

# The Oklahoma Eagle

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

## NATION

### Why Black Kids Need the Education Dept. — and Why Trump Wants It Gone

Word In Black. **A14**

## NATION

### Chicago's Lead Problem Isn't Going Away Anytime Soon

Word In Black. **A14**

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# "It Was What People Do."

ROSS D. JOHNSON, The Oklahoma Eagle, **A2**

FOX23.COM NEWS STAFF, OCT. 1, 2024

## Tulsa pastor pleads not guilty to first degree rape, child sexual abuse and incest charges

**TULSA, Okla.** — A Tulsa pastor pleaded not guilty to several sex crime charges on Monday, according to court documents.

FOX23 told you Bertheophilus Maurice "Judge" Bailey Sr. was arrested and charged with rape, child sex abuse and incest last week.

Bailey's preliminary hearing is set for Nov. 1.

Tulsa Police arrested a local pastor on charges including first degree rape, child sexual abuse and incest on Wednesday.

He just resigned from his church over the weekend.

According to an affidavit, Bertheophilus Maurice "Judge" Bailey Sr. began sexually assaulting his victim when she was a child.

KTUL, NEWS CHANNEL 8, ABC, TULSA, SEP. 25, 2024

## LOCAL PASTOR FACES CHARGES INCLUDING RAPE AND CHILD ABUSE

SIERRA JOSLIN, TANYA MODERSITZKI

**TULSA, OKLA (KTUL).** — According to court documents, Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey was arrested on Monday after being accused of raping the victim.

Documents say he's a pastor of a local church and started sexually abusing the victim when she was in the 6th grade.

In 2021, documents state as an adult, the victim got married and had a baby.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, SEP. 27, 2024

## Pastor sexually abused his daughter for 10 years, OK cops say. 'I suffered in silence'

KATE LINDERMAN

A pastor's daughter was in sixth grade when he prayed over her, then started to touch her inappropriately, Oklahoma police said.

Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey, of Tulsa, then sexually assaulted her and continued to do so for years, police said. "For too long, I suffered in silence, afraid of the repercussions of speaking out against someone with such influence and power," the daughter, Harmony Bailey Oates, said in a Sept. 17 Facebook post, coming forward about a decade of mental and sexual abuse by her father.

A pastor's daughter was in sixth grade when he prayed over her, then started to touch her inappropriately, Oklahoma police said. Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey, of Tulsa, then sexually assaulted her and continued to do so for years, police said.

"For too long, I suffered in silence, afraid of the repercussions of speaking out against someone with such influence and power," the daughter, Harmony Bailey Oates, said in a Sept. 17 Facebook post, coming forward about a decade of mental and sexual abuse by her father.

McClatchy News reached out to Oates but did not immediately hear back.

## "He would pray over me at first..."

HARMONY BAILEY OATES, FACEBOOK

MINISTRY WATCH, SEP. 30, 2024

## OK Pastor Arrested for Abusing Daughter

DANIEL RITCHIE

An Oklahoma pastor has been arrested and faces multiple charges related to the alleged abuse of his own daughter.

Bertheophilus Maurice "Judge" Bailey Sr., 45, recently resigned as pastor of St. Andrew Christian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Tulsa Police along with its Special Victims Unit obtained

## "I'm not in the shadows anymore."

HARMONY BAILEY OATES, FACEBOOK

**Despite Legal Challenges & Exemptions, GOP Lawmakers Remain Committed to Anti-ESG Law**  
Oklahoma Watch. **A8**

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investigation with the victim, she was

**FEATURED**

### Despite Legal Challenges & Exemptions, GOP Lawmakers Remain Committed to Anti-ESG

Anti-ESG, A8



**FEATURED**

### Tulsa District 9: Fowler faces Bush as housing, infrastructure draw resident concerns

District 9, A10

## Bertheophilus

# “It Was What People Do.”

ROSS D. JOHNSON, The Oklahoma Eagle

*This is part two of The Oklahoma Eagle’s “The Children of Oklahoma” four-part series, following “Their,” an in-depth analysis of the state’s commitment-in-action for the safety and care of Oklahoma’s children. In “Their,” The Oklahoma Eagle explored the perceived culture of hate experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ children, fostered by state officials and public figures. The third part of our series, “Owasso’s Children,” will explore the U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Office’s investigation of Owasso Public Schools failures to ensure Title IX protections. The final part of our “The Children of Oklahoma” series will explore how the state, school districts and churches plan to enact measures of accountability and resolution.*

“A total catastrophe to the whole kingdom of God”

The St. Andrew Christian Church pastor’s words, voiced from the pulpit, weren’t a threat against his congregation, the faithful, members of the house of worship, but an admonition for his daughter, then 21 years-old.

The decade prior to the pastor’s warning, captured during a recorded phone conversation with his daughter, Harmony Bailey Oates, according to an Oklahoma District Court affidavit, were marked by an escalation of sexual abuse that she alleges would begin with a prayer by her father, Bertheophilus Maurice ‘Judge’ Bailey, Sr., 45, pastoral leader of St. Andrew Christian Church in North Tulsa.

A sixth-grade student at the time that her decade-plus torment is alleged to have begun, Oates, then about 11 years old, was fondled by her father, soon forced to perform sexual acts as a middle school student and ultimately raped by the self-described “community servant” before completing high school.

Bailey, a once revered pastor, is now held in Tulsa County Jail on a \$500,000 bond since his arrest on Wednesday afternoon, Sep. 25.

Oates’ life of alleged sexual assault, emotional and physical abuse and violence, has transitioned to one of testimony, forced to recount, with vivid detail, trauma that has defined the life of the now married 22-year-old.

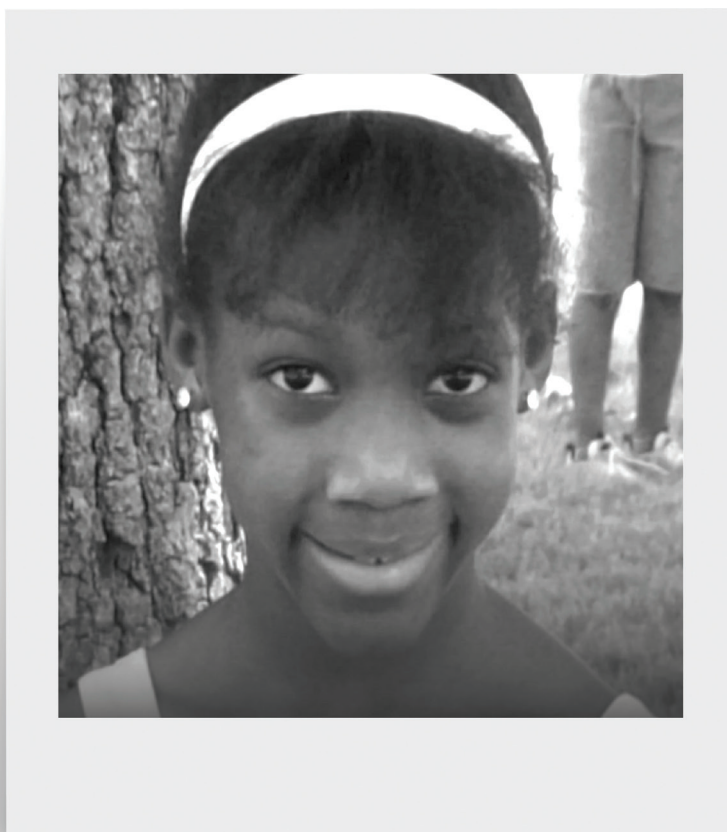
Oates’ ordeal reflects Oklahoma’s position as the state with the second highest rate of child abuse cases, per 100,000 people under 18, in the southern region of the country, and seventh in the nation, according to NY Requirements.

In determining where in the U.S. are children suffering the most abuse, NY Requirements sourced data from the Child Maltreatment 2020 report, compiled by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

At 1,540.1 cases per 100,000 people under 18, Oklahoma’s children are statistically more vulnerable to the violent sexual behavior of predators than neighboring Texas and Arkansas. Peaking at a rate of 16.6 per 1,000 children in 2020, the state has seen a marginal decline to 14.6 in 2022.

Child abuse, according to Oklahoma statute, and reported by Oklahoma Policy Institute, includes sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or non-accidental physical or mental injury. Abuse can also include harm resulting from failing to protect or abandoning a child. Sexual Abuse includes rape, incest and lewd or indecent acts or proposals by a person responsible for the child’s welfare.

Oates’ alleged trauma was not merely a breach of the safety a child associates with home but would



Harmony Bailey Oates, daughter of accused pastor, Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey.  
PHOTO ST. ANDREW CHRISTIAN CHURCH, FACEBOOK

often extend beyond the family’s North Tulsa home into the St. Andrew pulpit, where her father would stand before the church’s congregation, delivering sermons about the virtue of Christianity.

“The thing is whenever I was a kid I separated my dad from who he was. I had to that’s the only way I survived,” said Oates during an interview with 2 News Oklahoma. “I would call him my best friend only to hide the reality of what I was living.”

