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End of Pandemic-Era Rental Assistance Could Cause Evictions Spike

Risks for tenants and landlords

Pandemic Assistance, A8



FEATURED

OK Utility Customers May Face Even Higher Costs From 2021 Winter Storm

Utility Customers, A6



Langston University students, faculty and staff 1970s-era photos.

ILLUSTRATION THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE & OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Langston

Langston students look to mend strained relationship with historically Black town

SASHA NDISABIYE
NonDoc

When the fall semester began, Langston University students returned to campus and found a surprise: Town officials had passed an ordinance banning students from having off-campus parties within city limits, a move that follows the university's push for stricter enforcement of its "dry campus" policy — the prohibition of alcohol and substances on university property, regardless of age.

Cont. A5, Langston

The Oklahoma Eagle

Ernie Fields: An Iconic "Territory Band" Leader

By MICHAEL LAPRARIE, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Ernie Fields (Ernie Fields, Jr. Collection, OHS).

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Langston University students talk with Langston Chamber of Commerce members, including William Horey, on Thursday, Sept. 12, 2024, after a Langston Board of Trustees meeting was canceled.

PHOTO SASHA NDISABIYE

Langston University (LU) is a public land-grant historically black university in Langston, Oklahoma. It is the only historically black college in the state and the westernmost four-year public HBCU in the United States. The main campus in Langston is a rural setting 10 miles (16 km) east of Guthrie. The university also serves an urban mission with centers in Tulsa (at the same campus as the OSU-Tulsa facility) and Oklahoma City. The university is a member-school of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.

PHOTO LANGSTONUNIVERSITY.EDU

Langston

Langston students look to mend strained relationship with historically Black town

From A3

Feeling as though they lost a necessary outlet and long-standing tradition, Langston's Student Government Association President Myles Lowery and other student leaders started discussions with local officials in hopes of rebuilding relationships between the town and university students. To their surprise, a canceled government meeting turned into an eye-opening conversation about the town and university's history, as well as the dire need for investment and community engagement in the Langston area.

On Sept. 12, when an illness postponed a meeting of the Langston Town Board of Trustees, student and community leaders stayed at city hall to discuss their strained relationship, which Langston Chamber of Commerce member Jaquita Bruner said arises in part from students' disregard for the permanent residents of the historic town.

"Half of [the students] don't even know we're here," Bruner said. "This town built this school. It was a passion between everybody. Everybody out here (...) bled LU. Even if they didn't work there, they worked for it. They put everything they had into it. They gave money to it. They love that college, but there's a disconnect

now."

During the hour-long conversation, Bruner and William Horey, another member of the Langston Chamber of Commerce, expressed their appreciation for students visiting city hall to participate in the meeting, as well as their growing concern that the town of Langston is only years away from disappearing.

"See, I'm glad y'all even decided to come," Horey told students. "So maybe y'all come more, get some people over here like us, who can think (...) because a lot of people over here, they're just content with dying out."

Town's survival threatened as residents face dilemma

Many Black Oklahomans can trace their history in the area to westward expansion even before the Civil War, as some Black people enslaved by Native Americans arrived here following the Indian Removal Act of 1830. After slavery was abolished in southern states, other newly-freed Black men and women opted to settle in what would become Oklahoma — a place with land, oil and the hope for opportunity.

As lands were opened for non-Indigenous settlement, other Black people followed suit to their white counterparts and traveled to Indian

and Oklahoma territories in search of better lives and freedom. They settled communities like Langston, Boley, Redbird and dozens more, which became known as all-Black towns.

More than a century later, Langston and Boley stand as the largest of only 13 historically Black towns remaining in Oklahoma.

Although the struggles of a small town in American can rarely be blamed on a singular occurrence, Bruner holds firm to her belief that the slight rerouting of State Highway 33 — a 135-mile highway designated in 1927 that intersects both Interstate 35 and Interstate 44 — marked the start of the town's downfall.

