory reporting between law enforcement and the Department of Human Services; and
- Clarifying the definitions included in the safety zone violation statutes.

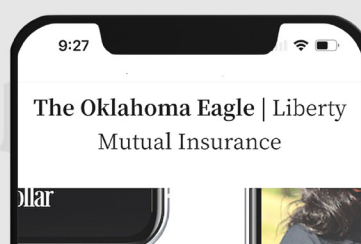
Conley closed the study by urging the public to do right by child victims of sexual abuse, and she again referenced the Ninnekah settlement as an incentive for Oklahomans to combat the issue.

"We've got to stop thinking about the perpetrator and start thinking about the victims here," Conley said. "If you don't want to think about the victimization of children, go to what it's doing to our taxpayers and our constituents. That the money now is being put on the backs of those community members."

SASHA NDISABIYE grew up splitting her time between southern California and southern Arizona before moving to Oklahoma to attend Langston University. After graduating from Langston with a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism and a minor in sociology, she completed a NonDoc editorial internship in the summer of 2024. She became NonDoc's education reporter in October 2024.

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PHOTO ASWAD WALKER

Unsung

Discipline

From civil rights activist Lulu White to U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett, here are a few of many who deserve more appreciation for their significant contributions throughout history.

Black Heroines Celebrated

ASWAD WALKER
Word In Black

It's impossible to spotlight all the Black women locally and nationally, past and present, who have provided heroic service in politics without getting their just due. Here, we define politics in a much broader and truer sense; not just those who hold political office, but those who impact(ed) the quality of every aspect of our lives.

PAST

Literally every Black woman in Texas who has impacted politics deserves mention on this list, as historians rarely spotlight Black women from the Lone Star State. Names like Christia Adair, Julia C. Hester, Beulah Shepherd, Holly Hogrobrooks, and Nellye Joyce Punch were all political giants in their own right.

Those listed below, whether from Texas (e.g., Houston) or not, dedicated their lives to improving the lives of others.

Lulu White

Lulu Belle Madison White was a civil rights activist in the 1940s and 1950s who devoted most of her adult life to the struggle against Jim Crow in Texas. She

campaigns for the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, and desegregation of public facilities.

According to historian and TSU professor Dr. Merline Pitre, White was also the driving force behind the growth of the NAACP in Texas, the destruction of the all-white state Democratic primary, and several game-changing, landmark court cases.

"If you're from Houston, you hear a lot about Christia Adair... but it was Lulu White who was out there organizing branches, who was out there saying we got go to the Supreme Court, we've got to get this money to go. She and her husband funded all of the [Texas-all] white primary cases. Therefore, not only did she stop that, but she pushed Black people to run for office. She was the one who got Heman Sweatt to go to the University of Texas. She was tough," shared Pitre.

Josie Robinson

When people discuss the founding of Houston's Pleasantville, the first master-planned community for middle-class Blacks in the United States, Judson Robinson Sr.'s critical role of marketing the new community of Blacks and

Cont. A16, **Unsung**

More Than Numbers: The Harsh Discipline of Black K-12 Girls

The troubling disparity raises questions about systemic bias against Black girls in America's schools.

QUINTESSA WILLIAMS
Word In Black

It's no longer a surprising revelation that Black girls are disciplined at disproportionately high rates compared to their peers of other racial backgrounds.

However, new data from two women's advocacy organizations and the federal government has further shed light on this persistent trend. Black girls, who make up just 15% of public school students, are far more likely than white girls to be suspended for behavior issues — and face exclusionary expulsion and corporal punishment as early as preschool.

A 2024 report from the National Black Women's Justice Institute found that Black K-12 girls represented more than three times their enrollment share in transfers and corporal punishment and more than double their share in expulsions. This data has been bolstered by a new report from the Government Accountability Office, which found that in the 2017-2018 school year, Black girls accounted for nearly half of all exclusionary discipline cases — including 45% of out-of-school suspensions, 37% of in-school suspensions, and 43% of expulsions.

This disparity also echoes the findings from the National Women's Law Journal and Ed Trust, which reported that in the 2015-2016 school year, Black girls were five times more likely than their white peers to be suspended. In addition, the report also found that as early as preschool, Black girls made up 20% of the female enrollment but accounted for 53% of out-of-school suspensions.

Bayliss Fiddiman, senior director of educational equity at NWLC, tells Word In Black that the new findings illustrate the uphill battle Black girls face in school.

"These disparities have existed for years, but the GAO report is a stark reminder that little has changed," she said. "The data reinforced what we already knew as a problem — Black girls are subject to harsher disciplinary actions for behaviors that are often perceived through the lens of bias, such as defiance or disruption."

Cont. A16, **Discipline**



Sharon Watkins Jones (left).