St. Andrew elevated Bailey, a second-generation pastor, to lead the congregation in 2018, although the son of Bertrand Sr. had been charged with felony criminal violations of Lewd Molestation, Sep. 2006, and Child Abuse by Injury, in Feb. 2010 and Apr. 2013.

The state’s witness in the Lewd Molestation case “failed to appear” for the Dec. 2006 hearing and the case was dismissed, according to state reporting.

The felony criminal complaints for Child Abuse by Injury were adjudicated by Tulsa District Court judges Hon. Carlos Chappelle (Jul. 2010) and Stephen Clark (May 2013), both resulting in Bailey’s plea of guilt and conviction.

Bailey received a five-year deferred sentence for the 2010 Child Abuse by Injury conviction, requiring supervision by the Department of Corrections Probation and Parole; 80 work hours under the supervision of Tulsa County Wellness Partnership; and completing parenting and nurturing classes according to Oklahoma Department of Human Services policy.

The 2010 deferred sentence was ordered to remain

effective until July 2015.

Bailey’s 2013 conviction and sentencing for Child Abuse by Injury, following his plea of guilt, yielded far fewer punitive outcomes. The court-ordered one year custody remand in Tulsa County Jail was suspended and the required work service was limited to only 23 hours.

Bailey, twice convicted by Tulsa County District Courts of Child Abuse by Injury, and the prior subject of a Lewd Molestation filing, would nonetheless lead “St. Andrew according to the blueprint of Holy Scripture” throughout a period when Oates alleges rape, oral sodomy, and stalking.

Sermons of prophesy and obedience, prayers for a strengthened faith, Bailey “breaking the code” of Revelations and apocryphal warnings filled the mid twentieth-century constructed sanctuary on Sundays.

The alleged hypocritical dual personas of Bailey were stark in contrast, delivering “the word” to congregants in public, and allegedly preying upon his daughter within their Tulsa home.

The pastoral leader would eventually admit to watching videos of fathers and daughters having sex, that “seeds of sin grow”, that he masturbated to the videos

and felt justified in “acting out” what he watched because “it was what people do”, according to the Tulsa District Court affidavit.

Text messages shared between Bailey and his now former wife and church first lady, Arrica Bailey, reveal the extent to which the pastor understood the nature of his actions, the violations of his oaths to family and congregation and legal ramifications.

His messages included the following:

- “I’m an adulter [sic]”
- “I’m an [sic] child molester”
- “I am a rapist”
- “I am a bold abuser”
- “I should be locked away for the rest of my life”

In 2021, Oates, then 19, moved out of the Bailey home. She later married Malachi Oates. They share a daughter.

Undeterred by the distance from his daughter, her commitment to her husband and to his own greater angels of faith, Bailey is alleged to have eventually traveled to the couple’s home unannounced, pushed his daughter to the floor and “forcibly orally sodomize her.”

St. Andrew Christian Church would not rescue Oates from the alleged abuse.

Pastoral staff, ministry leaders and adherents

Cont. A3, Bertheophilus

# Transparency has become an evolving focus



DISTRICT COURT WITHIN AND FOR TULSA COUNTY,  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

STATE OF OKLAHOMA,  
Plaintiff,  
vs.  
Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey  
Defendant(s).

Case No.  
**CF-2024-3592**

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF OKLAHOMA )  
COUNTY OF TULSA ) ss.

DISTRICT COURT  
FILED  
SEP 25 2024  
DON NEWBERRY, Court Clerk  
STATE OF OKLA TULSA COUNTY

The undersigned, of lawful age, being first duly sworn, upon oath deposes and as follows:  
1. She is a Police Officer currently assigned to the Detective Division with the City of Tulsa.  
2. That the following offenses occurred in the City of Tulsa, County of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma:  
3. She has read certain official investigative reports and statements of witnesses regarding the above named Defendant(s) and, from these statements and reports it appears as follows:

On 8/23/2023 a Tulsa Police Report was made in reference to multiple DHS referrals regarding the above named defendant, who until recently was a Pastor of a local church, sexually abusing his biological, now adult, daughter HBO when she was a child. The mother of HBO, AB, sent me an audio recorded phone conversation between HBO and the defendant. In the recording, HBO confronted the defendant about the sexual abuse and the defendant begged her not to tell her husband because the secret getting out would be "a total catastrophe to the whole kingdom of God".

At the time of the report, HBO was not ready to move forward with prosecution.

On 9/18/2024, HBO reached out and told me that she was ready to press charges, and she wanted to share her story. HBO and AB came in for an interview that day. During the interview, HBO disclosed that the abuse started when she was in the sixth grade. It began with the defendant praying over HBO's body and touching her on her buttocks, breasts, and vagina. When HBO was in middle school, the defendant began performing oral sex on the victim and made her touch his penis and "masturbate him". The defendant asked HBO to perform oral sex on him, but she refused. In high school, when HBO was approximately 16-17 years old, the defendant entered HBO's bedroom at night, took her clothing off, and then vaginally penetrated her with his penis.

In 2021, after HBO moved out, got married, and had a baby, the defendant came into her residence unannounced, pushed her to the floor and forcibly orally sodomized her. After that incident, the defendant began coming to HBO's residence and looking in her windows.

Both HBO and AB had multitudes of evidence to provide for the investigation. According to AB, the defendant admitted to molesting their daughter. The defendant confessed his crimes in numerous forms of communication between he and AB. In the text messages, the defendant admits to watching videos of fathers and daughters having sex and that "seeds of sin grow". The defendant stated that he started out by masturbating to the videos but then he felt justified in acting out what was shown in the pornography because "it was what people do". The ages of the females in the father/daughter porn are currently unknown, but it is reasonable to believe that the defendant may have been engaging in the viewing of child pornography based on my training and experience in these investigations.

AB provided me with text messages between she and the defendant. In the messages, AB confronted the defendant about molesting HBO and lying about it. The defendant answers by agreeing that he lied and that he had planned on taking the secret to his grave. In another message from the defendant, he admits to being ashamed and humiliated from the exposure of the abuse. The defendant also confesses his guilt: and even stated, "jumping from touching to sex is not a big deal for me."

The text message shown below was sent to AB from the defendant.

ABOVE **Tulsa County District Court Affidavit, State of Oklahoma v. Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey,** detailing criminal charges of multiple acts of first-degree rape, incest, and child sexual abuse against his daughter, Harmony Bailey Oates, dating back to 2012 and 2013.

PHOTO THE ROYS REPORT

LEFT **Bertheophilus Maurice 'Judge' Bailey, Sr.,** 45, now former pastoral leader of St. Andrew Christian Church in North Tulsa, is alleged to have committed multiple criminal acts of first-degree rape, incest, and child sexual abuse against his daughter, Harmony Bailey Oates, dating back to 2012 and 2013.

PHOTO FACEBOOK

## Bertheophilus

From A2

learned about Bailey's alleged "sins" via social media posts and local news reports on Wednesday, Sep. 25.

"It feels like I'm not in the shadows anymore," Oates shared.

The courage to make public an alleged chronology of sexual violence, living in fear, hiding, was fueled by support from her family. Initially confiding in her husband and older brother, she would later share a far more difficult discussion with her mother, who has been consistently supportive of her daughter.

Bailey's family shared their support of Oates in a statement released after his arrest. "You are a strong, intelligent, and talented young woman. No one should ever have their trust and safety violated in such a horrific way. We are all so deeply sorry this happened to you."

Oates release from a father whom she once called her "best friend," and the repeated abuses she alleges, has finally ended.

But her testimony reveals a long-standing trauma and has forced a community to ask "How... how could this happen?"

### The Knowing

The allegations against Bailey are a haunting reminder for some of the child sexual assault and lewd/indecent acts by former Victory Christian Center staff in 2012. Chris Denman, a former janitor at the South Tulsa megachurch was sentenced to 55 years in prison after pleading guilty to raping a 13-year-old girl in the church's stairwell. Israel Castillo, a second church employee, pleaded guilty in 2013 to soliciting sex from a 14-year-old girl via the Internet and was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Transparency has become an evolving focus for churches throughout the country.

Background checks, criminal and employment history are the most common markers for assessing, vetting, potential church hires.

Congregations seek to establish the ideal balance between applying an often-perceived aggressive vetting of leadership and staff before hire, and assessments that provide enough information to best ensure the safety of its members.

A casual search online returns pages of third-party (independent) services to help ease the burden on church staff and establish

**More than half of responding Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated congregations (58%) said that "they require background checks for all staff and those who work with children and students." Although encouraging, far less reported that staff and those working with younger churchgoers were adequately trained in reporting sexual abuse cases (38%) or providing the appropriate care for survivors of sexual abuse (16%).**

2023 Annual Church Profile Report, a data gathering tool to assess the health of congregations. In 2023, the ACP was used by several Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated churches.

the objectivity required to make the most informed decision.

How congregations consider the information provided, what internal policies direct their hiring decisions, and which statutory requirements apply to them are moving targets for many faith homes.

It is not known if St. Andrew, throughout Bailey's tenure, employed periodic reviews of his criminal record, critically reevaluated his felony convictions of child abuse, or restricted his engagement with children.