"The highway's the No. 1 culprit," Bruner said. "When that highway came, we had probably 20 businesses, but they can't survive with everybody going around us and not through [Langston]. (...) So you see where Old 33 and New 33 is? New 33 ruined everything."

Relocated as part of a widening project in 2000 spurred by safety concerns — 12 people died in automobile accidents over 13 years — State Highway 33 now runs north around the outskirts of Langston, thus decreasing tourism and travel stops in the historic town. The Old State Highway 33 now serves as the backroad into Langston and the university's

campus.

Langston University stands as the only historically Black college or university in the state, and compared to the 12 other historically Black towns in Oklahoma, Langston has a younger population.

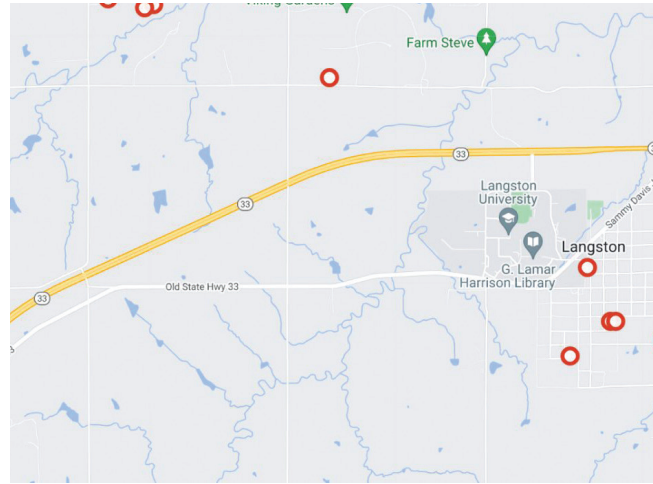
Langston University enrolls more than half of its students from out-of-state, and it annually brings thousands of students, faculty, staff and family members to the area. However, it has limited financial impact on the town, which has few places for students and university community members to spend their money.

As the dynamics have shifted from the town building the university to the university now keeping the town alive, much of the hope Horey and Bruner have left lies with the "youngsters" attending Langston University, especially those who may be missing their own families.

"I just think there's some people there on that campus, they're away from home," Bruner said. "Some of them — there might be a handful — they want a grandparent, or want to start an elderly program, or [want] to tutor, or [want] to do something for the community."

Horey said the town offers little incentive to people who are interested in investing, given that the main thing Langston has to offer is its land. He

Cont. A6, Langston



LEFT A car sits outside of Langston City Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024.

PHOTO SASHA NDISABY

ABOVE Langston University, Oklahoma's only historically Black university, is encapsulated by Old Highway 33 and the new Oklahoma State Highway 33.

PHOTO GOOGLE MAPS

Langston

Langston University: An institution that now anchors an historically All-Black town

From A5

recognizes that most students do not plan to stay in town after graduating, and he is concerned that even the hope of urban renewal efforts could eventually diminish the town's historic culture and community.

"They come in, they take over," Horey said. "The Black people don't want to live here, so the white people move in here for the dirt cheap. (...) They let this town go down like it is, then they come back and buy it up for cheap and then build on it. (...) They're going to make it to where there's no affordable housing. (...) We know how this plays out. Like I said, I'm talking to these kids more because all you got to do is want to live here."

The town's lack of quality-of-life necessities — such as adequate housing, a strong economy, practical grocery options, basic entertainment, and other fundamental aspects of an average college town — deter most students from staying in Langston. Residents acknowledge that people can't survive in an area without such necessities, but those necessities cannot be produced and maintained without people. The dilemma involves deciding the best way to bolster both community retention and economic growth in order to preserve and grow the historic community.

Horey said he believes it's not too late to salvage the town of Langston, but that will only be possible with intentional collaboration between the town and the university. To that end, during the Sept. 12 conversation between students and town residents, both groups agreed the community would benefit from an advisory board that includes Langston residents, students, administrators and municipal leaders.

Although no such advisory board has been created yet, Horey said he has been acting as a liaison between the town and university students at Langston City Hall.