PHOTO ASWAD WALKER

Unsung

IMPACT & GREATNESS

From A15

selling homes is spotlighted. However, according to Mary Fontenot, president of the Pleasantville Historical Society, Robinson's wife deserves much more credit than history has afforded her for her part in Pleasantville's founding, growth and success. "Josie Robinson really had her hands in a lot of building and selling homes in Pleasantville, and a lot of people don't know that," stated Fontenot. "She was quiet, but she was a darn good businesswoman."

Jo Ann Robinson

A college educator by trade, Robinson, along with legendary pastor and activist Rev. E.D. Nixon, provided the brains, vision, and organizing genius behind the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the entire movement in that city preceding the famous boycott. For decades, countless people heap all the praise on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for being the spokesman for that movement, but without Robinson that movement would have never moved.

Rosa Parks

Some might be surprised by this name added to the list because she's one of the few Blacks that we actually do hear about during annual Black History Month Celebrations. However, as is shared in the must-read book "The Rebellious Life of Rosa Parks," most of her story has been either untold or incorrectly told. Parks had a long history of service fighting for the rights of Blacks and women before refusing to give up her seat on that bus. She did "Me-Too" movement work decades before it had a name.

Her seat on that bus was not about some old lady not moving because she was physically tired. It was a courageous strategic play of a revolutionary who was tired of seeing her people being mistreated. When asked about that incident, she said she remembered her grandfather, her hero, who always kept a shotgun close and used it to defend his family from white domestic terrorists. Additionally, Parks and her husband couldn't find work in Montgomery after the boycott. They moved to Detroit, and there Parks began an even longer career as an activist. She is truly unsung for all the service she gave to her people before and after refusing to give up her bus seat.

PRESENT/FUTURE

The list of present/future unsung Black women can fill an entire Defender edition. Names like Harris County Clerk Teneshia Hudspeth, League of



LuLu White aka (Lulu Hendley, 1868 - August 20, 1931). PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Mugshot of Jo Ann Robinson in the wake of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Montgomery County Archives. PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Rosa Louise McCauley Parks (February 4, 1913 - October 24, 2005) was an American activist in the civil rights movement, best known for her pivotal role in the Montgomery bus boycott. The United States Congress has honored her as "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement"

Women Voters President Dr. Annie Johnson Benfield and Tracey Yvette Scott, president of the Black Women's PAC President Tracey Yvette Scott absolutely deserve attention. And those are just a few of the local sisters doing big things on the political scene.

Here are others worth supporting and chronicling their rise to even higher greatness and impact.

Minyon Moore

The most successful, creative and most watched Democratic National Convention in history was chaired and coordinated by this unheralded Black woman, Minyon Moore. She was said to have been tasked with "slightly restructuring the DNC with the switch from President Joe Biden to Vice President Kamala Harris at the top of the Democrat's ticket. But she did much more than give the DNC a slight tweak. She set a new standard folk

Mrs. Rosa Parks altered the negro progress in Montgomery, Alabama, 1955, by the bus boycott she began. National Archives record ID: 306-PSD-65-1882 (Box 93). PHOTO EBONY MAGAZINE

Cont. A17, Unsong

Discipline

Poverty, disabilities & lack of school resource officers, contributing factors of disproportionate discipline

From A15

Adultification and Colorism contribute to the Disparity

The GAO identified that the disproportionate discipline of Black girls is due to a range of factors, including poverty levels, disabilities, and the presence of school resource officers. However, racial bias — particularly via adultification and colorism — plays the most significant role.

"Teachers and school staff often perceive Black girls as older and more mature than they are, which means they are seen as more 'responsible' for their actions and are punished more severely than their peers," says Dr. Sydney McKinney, executive director of the National Black Women's Justice Institute. "This bias manifests in labeling typical teenage behavior as 'disrespect' or 'disruption,' and Black girls often bear the brunt of these stereotypes."

Fiddiman also elaborated on the colorism factor: "Black girls with darker skin are undoubtedly more likely to be punished than those with lighter skin," she says. "It's an unfortunate extension of the racial bias that permeates school discipline systems."

Black Girl Discipline Is a National Public Crisis

The discipline crisis among Black K-12 girls spans every state in the U.S. McKinney pointed to the long-standing trends in exclusionary discipline data from the 2024 NBWJI report. "Our data from 2011 to 2018 shows consistent overrepresentation of Black girls in nearly



every category of discipline—whether it's suspensions, expulsions, or referrals to law enforcement," she says. "This consistency over time is perhaps the most alarming aspect. It's clear that little progress has been made despite awareness of the issue."

The over-punishment of Black girls in schools is not a recent phenomenon but part of a broader historical trend of excessive discipline rooted in racial and gender biases. That includes corporal punishment in the classroom.

In Arkansas, for example, an 8-year-old Black girl was paddled for refusing to do her schoolwork. The administrator involved later acknowledged the harm caused by such punishment, especially when disproportionately applied to Black

students.