The state of Oklahoma does not explicitly require that churches employ background checks for employees and staff, instead, such requirements are guided by a church's adoption of child and youth programming. Exemptions from Oklahoma Title 10 OK Stat § 403, a provision of the Oklahoma Child Care Facilities Licensing Act are permissible, should a church within the state host "programs in which children attend on a drop-in basis and parents are on the premises and readily accessible," or the proper accreditation has been earned.

In 2023, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Overtures Committee, rejected a South Texas Presbytery's proposal that outlined when mandatory background checks would be required, administered by the state. The Overture, never making it out of committee, was referred back to the South Texas Presbytery, noting concerns of "liberty" restrictions of members, the scope of mandated background checks, confidentiality, the perceived alignment with the state and the consequences for refusing to submit to a background check.

The PCA Overtures Committee would instead propose an amendment that replaced a Book of Church Order (BCO) requirement for mandatory background checks with a "a non-binding encouragement" of background checks.

After decades of sexual abuse and cover up allegations by children and staff, detailed by the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express-News in a 2019 report, Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated congregations, which represent approximately half of the Baptist-affiliated churches in Oklahoma, have begun to accept a greater commitment to ensuring the safety of their faith-communities.

In the wake of 700 reported victims who alleged rape, sexual misconduct and moving the accused and/or convicted senior church

officials to other congregations around the country, the Southern Baptist Convention approved a resolution condemning sex abuse and establishing a special committee to investigate sex abuse. The approved resolution, according to then SBC president, Rev. J.D. Greear, was regarded as a "defining moment", aimed at "Protecting God's children."

St. Andrew, under Bailey's leadership, and according to the church's website, "released..." their "...affiliation to the Baptist denomination."

Any potential precautionary measures to protect the St. Andrew congregation, as directed by the Southern Baptist Convention's "defining moment," no longer fell within the purview of the SBC.

Lifeway Christian Resources, in cooperation with Baptist state conventions, compiles the Annual Church Profile (ACP), a data gathering tool employed to assess the health of congregations. In 2023 several state conventions used the ACP to gather insight into how Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated institutions have addressed the issue of background checks, however, the Oklahoma convention was not listed as a participant.

More than half of responding Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated congregations said that "they require background checks for all staff and those who work with children and students." Although encouraging, far less reported that staff and those working with younger churchgoers were adequately trained in reporting sexual abuse cases (38%) or providing the appropriate care for survivors of sexual abuse (16%).

Of the South-Central region state convention churches, only one of four included participated in the ACP assessment. Texas, the lone standout, highlighted that 85% of responding churches require background checks.

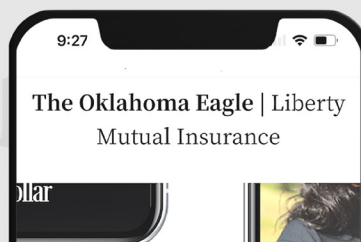
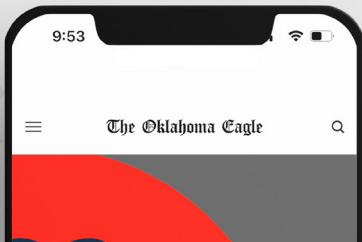
### The Called

*"The predators that are statistically likely to be in the pews, volunteering, and even behind the pulpit aren't just grooming their victims, they are grooming their community to view them as trustworthy and even as spiritual leaders."*

Kimi Harris, Writer, Christianity Today  
Cont. A5, **Bertheophilus**

## Our Mission

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



The Oklahoma Eagle

# Vernon: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

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



An All-Black town located in southwestern McIntosh County ten miles southeast of Dustin, Vernon was established in 1911 on the Tankard Ranch in the Creek Nation. Vernon is one of more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and is one of thirteen still existing. Thomas Haynes secured much of the land for the townsite and played a large part organizing the community. Its name honored Bishop W. T. Vernon of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The town

received a postal designation in 1912, with Ella Woods as the postmaster. Edward Woodard served as the town's first president, but he did not long remain in office. Louise Wesley established the first school and church. The congregation conducted church under a tree; Wesley taught school in her home. In 1917 the community built the New Hope Baptist Church. When the Julius Rosenwald Fund provided money to help build a public school, Vernon became one of the first communities in Oklahoma to receive assistance

from that philanthropic source.

The Vernon Rock Front Post Office is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 84003152). Rock Hill School is listed in the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory as a resource related to African American history. Like many rural towns of Oklahoma, Vernon suffered economic distress during the Great Depression. The exodus of many residents to urban centers after World War II added to the loss of residents. No population statistics are available.

**The Oklahoma Historical Society** is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma's history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

**Vernon's US Post Office**, 1980. (2012.201.B1329.0529, by P. Howell, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

## The Oklahoma Eagle

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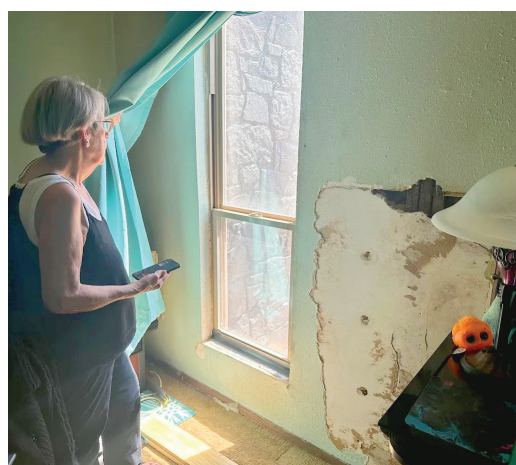
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## Featured Last Week



Trump's immigration stances:  
A study in hypocrisy



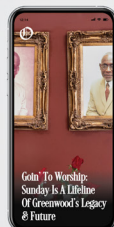
Low-income Renters Have Little  
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What to Know About State  
Question 834

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# A blind acceptance of those who profess a shared faith and commitment to ministry



St. Andrew Christian Church, North Tulsa, recently led by Bertheophilus Maurice 'Judge' Bailey, Sr., 45, who is alleged to have committed multiple criminal acts of first-degree rape, incest, and child sexual abuse against his daughter, Harmony Bailey Oates, dating back to 2012 and 2013. PHOTO ST. ANDREW CHRISTIAN CHURCH, FACEBOOK

## Bertheophilus

From A3

The absence of a broader mandate of background checks, across the full spectrum of faith and worship, reflects a sentiment shared by child predators in Anna Salter's book *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders*. A psychologist who has spent over 20 years working with and studying victims and sexual offenders, Salter drew from the stories of abusers, exploring what motivates sexual abusers and why so few are caught.

A convicted child molester whom Salter interviewed candidly framed a perspective about Christians who prioritize embracing a positive view of others, without just caution, above formal scrutiny... "I considered church people easy to fool ... they have a trust that comes from being Christians. ... They tend to be better folks all around. And they seem to want to believe in the good that exists in all people."

It is this culture, a blind acceptance of those who profess a shared faith and commitment to ministry, that enables abuse of youth and children within some churches.

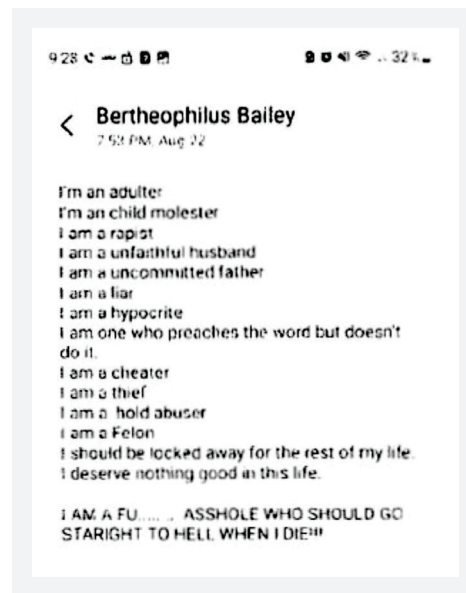
Rachael Denhollander, an attorney and former gymnast, who first publicly accused Lawrence Gerard Nassar, the

former Michigan State University and USA Gymnastics doctor, of sexual assault, challenged the perceived dismissive response from, and culture of apathy within, her family church weeks before Nassar's trial began.

Denhollander previously stated that "My advocacy for sexual assault victims ... cost me my church," without identifying the specific church in her statement. The former gymnast had expressed concerns regarding her church's relationship with Sovereign Grace Ministries, whom Denhollander believed was engaged in a coverup of a 2012 sexual abuse case, which was dismissed as a court ruled that the lawsuit exceeded the statute of limitations.

Immanuel Baptist Church (Louisville, KY) would later reveal that they were the church that Denhollander was referencing, further noting that "we were sinfully unloving" regarding Denhollander's concerns about their relationship with Sovereign Grace Ministries. Further, Immanuel noted that "We have since thoroughly repented to the Denhollanders and to the church we serve, seeking to confess every known sin. In return, the Denhollanders and our church family have been very gracious and forgiving."