This week, Bruner is helping to organize a meet-and-greet with Langston University President Ruth Ray Jackson as a collaborative effort between the town of Langston, the

“**They come in, they take over... The Black people don't want to live here, so the white people move in here for the dirt cheap. ... They let this town go down like it is, then they come back and buy it up for cheap and then build on it.**

William Horey, member, Langston Chamber of Commerce

Langston Chamber of Commerce and other entities. Set for 3 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 13, at the Ballard's Bed and Breakfast and Event Center on the southeast edge of Lake Langston, the town plans to present Jackson with a key to the city. The event maintains a tradition between the town and the university, and Bruner said she hopes it will allow more local residents to get to know the new university president, who faces a host of campus challenges already.

Langston Board of Trustees meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month, and the next meeting is set for 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 14, at city hall. Meeting notices and board agendas, however, are not posted on the City of Langston website, which is largely out of date and provides limited information for students looking to learn about the town's government.

'It was chaotic': Huge spring party spurred ordinance

Toward the end of the 2024 spring semester, the disconnect between the town and university culminated in an out-of-control party involving hundreds of students. The new ordinance prohibiting parties in city limits was put into place following the event.

"It was 700 people," said Langston Mayor Michael Boyles. "There were three of my police on duty that night. They were outnumbered. They were overwhelmed. (...) [The students] wouldn't even listen to any command that was given to them. The fire marshal was being ignored. He was saying that they were over capacity because there were 700 people just outside [of the building]."

Fewer than 1,700 people reside in the town of Langston, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The town's subsequently low sales tax base results in limited reliable law enforcement in Langston city limits, according to Boyles.

"The police officers that were there, they were surrounded by everybody," Boyles said. "They had to call all the officers that they could. Guthrie, 12 miles away, only had two

officers that they could send. Highway patrol had a few officers that they could send. The sheriff's department only had two officers that they could send. They had less than 10 officers, and nobody was missing. (...) It was chaotic."

Unaware of the new town ordinance this fall, students scheduled an Aug. 8 "Thirsty Thursday" party, a longstanding weekly tradition among Langston students normally held at various locations in the town. The Aug. 8 event was being hosted in the parking lot and surrounding areas of a local beauty supply store called Lions Mane. Once students began to arrive, they were met by both city and campus police officers, who shut down the event. Langston Chief of Police Jay Hill revealed the news of the ordinance to attendees, according to Langston nursing student London Brookins.

On Sept. 9, Lowery, along with Langston SGA Vice President Elise Thompson and student activities coordinator Terrance Keys, met with Boyles and Hill to discuss the city's perspective and reasoning behind the ordinance.

"Their perspective is, whenever we have large gatherings like that, it can get up to about a thousand people, and they only have so many officers here because it is a small town. So, they don't get as much funding," Thompson said. "Then, there's a lot of elderly people that live there as well. And (...) people have kids and things like that. And then, with the events being on a Thursday, kids have school in the morning."

Langston does not have its own school district, leaving families to enroll their children in the public school district in Coyle, a neighboring town just east, or commute the 12 miles down Highway 33 to Guthrie Public Schools. Coyle and Langston have been intertwined over the years, with public service agreements and political dynamics proving complicated over the years.

Thompson said Langston student government leaders understand the town's concerns and have worked to relay them to university students in hopes of improving

Cont. A8, Langston

Oklahoma's All-Black Towns

The All-Black towns of Oklahoma represent a unique chapter in American history. Nowhere else, neither in the Deep South nor in the Far West, did so many African American men and women come together to create, occupy, and govern their own communities. From 1865 to 1920 African Americans created more than fifty identifiable towns and settlements, some of short duration and some still existing at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Source: The Oklahoma Historical Society

Utility Customers

Oklahoma Utility Customers May Face Even Higher Costs From 2021 Winter Storm

PAUL MONIES
Oklahoma Watch

Oklahoma utility ratepayers could be paying even more money from a huge winter storm almost four years ago after cities questioned if the Oklahoma Corporation Commission could waive franchise fees or municipal taxes from the storm charges on monthly customer bills.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court, in an 8-0 ruling on Wednesday, overturned the agency's order in 2022 waiving the fees and taxes for more than \$3 billion in natural gas costs related to the winter storm in February 2021. It sent the case back to the Corporation Commission for further review. It will likely end up in district court.