A 2019 report by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies later found that Black girls like the 8-year-old are paddled at three times the rate of white girls.

Nowhere is the corporal punishment issue more pronounced than in states like Mississippi. During the 2013-14 school year, nearly 44% of all Black girls in the U.S. who faced corporal punishment were from the state. Moreover, schools in Southern states, such as Arkansas, Missouri, Alabama, and Texas, exhibited some of the largest disparities, with Black girls being struck significantly more than their white peers.

Additionally, zero-tolerance policies

have long targeted Black girls for minor infractions, such as dress code violations or minor behavioral issues, leading to suspensions, expulsions, and even arrests. These policies are part of what researchers call the "school-to-prison pipeline," where disciplinary measures contribute to long-term academic and legal consequences for Black students.

The Long-Term Educational Impact

The long-term effects of exclusionary discipline are profound, including academic disengagement, lower self-esteem, and higher dropout rates. In the GAO report, school counselors and

Cont. A17, Discipline

Unsung

For Black Women, their impact to our communities will continue to grow

From A16

never conceived possible. And Moore is no political newcomer. A long-time Democratic political advisor, Moore got her start in politics working on Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign. She also worked in former President Bill Clinton's White House. According to social commentator Jeff Johnson, she has mentored and "put on" countless young sisters and brothers, allowing them entrance and participation at the highest heights of political doings.

Reverend Dr. Angela Raven-Anderson

Raven-Anderson, director of the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church Social Justice Ministry, is on a mission to convert voter "fickleness" into voting fanaticism. "It is important that people understand that their vote matters, that their voice is their vote. And we need for people to come out and elect just officials to legislate on behalf of our people," she said.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is an American civil rights organization formed in 1909 as an interracial endeavor to advance justice for African Americans by a group including **W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary White Ovington, Moorfield Storey, Ida B. Wells, Lillian Wald, and Henry Moskowitz.** Over the years, leaders of the organization have included Thurgood Marshall and Roy Wilkins.



Sherika Dennis

Dennis was a different kind of child who was fascinated by all things politics from her earliest memories. While a student at TSU, Dennis served as the Student Government Association president. But she created a company that allows her to do what she really loves – impacting politics behind the scenes, crafting political strategy and public engagement opportunities for individuals and organizations.

U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett

With all her relatively recent notoriety, it's

hard to view Crockett as unsung. But I dare say she's a fighter extraordinaire, and the future is wide open for this dynamic lawmaker.

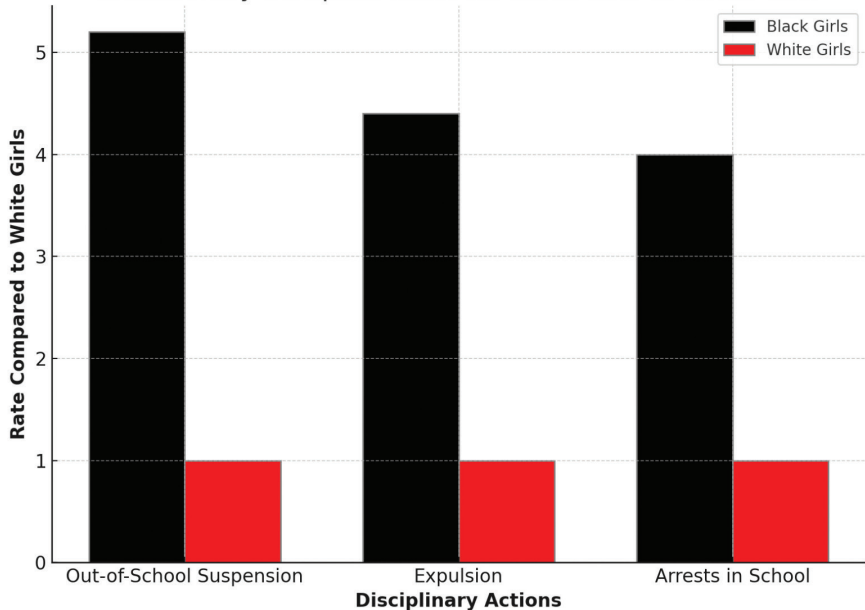
Sharon Watkins Jones

Watkins Jones runs Watkins Jones LLC, a consulting company specializing in political advocacy, with her husband Michael. She is also a leading voice of advocacy as the chief equity officer for Children at Risk. She's not an elected official. She makes her impact by challenging lawmakers to set a just and equitable legislative agenda for children and really all of society.