Mark Prater, executive director of what



Alleged Text messages shared between Bertheophilus Maurice Bailey and his former wife. PHOTO THE ROYS REPORT

is now Sovereign Grace Churches, credited Denhollander for coming forward with her testimony against Nassar, however, he noted her allegations against Sovereign Grace as false.

Nassar was later convicted and sentenced to 60 years in federal prison, Dec. 2017, after pleading guilty to possession of child pornography and tampering with evidence. In Jan. 2018, Nassar was sentenced to an additional 40 to 175 years in Michigan State Prison, after pleading guilty in Ingham County to seven counts of sexual assault.

Michael Veitz, a former Tennessee police officer and writer for *Christianity Today*, advocated an approach he regards as "informed trust," whereas churches are not merely blindly receptive of faith-inspired staff and leadership, but that they also employ proactive measures to ensure the safety of their faith communities.

Veitz suggests that faith communities should trust their members but must also commit to validating their trust.

Referencing his personal faith, as a "Presbyterians committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms," Veitz reflects upon a belief that all are "born in sin," and that discernment, a practice of examining all who profess a call to lead and serve is warranted. He [Veitz] also addresses a common argument against the "rigorous vetting" of those called, that the practice engenders a perceived barrier between the congregation and those with whom we seek a "deep-seated trust in communal bond."

The desired "communal bond", observed Veitz, should be the shared goal of the congregation and the called, accomplished after earning an "informed trust."

The Unanswered Question  
Whether St. Andrew employed criminal background checks or precautionary measures prior to voting on Bailey's ascension as pastoral leader, or if the church simply relied upon his familial relationship without scrutiny, may certainly be introduced as an aspect of his case.

What is certain is that the North Tulsa congregation returned to a faith home, on Sunday, shaken by the allegations and the absence of their pastor.

As Oklahomans evolve their understanding of what allegedly occurred in the homes of Bailey, his daughter Oates and St. Andrew, more questions will arise.

For Oates, thankfully, the alleged violence has ended... And now, the memory of what has been alleged may be known and come to light [Luke 8:16].

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Ross D. Johnson, The Oklahoma Eagle Creative Director and contributor is impassioned by the written and visual narratives of Black communities. A lifetime East Coaster driving beneath the Oklahoma sky.



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Sunday Morning Worship 11 a.m.

Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m.



Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr. Pastor

## Gethsemane Baptist Church

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

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

Sunday School 9:00 a.m.

Church Services 11:00 a.m.

## Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

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

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons

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Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

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

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Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm

Wednesday worship - 8pm

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## Anti-ESG

# DESPITE LEGAL CHALLENGES AND EXEMPTIONS, *GOP Lawmakers Remain Committed to Anti-ESG Law*

**PAUL MONIES**  
Oklahoma Watch

Oklahoma Republican lawmakers said they will continue offering tweaks to the state's anti-oil and gas boycott law for financial firms and banks, even though the law itself is on hold pending an appeal at the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Rep. Mark Lepak, R-Claremore, held an interim study on Wednesday looking into the background of state laws targeting climate change goals and other environmental, social and governance initiatives put in place by investment firms and banks. Lepak said he remained committed to making the Oklahoma Energy Discrimination Elimination Act better.

"ESG goals weaken industries important to Oklahoma's economy, which means fewer jobs, which reduces our collective wealth and in turn reduces tax collections and everything tax dollars support," Lepak said. "Beyond the basic services we all expect, it also affects things like our pensions that are totally supported by tax dollars.... Does it make sense to invest in things that hurt our economy?"

Oklahoma lawmakers passed HB 2034 in 2022, which directed the state

treasurer to establish a list of banks and financial institutions perceived to be boycotting the oil and gas industry with their carbon-emissions reduction goals. Treasurer Todd Russ has issued three versions of the list, the latest issued in May. Among the companies on the list are Bank of America, State Street Corp., BlackRock Inc. and Barclays PLC.

But enforcement of the law is on hold after a retiree, Don Keenan, challenged its constitutionality and what he called political interference in the state's pension plans. Oklahoma County District Judge Sheila Stinson issued a permanent injunction in September.

The witnesses at Wednesday's interim hearing uniformly thought Oklahoma's law was working as intended despite the legal challenges and an exemption taken by one of the state's largest pension systems. Russ also exercised an exemption because the state's purchase cards are managed by Bank of America, which he put on the restricted company list.

Three of the witnesses had ties to the energy industry or conservative think tanks partly funded by the oil and gas sector. Some of their presentation slides cross-referenced similar reports issued by conservative think tanks in other states. Russ has attended several

## ESG

### What is ESG Investing?

ESG stands for environmental, social, and governance. ESG investing refers to how companies score on these responsibility metrics and standards for potential investments. Environmental criteria gauge how a company safeguards the environment. Social criteria examine how it manages relationships with employees, suppliers, customers, and communities. Governance measures a company's leadership, executive pay, audits, internal controls, and shareholder rights.

### Environmental

Energy use, waste management, and carbon footprint.

### Social

Labor practices, community engagement, and human rights.

### Governance

Board diversity, executive pay, and ethical standards.

conferences hosted by the State Financial Officers Foundation, which has also provided him with talking points about anti-ESG laws and hosted speakers from other similarly minded groups.

Jason Isaac, a former Texas House member now with the Austin-based American Energy Institute, bashed recent research reports in Texas and Oklahoma critical of those state's anti-ESG laws. He said U.S. environmental regulations and policies promoted "eco-anxiety" and "climate alarmism."

"When we increase regulations in the United States, all we do is shift production to other countries," said Isaac, who described himself as living a high-carbon lifestyle. "We don't reduce demand, we just ship production. That's why this ESG agenda is really the China ESG agenda. China is adding a coal-fired power plant every single week."

Isaac said taxpayers were subsidizing electric vehicles and states pushing a so-called all-of-the-above energy strategy were contributing to lazy messaging about energy demand and production.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt and former Gov. Mary Fallin, both Republicans, touted the state's oil and gas sector and renewable energy contributions to the

Cont. A9, Anti-ESG

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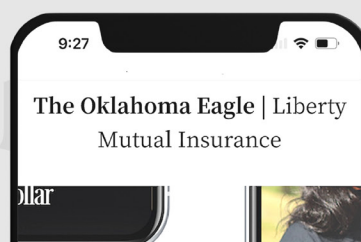






PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

## Anti-ESG

# For Tulsans & legislators, the conflict between stewardship and control is daunting

From A8

state's economy. In 2020, the state tried unsuccessfully to get Tesla to make its trucks near Tulsa and has offered incentives to troubled electric car manufacturer Canoo Inc.

Paul Tice, a former Wall Street bond trader who is now a senior fellow at the National Center for Energy Analytics, said ESG represented a variety of morally subjective policies that was hard to square with the goal of most investors.

"It's basically progressive politics and political goals masquerading as finance," Tice said. "Through pressure from activist groups and moral duress, we have integrated ESG into the financial markets."

Russ said financial institutions on the state's restricted company list are on notice that Oklahoma is serious about protecting the oil and gas industry. He said the law should be expanded to include giving state pension funds more of a say on a public company's shareholder proxy voting process. Russ said investment managers are voting for ESG shareholder resolutions without taking into account the views of some of their biggest customers like state pension funds.

"We're not telling private firms where they can and cannot invest," Russ said. "We want to stop Oklahoma pension dollars from being hijacked to further non-financial, social causes. We just want to look for the best returns of those investments and the best outcomes for our pensioners."

Russ and another witness, Matthew du Mee, who appeared on behalf of Heritage Action for America, repeatedly faulted investment giant BlackRock for pushing low-carbon goals and other ESG practices. Apart from proxy votes, du Mee said BlackRock's huge investment profile gives it more access with company executives to press their case.

"BlackRock and State Street meet with companies behind closed doors, and they tell those companies what they need to do," du Mee said.

Lepak said the House had two bills in the

“

**BlackRock and State Street meet with companies behind closed doors, and they tell those companies what they need to do.**

Matthew du Mee,  
Heritage Action for America

2024 session to make changes to the energy discrimination law, but neither made it through the Senate. He has another interim study scheduled for Oct. 31 on the state's pension systems.

Tulsa retiree Don Keenan sued Russ last year over the state's anti-ESG law. Keenan is a former human resources director of a Sinclair refinery in Tulsa, worked for the state for 11 years and is a beneficiary of the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System. The law is on hold after a district judge issued a permanent injunction.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court has an Oct. 30 deadline for main briefs to be filed in an appeal by the attorney general's office of the permanent injunction.

Separately, Russ and his chief of staff, Jordan Harvey, were named in a lawsuit filed last week over open records requests made to this office about the Energy Discrimination Elimination Act. The complaint alleges Harvey failed to turn over emails about the law from a private Gmail account. It said the treasurer's office has been coordinating with outside groups that want to influence Oklahoma policy.

"On information and belief, Defendant Harvey received at her personal email address from certain unnamed 'friends in DC' the three documents she forwarded from her personal email address to her state email address, at least one of which she later sent to the governor's office," the lawsuit said.

The treasurer's office said it provides thousands of pages of records to all types of requesters. It has not yet answered the complaint filed in Oklahoma County district court.