Vice-Chief Justice Dustin Rowe, in a concurring opinion, said customers could end up paying up to \$100 million more in franchise fees and sales taxes from the \$3.07 billion in winter storm charges.

"Will payment be made from the securitized revenue or from the utility companies' balance sheets?" Rowe asked in his opinion. "I suppose the answer to these questions will be litigated in district court. From there, the district court can determine whether the burden of an additional \$60-\$100 million will fall onto the people of Oklahoma."

The city of Oklahoma City challenged the Corporation Commission's order before the Oklahoma Supreme Court in August 2022. The Oklahoma Municipal League also joined the lawsuit.

Christian Rinehart, deputy general counsel for the Oklahoma Municipal League, said the once-in-a-generation storm negativity affected not only customers and utilities, but municipalities too.

"OML is encouraged by the decision from the Oklahoma Supreme Court," Rinehart said. "Franchise fees and gross receipts taxes owed to municipalities under contractual

legal obligations were protected."

Outgoing Corporation Commissioner Bob Anthony voted against the order in 2022. Anthony said in a statement Thursday he wished the court had been able to make the same review of the storm costs when it narrowly ruled on the constitutionality of the storm bonds.

"We can only imagine what the court might have done to the OCC's multi-billion-dollar winter storm bond financing orders if it had not been prevented from considering the protests filed in those cases, some of which made substantially the same legal arguments," Anthony said. "Justice Rowe is right to wonder who will be required to pay that additional \$60-100 million owed to Oklahoma's towns and cities."

Former Senate President Pro Tempore Brian Bingman, who won his Corporation Commission race on Tuesday with almost 64% of the vote, will join fellow Republicans Kim David and Todd Hiatt on the

commission.

At one point during the February 2021 winter storm, natural gas prices in Oklahoma's trading hub exceeded more than \$1,200 per thousand cubic feet, the highest in history. At no other regional trading hub did natural gas spot prices get as high as in Oklahoma. Regional natural gas prices before the storm traded at about \$3. Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond filed lawsuits against natural gas pipeline and marketing companies over what he called market manipulation. A district court judge in Osage County is expected to rule soon on whether those lawsuits can proceed.

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.



Sen. Lonnie Paxton (R-Tuttle) listens during a meeting on the Senate Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on Education on Wednesday, May 8, 2024.

PHOTO MICHAEL DUNCAN

Paxton

Lonnie Paxton to be next Oklahoma State Senate leader

TRES SAVAGE
NonDoc

One week after the 2024 election cycle concluded, members of the 2025 Oklahoma State Senate Republican Caucus gathered at the State Capitol for a private vote to nominate a new leader of the Legislature's upper chamber. Within 30 minutes, the proverbial white smoke of frantic text messages to lobbyists and media revealed the victor of the split GOP election: Sen. Lonnie Paxton was selected as the next president pro tempore of the State Senate.

According to two senators speaking on the condition of anonymity, Paxton defeated Sen. David Bullard (R-Durant) by one vote — 20 to 19 — although internal GOP Caucus leadership election results are typically said to be kept private.

"I am grateful to my fellow members who chose me to lead the Senate moving forward," Paxton said in a press release. "The Oklahoma Legislature has never been in a better position overall to make changes and pass legislation that benefit Oklahomans. I am excited for this new chapter, and I will work every day to ensure we continue to build on our success. I have learned many lessons during my time in the Senate."

Bullard provided a statement to NonDoc on the day's vote.

"While I did not win the pro tem vote, I'm confident that the Senate will tackle big issues for our state and our people," Bullard said.

The Senate will formally vote on its next president pro tempore on organizational day for the 60th Oklahoma Legislature. Under the Oklahoma Constitution, organizational day is held on the first Tuesday after the first

The Senate will formally vote on its next president pro tempore on organizational day for the 60th Oklahoma Legislature.