Congresswoman **Jasmine Crockett**, Texas (D-30).
PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

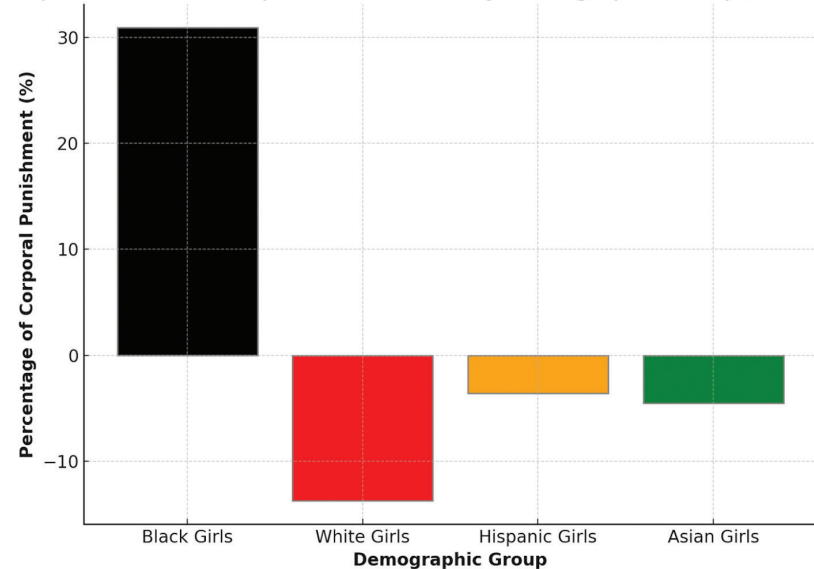
Discipline

Exclusionary Discipline Rates for Black Girls vs White Girls



Bar graph chart showing the exclusionary discipline rates where Black girls faced 5.2 times the rate of out-of-school suspension, 4.4 times the rate of expulsion, and 4 times the rate of arrests in school for behaviors such as defiance, disrespect, and disruption, according to data from the [Government Accountability Office](#).

Representation in Corporal Punishment by Demographic Group (2017-2018)



Bar graph representing the overrepresentation and other demographic groups in corporal punishment during the 2017-2018 school year. The chart shows that Black girls were significantly overrepresented at 30.9%, while White, Hispanic, and Asian girls were underrepresented, according to data from the [Government Accountability Office](#).

Black girls are five times more likely than their white peers to be suspended at least once, which means they are missing critical learning time.

From A16

psychologists emphasized the damaging effects these biases have on Black girls' academic performance and emotional well-being, noting that they "often feel unsafe or unsupported in school environments" — emotions that can have lasting consequences on their self-esteem and educational outcomes.

"Black girls are five times more likely than their white peers to be suspended at least once, which means they are missing critical learning time," Fiddiman said. "This contributes to a growing disconnect between them and their school environment, creating a cycle where they are less likely to feel supported or able to succeed."

While Fiddiman and Dr. McKinney noted that some school districts acknowledge the problem, they often fail to take substantial

action or lack financial and structural resources to implement necessary policy and practice changes.

A Call for Reform

The GAO report's findings have reignited calls for policy reform, urging schools to move away from exclusionary discipline and adopt more culturally responsive practices that address the root causes of behavior rather than simply punishing students. Fiddiman and Dr. McKinney emphasize the need for data-driven solutions and trauma-informed policies to create a positive school climate for Black girls.

"The discipline gap between Black girls and White girls is largely due to how they're disciplined within the same schools," says Fiddiman. "This information is crucial because it highlights the bias within the school system. While looking at state-level data is useful, examining specific schools

where Black girls are disproportionately disciplined makes it easier to pinpoint solutions."

Dr. McKinney agrees: "Without this level of specificity, schools can too easily ignore the problem."

Fiddiman also stresses the importance of trauma-informed policies and interventions that consider the life experiences of Black girls. "It's about creating an environment where they feel safe, supported, and able to thrive."

Dr. McKinney echoes this sentiment, pointing to the deep awareness of the unequal treatment they face. "What I consistently find is how clear Black girls are about the changes needed to help them thrive. They're not shy about identifying what they need. We just have to listen and follow their lead."

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Theater

KIMBERLY MARSH, The Oklahoma Eagle

The Musical Brings Michael Jackson's Story to Tulsa



Jamarice "J" Daughtry, singer, actor, philanthropist, entrepreneur, will portray Berry Gordy in MJ the Musical - Tulsa, a Celebrity Attractions performance scheduled for October 15-20, 2024.

PHOTO JDAUGHTRY.COM

Small Details that Tell a Story

Daughtry illustrates a scene involving Joe Jackson that shows in a subtle way, using actions, not words, that he did not always understand all the details of agreements he entered on behalf of the Jackson Five. It shows a determination to make money and be successful, but it also reflects on a life of being neglected.