"The Treasurer's office works diligently with multiple organizations in an effort to provide thousands of documents on a regular basis," Harvey said in an email on Wednesday. "It is deeply disappointing that an out-of-state company is using Oklahoma's Open Records Act, a sunshine law designed to ensure transparency for the people of Oklahoma for the benefit of unknown out-of-state entities."



JULY 2024

## An Oklahoma District Judge issued A permanent Injunction Against The state's Anti-ESG law

Paul Monies has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2017 and covers state agencies and public health. Contact him at (571) 319-3289 or pmonies@oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter @pmonies.

## SQ 833

# What to Know About State Question 833 and Authorizing Public Infrastructure Districts

KEATON ROSS  
Oklahoma Watch

Backers of an amendment to authorize municipal public infrastructure districts say the funding mechanism could spur more affordable-housing construction, but critics question the potential burden on taxpayers.

State Question 833, a legislatively referred constitutional amendment on the Nov. 5 general election ballot, proposes authorizing municipalities to create public infrastructure districts. To qualify as a public infrastructure district, 100% of surface property owners must agree to the funding formula and present a plan to their local city council. A board of trustees would be established to oversee the district if approved.

Residents of areas designated as public infrastructure districts could be assessed an annual tax of up to \$100 per \$100,000 of assessed value to fund the infrastructure improvements. The trust would also have the authority to issue public bonds.

Here's a guide on State Question 833 and how it would affect municipal development in Oklahoma:

### Who supports State Question 833, and why?

Rep. Terry O'Donnell, R-Catoosa, and Sen. John Haste, R-Tulsa, sponsored a resolution to put State Question 833 on the ballot and debated in favor of the measures on the House and Senate floors.

O'Donnell called public infrastructure districts the "ultimate local control" that will allow city officials to spur construction in areas developers might not otherwise be interested in. He said single property owners would be the most likely to utilize the funding mechanism.

"The cities have control over these local districts in awarding them, and the people who move into them pay the additional bonds," O'Donnell said. "Nobody else pays the additional bonds."

Haste said public infrastructure districts could take pressure off cities and towns and allow faster development.

"Particularly in areas with a lot of growth, this is a way to support cities to build more houses," he said.

### Who opposes State Question 833, and why?

In the House, a mix of fiscally conservative Republicans and Democrats voted against SJR16. In the Senate, six Republicans and one Democrat voted no on the resolution.

Rep. Andy Fugate, D-Oklahoma City, posed the hypothetical that a developer could push to establish a public infrastructure district in a high-end housing district and then sell the property at a substantial profit. He also said residents of public infrastructure districts could be more hesitant to support bond measures for public schools.

"This really is the triple crown of bad policy," Fugate said. "If you vote for this, it's a vote for more taxes, it's a vote that will hurt your public schools, and it is a vote that will put taxpayer dollars into the pockets of developers that will pay and then leave."

### Does State Question 833 require developers to build affordable housing?

Local municipalities could impose that as a requirement for public infrastructure district proposals.

### If State Question 833 is enacted, who would oversee public infrastructure districts?

The text of the measure states that a Board of Trustees would have authority over the public infrastructure district, but does not specify duties or appointment requirements.

Does State Question 833 specify what qualifies as public infrastructure?

No, but lawmakers could narrow the definition in subsequent legislation should voters approve the amendment.

### Is anyone spending money to sway voters on State Question 833?

As of Oct. 16, no individual or organization has reported spending on State Question 833, according to Oklahoma Ethics Commission filings. Pre-election spending reports are due on Oct. 28.

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



Jayme Fowler, candidate for Tulsa City Council, District 9.

PHOTO, FOWLER FOR TULSA.COM

## District 9

# Tulsa District 9: Fowler faces Bush as housing, infrastructure draw resident concerns

MATT PATTERSON  
NonDoc

Five months ago, Tulsa City Council District 9 two-term incumbent Jayme Fowler was running for mayor of Tulsa against well-known and well-financed candidates. As the candidate filing period approached, he suddenly announced a decision to forgo a mayoral bid. Instead, after briefly saying he would sit out Tulsa's 2024 cycle altogether, he filed for reelection, finished second among five candidates in August and now faces former Oklahoma House Rep. Carol Bush in a head-to-head matchup for another two-year term Nov. 5.

"We took a look at the polling data, and Karen (Keith) was raising money a year before she announced, and Monroe (Nichols) had been raising money, too. I was a little naive in thinking that I could raise a million and catch up," Fowler said of his exit from the mayoral race. "I looked at the polling data, and I think sometimes we all make decisions that aren't grounded in logic and are made out of emotion, and I think I got to the point where I said I'm going to drop out of the mayor's race and run for reelection."

For Bush, who represented House District 70 for three terms, running for the Tulsa City Council offered a new outlet for the public service she wanted to continue after briefly considering a 2024 mayoral run herself.

"After six years as a state representative for the Tulsa area, I left on my own accord," she said. "I was ready to come home and focus more specifically on Tulsa issues, even though a lot of the bills I ran were Tulsa-related. I felt like I could have a more direct impact on the city council."

Before her legislative service, Bush

**Tulsa City Council District 9 covers a south-central portion of the city, spanning north of Interstate 44 to 31st Street and south to 71st Street between the Arkansas River and Sheridan Avenue.**

worked as executive director of the Tulsa Crime Prevention Network for a decade. Fowler has worked in finance for 35 years. In addition to his work, he lends his time to the Tulsa Memorial High School High School Foundation.

Tulsa City Council District 9 covers a south-central portion of the city, spanning north of Interstate 44 to 31st Street and south to 71st Street between the Arkansas River and Sheridan Avenue.

### Candidates hear homelessness, housing complaints

As Bush and Fowler have campaigned, they say several issues always seem to be on the top of people's minds. Among those are housing and Tulsa's homeless population. Tulsa has about 1,400 chronically unhoused people, according to its last point-in-time count earlier this year.

Bush said expansion of services for those experiencing homelessness poses a top challenge for city governments to face.

"That's the No. 1 issue I hear about from people," she said. "It's from the standpoint of both wanting to help but also the illegal activities that can come with it. That can be breaking into homes or assaulting people or camping out in front of stores so that people can't get their businesses to open. It makes it intimidating for customers. We have some areas that are so bad with panhandling — like 51st and Harvard — where people won't buy gas because they are being asked for money."

Fowler has also heard similar complaints from constituents.

"We're challenged by it like every big city," Fowler said. "We are doing some progressive things. We're doing a low-barrier shelter by Mohawk Park with wraparound services.

There will be social workers. When they're admitted, they can start working on the things that got them on the streets in the first place, whether that's substance abuse or other problems. I think it's a positive step in helping people get their lives back."

### Slow Tulsa development process 'kind of a joke'

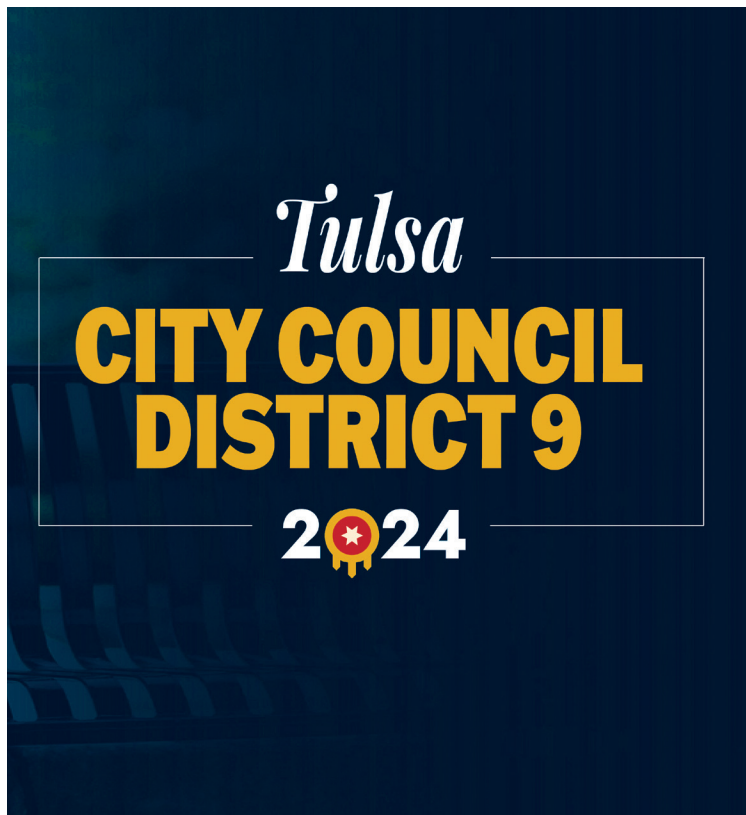
Both Fowler and Bush said Tulsa needs to step up its game when it comes to development and make it easier for those interested in developing the city to get projects started, permitted and inspected. Bush said other cities in the metro are ahead of Tulsa in those terms.

"The whole process of getting work done is laborious, and it takes forever," Bush said. "I know of a guy who has been sitting on land for over a year because of the lack of continuity from one of the inspectors to the next. We have a real problem in that area. Broken Arrow knows that we're kind of a joke. They're saying to people who want to build there that they're open for business."

Fowler said there are some ways to relieve the logjam of permits and inspections, depending on what type of housing is being developed.

"I think we have a big challenge as far as permitting and inspections," he said. "If you're a developer who has built low-cost starter homes, then those delays can eat into the profits. One of the things we're starting to do is use some manufactured homes in northeast Tulsa. They're built in a factory and assembled on-site. When you do that, you're no longer under the guise of permitting and federal guidelines, and with those done away with the cost goes down."

Cont. A11, District 9



Carol Bush, former Oklahoma House Rep. and candidate for Tulsa City Council, District 9. PHOTO: VOTE CAROL BUSH.COM

## District 9

# Econ. development, housing, infrastructure & homelessness, key issues for District 9

From A10

### 'It's not sexy to talk about sewer lines'

Bush said Tulsa has a lot going for it, including culture in the form of arts and entertainment, museums and the BOK Center.

However, she remains concerned about what's underneath the streets and whether the city's resources are being put to their best use. She cites what she calls the "sidewalk to nowhere" in one part of Tulsa where a sub-division of homes on large lots have sidewalks even though the broader area does not.

"We need to spend time and resources dealing with this," she said. "Our infrastructure is aging. We have sewer lines in neighborhoods that have serious issues because of that. It's not sexy to talk about sewer lines, but we have a problem with them. We have people dealing with things like groundwater coming into their faucets at home. The city needs to put a plan together to improve and replace aging infrastructure. We have a lot of clay pipes. Nobody uses clay anymore."

“

**The city needs to put a plan together to improve and replace aging infrastructure.**

Carol Bush, former Oklahoma House Rep.

Fowler argued that, in some respects, Bush misunderstands the problem and is oversimplifying the solution. He said there is not one type of pipe that meets every need.

"She has suggested HDPE pipe, but if we did that the city would likely have only one source to supply the pipe going into the ground," he said. "She alluded to clay (pipes), but those are slowly but surely being done away with and upgraded. I think there's a lot to this issue."

### How they differ

Asked what differentiates him from his opponent, Fowler pointed to his experience representing Tulsa City Council District 9 for two terms, as well as his experience in the private sector.

"I hold my opponent in high regard and esteem, but if you look at the council now, you have eight councilors who are involved in nonprofits and one person in private business," he said. "I've spent my whole life in the private sector, and I understand what it takes in other world-class cities."

Bush said that, if elected, being on the council would be her full-time job. Bush said her experience in the Legislature

— where she passed bills extending the statute of limitations for prosecuting sex offenses committed against minors and authorizing harm-reduction or "needle exchange" programs — also bolsters her resume.

"One of the things that differentiates me from my opponent is that I treat this as my full-time job, and I return all my emails and phone calls," she said. "Sometimes you're not going to like the answer. Not all issues are fixable, but even just through my door knocking I've been able to solve a couple of issues for people. I will always be accessible and accountable, and I want to hear ideas from people, because I think together we can solve a lot of problems for the city and make it a better place to live."

The Tulsa World's editorial board has endorsed Bush in the Tulsa District 9 race.

Matt Patterson has spent 20 years in Oklahoma journalism covering a variety of topics for The Oklahoman, The Edmond Sun and Lawton Constitution. He joined NonDoc in 2019. Email story tips and ideas to matt@nondoc.com.



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The Oklahoma Eagle

## Obituary

# GRETA Ann Lee

*A beloved educator and mentor for generations of youth from Tulsa to Japan and many locales in between, passed on Oct. 14, 2024. She was 66.*

GARY LEE, The Oklahoma Eagle



PHOTO LOREM IPSUM

Greta's cause of death was complications associated with cancer, according to family members.

Greta was educated in Tulsa Public Schools and excelled in the classroom. The early foundation for learning paved the way for her to become a teacher in elementary school and preschool classrooms for much of her adult life.

At the peak of her career, Greta moved to Japan, where she lived and taught local school kids for more than four years. The pivot to life on the other side of the globe from her north Tulsa roots and immersion in Japanese culture would be one of the most impactful periods of Greta's life.

Greta was born at Moton Hospital in north Tulsa on April 27, 1956, the fifth child of Fred and Elreatha Lee, a couple well integrated in their community. In naming her, Greta's mother, Elreatha Lee, took her first name from a family friend and a shortened version of ReAnna, her paternal grandmother's name for her middle name.

As a child and throughout her life, Greta found her comfort zone in quietude. Yet, wherever she moved, she made friends easily and forged close bonds, particularly in spiritual communities.

From an early age, Greta showed unusual artistic talents and a zeal for learning new things. She had a particular skill for drawing and graphics.

Greta was a pupil at public schools on the north side of Tulsa and graduated from Edison High School in 1976. She attended Langston University, Oklahoma's only historically Black college. There, her interest in educating a younger generation was cemented. She graduated in 1982 with a degree in early childhood education.

Soon after graduation, Greta worked at Emerson Elementary School in Tulsa and public schools in

Coffeyville, Kan. In 1987, she returned to Tulsa and taught fifth grade at William Penn, Gilcrease, and Hoover elementary schools. Her devotion to lifting younger generations with knowledge was remarkable. Many of Greta's former students recall the impact she had on them.

Always eager to expand her skill sets, Greta began learning Japanese at Tulsa Community College in 1997. In 1998, she applied for and was accepted as an assistant language teacher at an elementary school in Utsunomiya, Japan.

She spent four years in Japan, helping pupils learn English. She assisted in developing lesson plans and aided in teaching about the differences and similarities between American and Japanese culture.

After returning to the U.S., Greta eventually resettled in Texas. She studied at the All-Nation's School of Ministry in Houston, Texas, and earned an associate degree in ministry in 2010. She taught preschoolers at Houston Kidz, a church-affiliated school.

Besides teaching, the church was a constant centerpiece of Greta's life. In early years, she attended Paradise Baptist Church, the place of worship for her family. Regular Sunday Bible School and Vacation Bible School were events that she looked forward to attending and participating. She later became a member of Antioch Baptist Church, where she learned under Rev. M. C. Potter.

When Greta moved to Texas, she engaged heavily in church worship and activities. She became active in street evangelism in Houston. She also joined missionary trips to Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The care of family members was always crucial for Greta. She doted over and helped raise the

three children of her younger sister, Freddyne Lee: Christian Bell, Candace Bell, and Xavier Jordan Lee. The lifelong teacher's love of and mentorship of her nieces and nephew continued throughout her life. After returning to Tulsa from Texas in 2017, Greta became the caregiver to her mother, Elreatha Lee.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the family sheltered in their home in north Tulsa, Greta became the family's breakfast maker. Her gourmet creations helped uplift her mother, brother, and sisters during the era's challenges.

In her later years, Greta reached into the deep well of her faith. She often led the family in prayer and interpretations of the scripture. She filled many notebooks with reflections on the Bible and the lessons it brought to contemporary life.

Greta is survived by her mother, Elreatha Lee; two sisters, Erma Lee and Lisa Lee; and six brothers, Frederick Lee, David Lee, Gary Lee, Robert Lee, Anthony Lee, and Albert Lee (Marissa); nieces, Christian Bell Onyemali (Kingsley), and Candace Bell; nephew, Xavier Jordan Lee; and a large circle of aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relatives. She was predeceased by her father, Fred Lee, and two sisters, Lilla Lee Jenkins and Freddyne Lee.

Services will be held at Gilcrease Hills Baptist Church, 2001 W. Newton St., in Tulsa, on Oct. 26 at 11 a.m. Rev. Beverly Baul, a longtime friend and spiritual advisor to Greta, will officiate. The family would like to express gratitude to Rev. Baul for her care extended to Greta.

Jack's Memory Chapel will handle funeral arrangements. Greta will be interred at the family's resting place - Doyle Cemetery near Haskell, Okla.



PHOTO BY CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION VIA GETTY IMAGES

# Here's Why LA's Top Law Enforcement Official Wants to Ban the Death Penalty

DISTRICT ATTORNEY GEORGE GASCÓN  
Word In Black

AFTER THE EXECUTION OF MARCELLUS WILLIAMS, LA DISTRICT ATTORNEY GEORGE GASCÓN CALLS ON CA GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM TO BAN THE DEATH PENALTY.

The execution of Marcellus Williams serves as a stark reminder of the injustices of the death penalty. Today, as we reflect and mourn this death, we must consider the facts of the final hours of Mr. Williams' life: There were ample concerns about the evidence of the case, including DNA evidence that refuted early claims. In a petition to the court, the victim's family asked that Mr. Williams not be put to death.

Prosecutors in Missouri objected to this execution—a fact that grieves many prosecutors, including me as the LA County District Attorney. Part of our work as prosecutors is to serve victims of crime, and this execution was a painful disservice to the family Lisha Gayle, who have sought justice since she was killed in 1998.

Today I am calling on Governor Gavin Newsom to use executive action to commute the death sentences of nearly 700 people on California's death row and sentence them to life without the possibility of parole instead.