"You know, Michael's dad (Joe) was also a musician at one point. He got married early, and that didn't work, and then he met Katherine, Michael Jackson's mother, and had these kids, trying to make ends meet. The Jackson Five was the first thing that worked for him. He tried to be a musician. He tried to be a taxi cab owner. He tried a few things and none of those worked. But the Jackson Five was a product that was working, which is why his grip was so tight on it. It was the only thing that he ever got to actually be successful in. And these kids, although they were his children, were also his product, and it was what kept the family afloat, and it was what was making him successful and, you know, rich...There's a point where, you know, he didn't graduate high school, and he couldn't really read, and there's a point where Berry Gordy and Joe Jackson are signing a contract, and the direction for us was to, for my role, the Barry Gordy role, to just flip through the pages and have Joe Jackson just quickly sign and not read anything. It's a small thing, but I was talking to Devin Bowles, who plays Joe Jackson, and I was telling him the reason why we're doing this like this is because Joe Jackson could not read, so he's just signing his life away, and he doesn't know what he's signing. He just knows that there's money involved."

Daughtry explained that Joe Jackson was neglected as a child, being shuffled around between a mother who didn't want him and a dad who married a woman who didn't want him. It shaped how he was, the lack of affection shown for his children, his dismissive of his wife, and his drive to create a legacy, and his behaviors impacted most of what MJ did as a businessman and a performer. MJ also was driven by perfection and had big, sometimes unreasonable, expectations of his dancers and crew.

J. Daughtry's Roots

Daughtry was raised in Florida and attended Bethune Cookman University in Daytona Beach, majoring in Business Administration with a concentration in marketing. He moved to DC to work with Black Entertainment Television (BET) where he worked as an unpaid intern. In order to make a paycheck, he switched to banking until the market crash of 2008.

"I ended up teaching fifth grade at a private Christian school in the DC area. The music teacher died at the school, and they were preparing for their spring concert, and they wanted to make sure the kids got to do the spring concert.

The principal approached Daughtry, who also is a gospel singer, to help finish preparing for the concert, which was such a success that the principal told Daughtry he should be working the musicals as a career.

"She said 'I'm going to give you three days a week to go audition, but you've got to promise me that you're going to audition. She literally gave me three days a week to go from DC to New York, audition and then come back. I did that for three months, and booked my first gig with a Cirque tour. It just hasn't stopped since then. But if it wasn't for her, I probably would still be teaching right now."

J. Daughtry has a way of being in the right place at the right time. His musical career began with an unexpected turn in his earlier career in teaching. That led to a role playing the music legend Berry Gordy. He went on to play Gordy in another production. Next week Daughtry will bring his portrayal of the Motown icon - who played a vital role in Michael Jackson's career -- to Tulsa in yet another show -the touring jukebox musical production of MJ The Musical.

When the curtain rises at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center on Oct. 15 for a run through Oct. 20, it will not only focus on the legendary King of Pop but also a behind-the-scenes look at Michael Jackson's (MJ) creative process, the Jackson family dynamics, and the psychological forces that shaped him.

MJ The Musical tickets are available through Tulsa musical promoter Celebrity Attractions online at celebrityattractions.com or from the Tulsa PAC ticket office at 101 E. 3rd St. or by calling (918) 596-7111.

"This isn't just a jukebox musical," Daughtry said in an interview with the Oklahoma Eagle. "We dive into Michael's relationships, especially with his father, Joe Jackson, and how those experiences influenced his music and drive for perfection."

The Journey to Berry Gordy

Daughtry's journey to playing Berry Gordy has been serendipitous.

"I was living in Japan, working at Universal Studios, and they offered an opportunity for me to... go back to America and still be paid for a month," he told The Oklahoma Eagle.

"So I came back to America, and I went to an acting class. The next day, I get a phone call from another casting director who said, 'I need to see you for this show called 'Motown', and I kid you not, it was like I had walked into the Motown Hall of Fame. There was Berry Gordy. There was Smokey Robinson and Stevie Wonder."

Daughtry performed as Gordy in the touring musicals "Motown" and "Ain't Too Proud," so the role feels like coming home.

"Well, you know, Berry Gordy is a musical icon. He actually has been many things. Music was something he fell into. He was a boxer and a musician. He worked at a car factory, which is how he learned how to run a company," he said.

While Gordy was more involved in earlier productions, Daughtry notes that his participation in "MJ The Musical" is more hands-off due to his advanced age. "In 'Motown,' he was very hands-on with the role. He would call me and make corrections or change things right before the show," Daughtry said. "In this show, he's not as hands-on, but he did come to LA to see the show and to hang out for a second.

"It's truly an honor to be able to play Mr. Gordy. He's very much like one of my uncles or a deacon at my church, which is what makes it easy for me to portray him."

Exploring Michael Jackson's life

One of the key themes explored in the show is MJ's complex relationship with his father, Joe Jackson. "We see his relationship with his father. We see his relationship with his mother, with the people that are around him, his business manager... It's a really interesting story."