While the death penalty has been halted in California due to the Governor Gavin Newsom's 2019 moratorium on executions, the state has not formally joined the 23 other states where the death penalty is illegal. This important change will allow for continued advocacy and action towards abolishing this unjust and irreversible punishment.

We must recognize that the threat of death without the assurance of justice is an indignity to our system, and we must also acknowledge there are systemic biases that endanger Black men like Mr. Williams disproportionately. Recall that Mr.

Williams was convicted and sentenced to death in 2001 for murder despite significant doubts about his guilt. After spending 24 years in prison, new DNA evidence emerged that contradicted the initial findings and raised serious doubts.

Now, through the callous disregard of the Missouri governor, we have lost the opportunity for justice.

As the District Attorney of Los Angeles County, let me be clear: I will never seek the death penalty. I don't hold this view because it is popular or easy; I do it because I truly believe in justice and the important work of prosecutors across this country. Throughout my career in San Francisco and Los Angeles, I have never pursued this ultimate punishment, choosing to focus on promoting justice and fairness in our criminal justice system.

Since being elected as District Attorney of Los Angeles, I have taken significant steps to address the injustices of the death penalty that we see time and time again. In the last three years, through the Resentencing Unit, my office has resentenced 36 individuals off death row and given them Life Without the Possibility of Parole instead. This decision not only spares them from the ultimate punishment but also allows them the opportunity to seek redemption and rehabilitation, and in some cases, their innocence.

Out of the 14 exonerations that have occurred in my administration, at least one man faced the death penalty. Thankfully, the jury rejected the request and sentenced him to life without the possibility of parole instead. If not for this decision, he might

have been executed before he was able to prove his innocence.

By refusing to seek the death penalty, I am standing up against these injustices and advocating for a more humane and equitable criminal justice system. I believe in holding individuals accountable for their actions but recognize that the death penalty is not the answer.

The irreversible nature of the death penalty means that there is no room for error, which is too great a cost to bear. Marcellus' case underscores that mistakes are made and the high risk of executing innocent individuals and the urgent need for reform in our criminal justice system.

Since 1973, the Death Penalty Information Center calculates that 200 people have been executed and later exonerated and found innocent, further highlighting the grave consequences of a flawed and immoral practice like the death penalty.

In a time when the death penalty is increasingly being questioned and abolished in many states, my stance reflects the growing consensus that capital punishment has no place in a fair and just society. I am committed to leading by example and showing that there are alternative ways to achieve justice without resorting to the ultimate punishment.

The case of Marcellus Williams should serve as a powerful reminder that reform and abolition of the death penalty is needed now.

I call on Gov. Newsom, respectfully and sincerely, to act today to preserve truth and justice in California.

FEATURED

## Chicago's Lead Problem Isn't Going Away Anytime Soon

Deadline to replace 400,000 lead service lines in Black South Side Chicago, A14



FEATURED

## Rev. Barber and the Poor People's Campaign Make Final Voting Push

Poor People's Campaign, A16



Dept. of Education

# Why Black Kids Need the Education Dept. — AND WHY TRUMP WANTS IT GONE

AZIAH SIID  
Word In Black

Since it split off from the former Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the 1980s, the Education Department has been a frequent target for the far right, who see it as a wasteful, “woke” bureaucracy interfering with local control of schools.

Donald Trump, the once and perhaps future president, talks about it frequently. Project 2025, the radical conservative blueprint for dismantling the federal government, put it high on the next president's to-do list.

They both call for the Department of Education to be demolished.

While it's become one of Trump's favorite talking points, he's not the first president to come up with the idea. He's the latest in a long line of powerful, right-wing conservatives dating back to President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, who want to abolish the 157-year-old department.

The DOE sets the nation's education policy through initiatives like the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Higher Education Act. It also helps guarantee all students have access to a fair and equitable education for all children. But it also protects the civil rights of minority or disadvantaged children, and has helped countless Black students pay for college.

What's less obvious is why far-right Republicans want to blow it up in the first place.

Trump has repeatedly said he plans to “close the Department of Education, move education back to the states.” Like Trump, the Republican Party's 2024 campaign platform argues that the DOE is a “woke” bureaucracy that wastes taxpayer money and interferes in local decisions. They don't like the department's push for racial equity, or its achievement incentives, or its protection of gay and transgendered kids.

But the Ed Department's biggest K-12 programs, by dollar amount, go to high-poverty schools, as well as providing Pell grants for college and money for students with disabilities. That's why Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump's Democratic Party opponent, has vowed to protect the DOE.

Here are three facts you should know about why the

Cont. A15, Dept. of Education

**Conservatives have long wanted a president to kill a department that funds poor schools, helps Black students pay for college, and protects all students.**

We could get that president if Donald Trump wins the White House.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Chicago

## Chicago's Lead Problem Isn't Going Away Anytime Soon

WILLY BLACKMORE  
Word In Black

Earlier this month, there was a deadline for water utilities across the country to submit a survey of lead pipes in their systems to the Environmental Protection Agency — the first step in the Biden Administration's ambitious plan to replace all the remaining lead service lines in the country over the course of a decade.

But the accounting of the water-delivery system in Chicago, and the agency's response to it, shows that the goal will not be met: the

EPA is giving Chicago, which has more lead pipes than any other city in the country, until 2047 to finish replacing them all.

“That's decades. That's generations of children and adults consuming lead contaminated water,” Chakena Perry, a Chicagoland-based senior policy advocate with the Natural Resources Defense Council told NPR earlier this year about the EPA's generous timeline. “It's incomprehensible to tell a resident that they

**The EPA gave the city until 2042 to replace 400,000 lead service lines — and the majority are located on the primarily Black South Side.**

need to wait that long for safe drinking water.”

**Lead's Devastating Impact**

Lead is a powerful neurotoxin, and there is no safe amount to consume in water. The effects of lead exposure — which can cause developmental and behavioral problems, as well as fertility issues, amongst other issues — tend to be worse for people who are already experiencing other social disadvantages, such as poverty. Combined with the fact that lead water infrastructure is often found in cities like Chicago, lead exposure is an environmental justice issue that disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities.

Chicago has an estimated 400,000 lead service lines — the most in the U.S., which connect larger cast-iron or ductile steel distribution lines with the privately owned plumbing system inside a home or apartment building.

Cont. A15, Chicago

Dept. of Education

## Diversity & Equal Protections unfavorably viewed by GOP legislators

From A14

DOE is important to Black students and why it should stay.

### 1. States Already Have the Power to Set Education Policy

Formerly a division of the old Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the DOE does a lot of different tasks, including monitoring school performance and promote evidence-



**U. S. Department of Education**  
The United States Department of Education is a cabinet-level department of the United States government. It began operating on May 4, 1980, having been created after the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was split into the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services by the Department of Education Organization Act, which President Jimmy Carter signed into law on October 17, 1979.



PHOTO LOREM IPSUM

based practices. Its highest-profile work is protecting and enforcing students' civil rights. But while it does have a policy agenda, sometimes sets education goals and often uses financial incentives to implement education policy, like the Every Student Succeeds Act and No Child Left Behind, it does not directly dictate what states can and can't teach. State education departments have the freedom to set their own standards.

### 2. The DOE Encourages Diversity, Which Helps All Kids

Research shows that Black representation in both majority white and predominantly Black schools helps boost the learning experience of all students. As a result, the federal DOE encourages schools to make diversity a priority — and calls on its Office of Civil Rights Enforcement to make sure minority students' rights to an education are protected. More on that later.

Under the Biden administration, the department is investing more than \$300 million in programs that increase school integration, including the Magnet Schools Assistance Program that aims to reduce racial isolation. The creation of the Fostering Diverse Schools initiative is also a new initiative to increase school socioeconomic diversity, which awarded more than \$14 million in new grants.

The administration also secured funding and grants designed to

### Biden Admin.:

**\$300 million invested in programs that increase school integration, including the Magnet Schools Assistance Program that aims to reduce racial isolation.**

diversify the teacher workforce, which is more than 80% white and female. It involves everything from loan forgiveness to aspiring teachers to designating money for HBCUs, which train a majority of Black teachers.

### 3. The DOE Protects The Rights of All Children

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, the DOE took on the mission of equal access to education for all students, regardless of race. That meant enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, among others, which prohibited discrimination in education based on race, sex, and disability.

In recent years, however, the DOE's role on that front has shifted, depending on which party holds the White House. The Obama administration, for example, used the department to try and disrupt the schools to prison pipeline: DOE officials told schools that data showing a disproportionate suspension of Black students could indicate civil rights violations. The DOE under Trump, however, rolled back those rules.

Now, the Biden White House has made protection of LGBTQ students the new civil rights frontier. It issued new Title IX rules that guard against discrimination, particularly against trans students. But conservative states are pushing back.

**Aziah Sild** graduated from Morgan State University with a Bachelor's in multimedia journalism. She previously interned with the Baltimore Business Journal where she reported on minority owned businesses and local synergies. During her time at Morgan, she served as the features editor, then campus news editor. She extensively covered breaking news, writing stories on strict deadline, and COVID-19. She currently serves as an education reporter for Word in Black.

Chicago

## Significant concentration of lead service lines located on the primarily Black South Side

From A14

One recent study conducted in Chicago found that an astonishingly high percentage of children under the age of 6 (the age group at the greatest risk of long-term complications from lead poisoning) are exposed to lead in drinking water, nearly 70%.

"The extent of lead contamination of tap water in Chicago is disheartening — it's not something we should be seeing in 2024," the study's lead author Benjamin Huynh, an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health said in a statement in March.

While Chicago has a significant Black and Brown population on the whole, all that lead-contaminated water is by no means evenly distributed. A significant concentration of lead service lines are located on the primarily Black South Side.

The fix — removing lead from water systems — is obvious, but it tends to never be all that quick or straightforward. And there are other cities with a large amount of lead too, including New York (100,000 lead service lines) and Cleveland (235,000 lead service lines).

The EPA has had a shifting formula for setting the deadline for cities with the most work to do when it comes to removing lead from the water system.

The EPA's initial formula for granting extended deadlines to cities with the most work to do would have put New York at 14 years, Cleveland at 27, and given Chicago fully 42 years to do all of the work, according to an analysis by Policy Innovation. Thanks to a recent revision to the formula, however, New York is now on the 10-year timeline, and Cleveland and

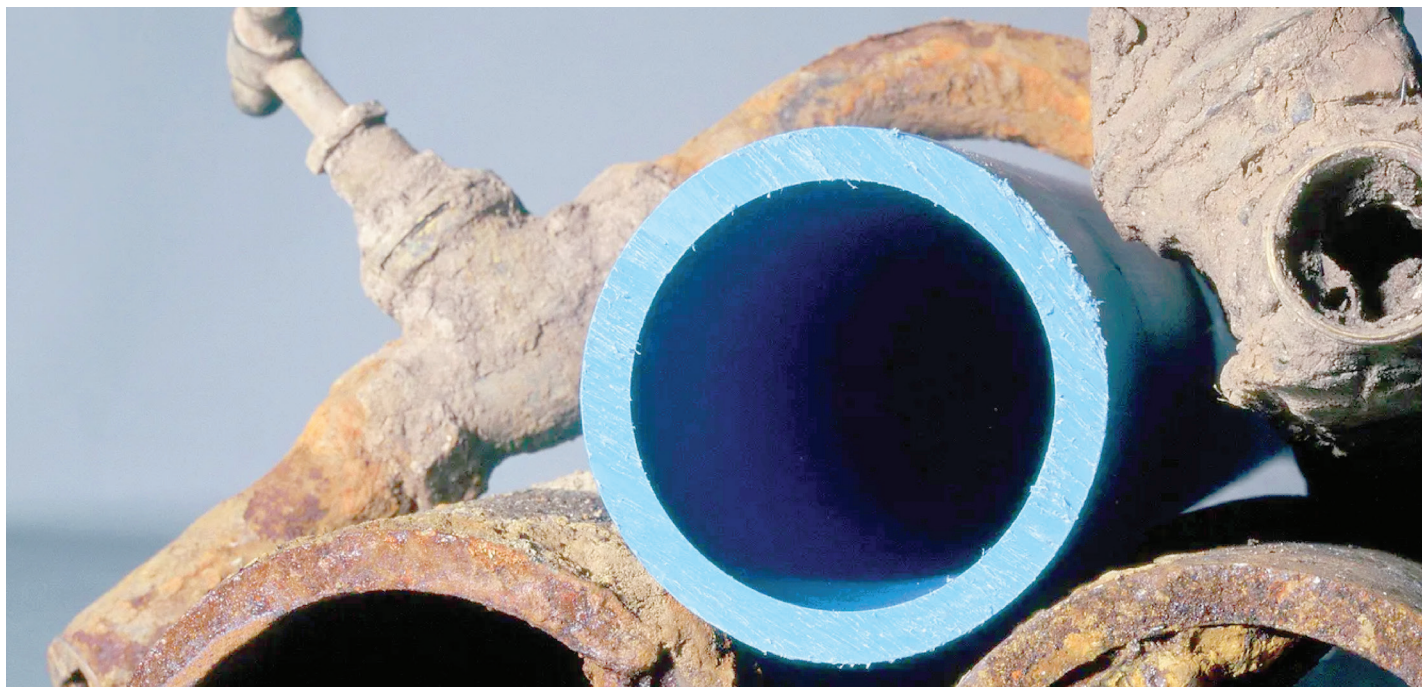


PHOTO GETTY/BRIAN MITCHELL

Chicago has more lead pipes than any other city in the country.

Chicago saw their deferred timelines cut roughly in half.

### Flint's Long Jour

The long-running effort to replace every lead and stainless steel service line in Flint, Michigan, shows just how arduous this kind of undertaking can be. The city has completed around 30,000 service line replacements in seven years at a cost of \$100 million, and while the work initially moved at a rapid clip, it has ground nearly to a halt in recent years. With the finish line approaching, difficulties around finding remaining lines, and also with

getting the necessary permissions to check publicly-owned service lines that run under privately owned front yards, have emerged.

There are bound to be similar hang ups in Chicago too, with access complicated by the fact that it's predominantly a city of renters, not homeowners. Currently, a tenant is not allowed to permit access for service line work, only the owner of a building is. With a significant immigrant population now living on the South Side, there is also the concern that some residents will avoid anyone knocking on a door about lead-pipe removal in order to

avoid the risk of deportation.

Then there's the question of costs: while Flint is on the hook to pay for new service lines thanks to a court ruling that mandates the lead-pipe removal program, in many cases Chicagoans will be on the hook for the costs. Some low-income homeowners will be able to get lead lines swapped out for free, but those who don't qualify will have to pay between \$15,000 and \$40,000.

**Willy Blackmore** is a freelance writer and editor covering food, culture, and the environment. He lives in Brooklyn.

## Poor People's Campaign

# Rev. Barber & the Poor People's Campaign Make Final Voting Push

REV. DOROTHY S. BOULWARE  
Word In Black

At the start of 2024, the Poor People's Campaign, in partnership with various faith groups, set out on a mission: mobilize at least 30 million eligible voters among low-income people of color. Their goal is clear — to awaken what they call a "sleeping giant" of voters. But why have so many stayed away from the polls? Bishop William J. Barber II, the campaign's national co-chair, says it's simple: politicians campaign without addressing the issues that matter most to these communities.

That's why the Poor People's Campaign has taken a grassroots approach, engaging directly with the communities it aims to mobilize. By building trust and encouraging participation, it hopes to move people from voter registration to actually casting their ballots.

One of the target areas is Georgia, which is experiencing a record turnout. More than 1.4 million ballots have been cast since early voting began on October 15. These numbers reflect the campaign's strategic efforts. They sent out 8.7 million text messages to low-wage, infrequent voters, whom they describe as the "least of these" in biblical terms.

"It's a problem when people who follow Jesus don't follow the principles of Jesus' ministry," Barber said at a recent rally in North Carolina. "That's the problem with Christian Nationalism."

Barber points to a study by Pew that analyzed 50,000 sermons and found poverty mentioned in less than 1% of them. In white churches, the focus was on doctrine; in Black churches, it was on praise. Churches

**The effort to mobilize 30 million low-income voters of color has gone from registration to getting folks to the polls.**



Reverend Dr. William Barber II and the Poor People's Campaign recently showed up in over two dozen states as part of the second National Canvassing Weekend, where they worked tirelessly to get out the vote.

aren't addressing poverty, and that's why poor people are not engaged in the political system. They are ignored by the campaigning politicians, and their issues are not addressed, Barber said.

"That's why young people have to make a choice between church and movements," he explained. "They can't find the moral faith they know is right in church, so they choose movements such as this one."

He emphasized the urgency of the campaign's work by highlighting the daily toll of poverty: "So many poor people die in this country that it would take 2 1/2 years to attend the funerals of the ones who die in one day," he said.

The Poor People's Campaign recently visited over two dozen states as part of the second National Canvassing Weekend, where they worked tirelessly to get out the vote. They canvassed and did outreach in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor and low-wage infrequent voters, whom they called the "sleeping giant of this election."

Just recently, the North Carolina faith leaders and organizers joined the team on a tour that included stops in Raleigh, Greenville, and Salisbury.

"As a disabled trans veteran, fourth-generation faith leader with the Christian Church, DOC, and tri-chair in the Arizona Poor People's Campaign, I canvass because my lived experiences of marginalization fuel a deep, unwavering commitment to justice and equity," said volunteer Zade Evans.

"Voting as an impacted person is a civic duty and an act of defiance against systems that have long silenced us," Evans said. "In Arizona, a battleground state, I am dedicated to awakening the sleeping giant of poor and low-income voters to build a future where all voices matter and where there's always room at the table."

A voice from the Pennsylvania campaign, Tammy Rosing said the experience felt really good and centered on the big issues, rather than divisions.

"Looking out upon my community of Lancaster, seeing the different dynamics, the diversity, and where everyone is...there was no intensity or hate around any conversations, even in the Bible Belt of Pennsylvania. We took the time to have really in-depth conversations, hearing their thoughts and struggles. It wasn't about Democrat or Republican. It was about meeting people where they were."



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