The show uses a series of flashbacks as a storytelling technique to demonstrate the impact Joe had on MJ's life, appearing in scenes with managers and Gordy. It innovatively touches on more sensitive topics, including MJ's struggles with addiction and the psychological toll of his upbringing.

"A lot of people come to the show, and you expect the music... But once you actually hear the story and see how well they put it together, a lot of people end up leaving in tears, saying, 'I did not expect to cry at the Michael Jackson musical.' But it's very real and very intricate, and it shows how the effects of mental abuse and physical abuse echo throughout a person's life."

Daughtry emphasized that the focus remains on the artist's creative genius and lasting impact on pop culture, noting that his music spans generations. Appealing to youth and grandparents, it is truly a show for the whole family.

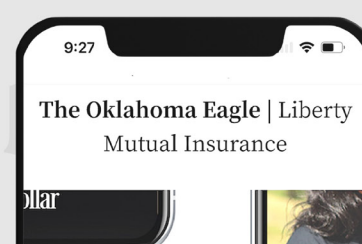
"This show is actually one of the biggest shows I've done visually. The music is pumping throughout. It's a very exciting show. And, of course, it's telling the story of Michael Jackson," Daughtry shares. "We start in his later years preparing for the Dangerous Tour in 1992, and throughout the story, we get to see Michael Jackson in the rehearsal process and how he operated creatively. But then we also get to see him as a human and what made him the way that he was."

Get your tickets now, Daughtry advised. The show has been selling out in cities across the country. "It's a powerful experience you won't want to miss."

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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





LOCAL MODELS strutted down Greenwood Avenue-turned runway during the PÄRLÄ FESTIVAL ART CRAWL. PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA

2024 - TULSA

Tulsa Creative Festival 2024

BY KIMBERLY MARSH

ART CRAWL



More than 200 BIPOC creatives brought their collective energy together to make this year's PärLá Festival in Tulsa a success.

For eight days in September 2024, the participating artists filled new spaces, added colorful images to abandoned houses, and adorned many familiar places with visual art, murals, dance, film, theater, yoga, food and fashion. The annual Parla festival is a collective event held at various venues across Tulsa. Initiated by Jerica Wortham and the JParle Artists Group, it brings out the best of artists in Tulsa's BIPOC community throughout the city.

"I am really proud of what we have accomplished this year," Wortham said in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle. "This festival is still very young, and I am excited about the next iterations," she added. "The thing that I think is most beautiful about this one is we have the opportunity together to create something for creatives, and for those that really appreciate creativity, and we also positioned so many of these creatives and artists into a spaces that they are able to carry this throughout the year and leading into the next year."

Wortham, founder of J'Parlé Artists Group, used her grant from the GKFF-sponsored Creative Artists Fund combined with sponsorship funds, donations, her own assets and some

Cont. B2, Creative

ART CRAWL ARTISTS

- Awesome Jerry
- Unity Joy
- Black Moon Collective:
- Raegene Riggs, Jaiden
- McKlellan, Kieran Crutison,
- Feather, Crystal Raso, Rah
- McConnell
- Black Wall Street Liquid
- Lounge, Larry Bowler
- Creative Suites, Tammy Randle
- Expressions by Eddy K
- The Spot on Main Street,
- Ojekunie Amusan
- Queen Rose Art House
- Silhouette Sneakers and Art,
- Sole Brothers by Semurai
- Designs
- Skyline Mansion, Carle the
- Artiste
- Fulton Street Books & Coffee,
- Kly'la Bivins

The Oklahoma Eagle



From B1

personal resources from the other artists, to bring all the creativity of the BIPOC community back to Greenwood and parts of Tulsa in an annual showcase of talent.

The steering committee members who brought it all together under Wortham's leadership included the following: Amy Gay, logistics Chair; Jazzy (Jasmine) Bivar-Smith, Forum Chair; Hank Byrd, Film Chair; Beth Henley, Visual Arts Chair; Obum Ukabam, Theater Chair; Angie Dixon-Walker, Soiree Chair; Taylor Finley, Marketing Chair; Davontai Bradford, Dance Chair; and Kode Ransom, Historian; Nisey Graham, Fashion Chair; Tanesha Rushing Porch, Concert Chair; Branjae, Production Chair.

Other Festival partners who helped make the festival happen are The University of Tulsa, Partner Tulsa, Mi Tea Lounge, Sharp Development, Silhouette, Skyline Mansion, Lowe's, Tulsa Regional Chamber and Build in Tulsa.

A new element added to this year's festival was a forward-thinking forum with youth during The State of BIPOC forum, which brought in new voices who will shape the future of Tulsa.

Wortham is already brainstorming about next year's festival. She has begun conversations "with fixtures and entities within this community that are on board to make next year even more of a dynamic presentation," she said. "I'm excited about the different cities and states that will be coming to experience this festival," she added.

The name Pärälá is a creative cultural conjugation of names that Wortham has used to brand her own brilliant style and poetry as J'Parlé. The English translation of the French word "Parle" is loosely defined as "I Speak." Wortham is a poet. The phonetic spelling of the word "Pärälá", means to transform something into greater value. "to transform something into greater value."

Seventeen BIPOC fashion designers transformed a section of Greenwood Avenue into a runway with dozens

of models showing the stylings of the following:

- Ideal Model Of God (IMOG) by Groovy Greg
- AnnEd by Denna Clark
- Earl Tayler by Tayler Earl
- Sew Much Calamity by Vivian Blackfire
- DaShadeRoom by Rene Reed
- True Descendant & Apache by Lester Shaw
- Black Wall Street Market by Billie Parker
- Rah by Rah the Alchemist
- Top Tier C by Chantel McKnight
- Apheenx by Tafari
- Suga Chic Glam Couture by Leatrice Parker
- CrochetHauz by Alex Hayes
- MQ Designs by Micah Q. Parker
- Enujora by Kendra Jones
- RealTime by Tianna Charity
- Lady Landback Designs by Kels Cooper
- M Jeanne Apparel by Marjorie Price

FASHION SHOW



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TOP: PÄRLÁ FESTIVAL ART CRAWL featured art throughout the week of the festival spread across more than a dozen locations across the city. Silhouette Sneakers & Art featured SOLE BROTHERS BY SEMURAI DESIGNS. PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA

LEFT: LOCAL MODELS (l), walked Greenwood Avenue-turned runway during the PÄRLÁ FESTIVAL ART CRAWL. PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA

Below: LOCAL MODEL, poses for the cameras during the fashion show - created with the goal to showcase BIPOC designers pushing the boundaries of fashion. PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA

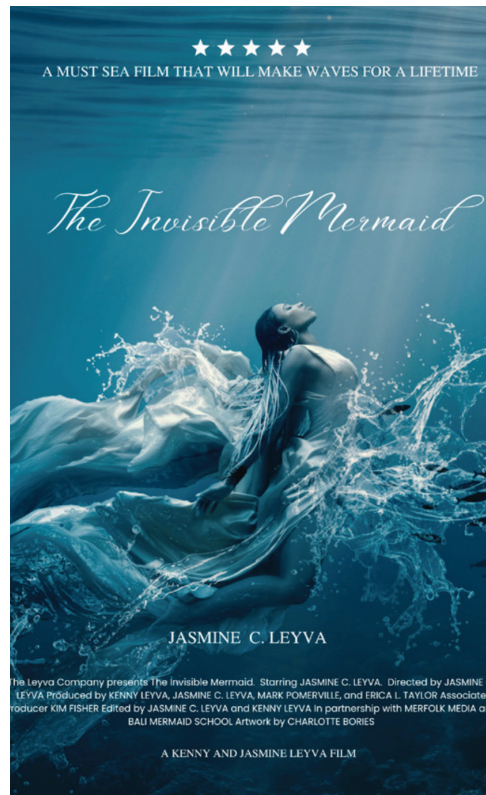
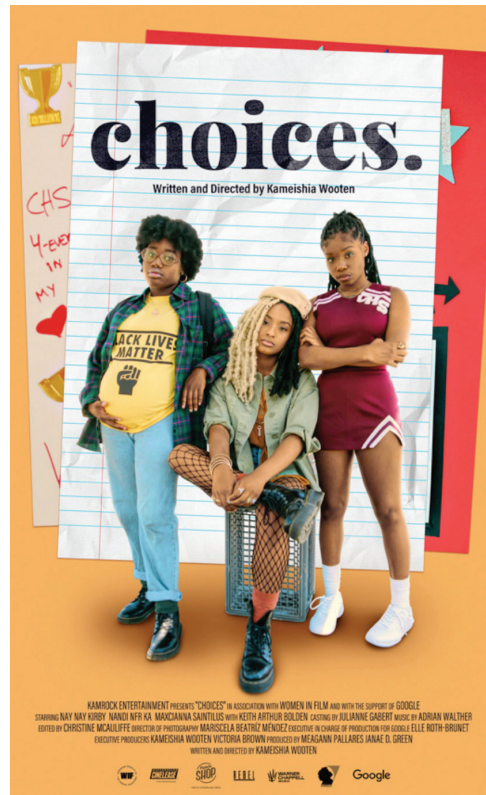
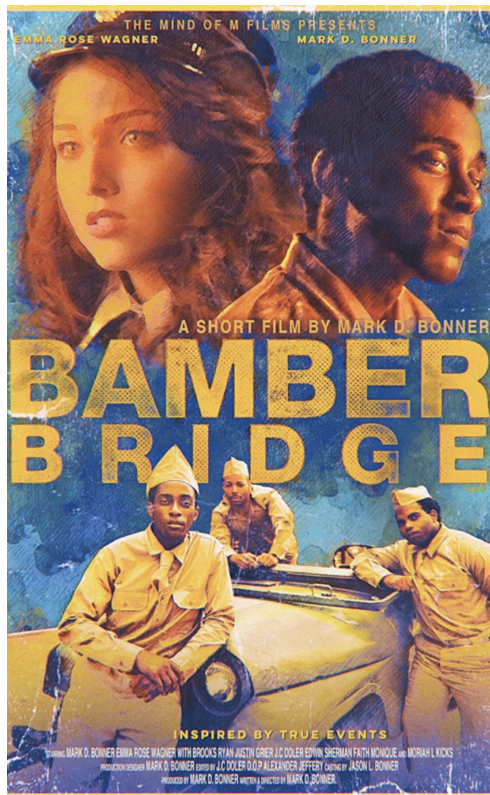
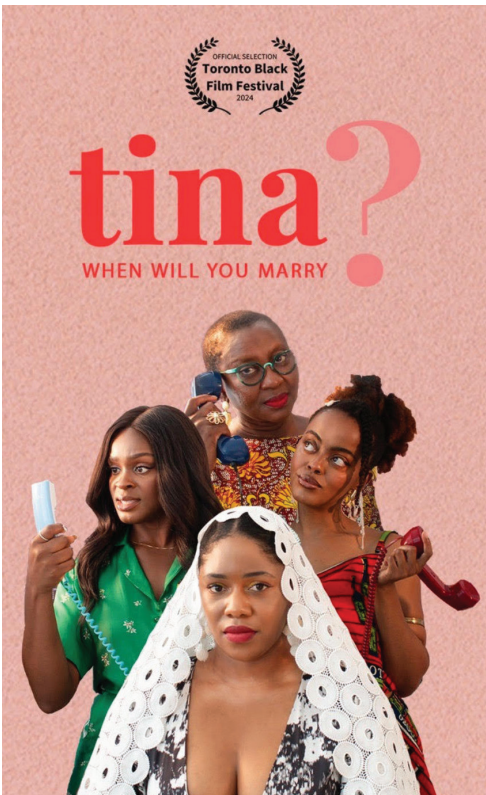


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Parla Festival Founder and lead artist, **JERICA WORTHAM**, speaks during the community at the BIPOC Forum, a thought leadership event will explore the state of BIPOC creativity and the experiences of being a BIPOC citizen in Tulsa, Oklahoma. PHOTO SAM LEVRAULT MEDIA

FILM FESTIVAL



HOSTED BY HANK BYRD, TULSA FILMMAKER

Top Row, From Left: **Tina Will You Marry Me.** Directed by Celestina Aleobua (Romance); **Bamber Bridge.** Directed by Mark D. Bonner (Drama, Action, Romance); **Choices.** Written and Directed by Kameishia Wooten (Drama); **In The Stillness.** Directed by Naira Adedeji (Drama);

Middle Row, From Left: **PARAGONE.** Directed by Bianca Castellar Calvani (Drama); **Pops.** Directed by Sylvester K. Folks (Drama, Comedy); **The Invisible Mermaid.** Directed by Jasmine C. Perry (Drama, Comedy, Mini Documentary),

Bottom Row **Wandered Away.** Directed by Kate Kones (Comedy, Horror)

PHOTO COURTESY OF PARLA

Black Broadway Tulsa

Black Broadway Tulsa kicked off its first season with A Raisin In The Sun, a play by Lorraine Hansberry that debuted on Broadway in 1959. The award-winning play highlights a Black family's search for success and the American dream.

The cast featured some of Tulsa's premier Black performers, including Kimberly Manning, Christian Stubblefield, Obum Ukabam, and Nicole Billups, who stars as Mama. The cast also includes Anna Joie, Destiny Pierce, Brooks Davis, Destini Robinson, Terrell Crawford, Jeffrey Jimenez, Tyrie Overton Jr. and Malachi Mackel-Braddick. For more info on the schedule and tickets, see www.blackbroadway.org.

The Black Actor's League | Tulsa Presents

"A Raisin in the Sun"

by Lorraine Hansberry

Directed by David Harris

 Anna Joie	 Kendell Barker Gordon	 Destiny Pierce	 Nicole Billups	 Bebe Taylor	 Obum Ukabam
 Tatiyana Lorick	 Christian Stubblefield	 Destini Robinson	 Kimberly Manning	 Christopher Maxwell	 Jeffrey Jimenez
 Terrell Crawford	 Brooks Davis	 Tyrie Overton Jr	 Malachi Mackel Braddick		

Sept 20th-29th 2024
Maya Angelou Auditorium
3101 W Edison St, Tulsa, OK 74127

Meet the Cast

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