Under the Oklahoma Constitution, organizational day is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January in odd-numbered years, which will be Jan. 7 in 2025.

Monday in January in odd-numbered years, which will be Jan. 7 in 2025. All senators — Republicans and Democrats — vote on the floor for their chamber's president pro tempore.

Numerous new faces in Oklahoma Senate

The Senate will formally vote on its next president pro tempore on organizational day for the 60th Oklahoma Legislature. Under the Oklahoma Constitution, organizational day is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January in odd-numbered years, which will be Jan. 7 in 2025. All senators — Republicans and Democrats — vote on the floor for their chamber's president pro tempore.

For the Senate and Capitol insiders, Tuesday's news culminated a year's worth of political jockeying and electoral effects, with new members awaiting their formal swearing in casting ballots in the caucus election. In February, Senate Republicans met behind the same closed doors and designated then-Senate Floor Leader Greg McCortney (R-Ada) as the anticipated president pro tempore for 2025 and 2026.

But as one political dynamic led to another in a tense 2024 session, McCortney lost his June reelection bid to a relatively unknown challenger: Jonathan Wingard, a military veteran who reported raising only \$26,100 and who benefited from conservative furor over the Senate's decision not to vote on an income tax cut and other topics.

In July, the Senate Republican Caucus returned for another leader-designee vote, but this time some of the hardline conservatives who opposed McCortney declined to attend, citing the lame-duck nature of a quarter of the caucus and the

pending August runoff and November general elections. With that vote, however, the caucus designated Paxton — an insurance agent who previously served as mayor of Tuttle — as its president pro tempore-to-be.

With elections concluded, that created the matchup between Paxton and Bullard, a fitting pitting of the caucus' two ideological factions. Bullard has pushed for the Senate to be more conservative on social issues and proposed income tax cuts, while Paxton has urged greater fiscal caution on revenue conversations and has clashed with hardline conservative activists like Don Spencer of the Oklahoma 2nd Amendment Association, whose leader once said his members might need to turn to the "ammo box" if they don't win at the "ballot box."

Paxton's one-vote victory comes with one vacancy in an eastern-Oklahoma Senate seat held for years by a Republican. After he was suddenly removed as the Senate's budget committee chairman, Sen. Roger Thompson (R-Okemah) announced his resignation in June. With Thompson making his resignation effective Nov. 1, Gov. Kevin Stitt chose to delay a special election for Senate District 8 until 2025. Per Stitt's proclamation, candidate filing is slated for Jan. 6-8, with primary elections March 4, runoff elections (if necessary) April 1, and the general election May 13, about two weeks before the constitutionally required adjournment date for regular session.

The Oklahoma State Senate will include 14 new faces in 2025:

In District 3, Dr. Julie McIntosh is replacing Sen. Blake "Cowboy" Stephens (R-Tahlequah) after defeating him in an August runoff;

Cont. A9, Paxton



Langston University (LU) is a public land-grant historically black university in Langston, Oklahoma. It is the only historically black college in the state and the westernmost four-year public HBCU in the United States. The main campus in Langston is a rural setting 10 miles (16 km) east of Guthrie. The university also serves an urban mission with centers in Tulsa (at the same campus as the OSU-Tulsa facility) and Oklahoma City. The university is a member-school of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. PHOTO LANGSTON UNIVERSITY.EDU

Langston

For Langston children access to public schools is a 12-mile commute to neighboring Guthrie

From A6

relationships.

Although there has been no progress on the idea of a resident and university community advisory board, Lowery attended the Langston Board of Trustees meeting Oct. 10 and said residents there spoke about trying to plan events to bring the town and the university together.

“Toward the end of the meeting, some of the town’s members were saying how they want to get with (...) students and start planning events,” Lowery said. “Like a kickball game or have a yard function — like a Black family reunion type of thing.”

This year, Langston University’s annual homecoming ran from Oct. 13

through Oct. 19, culminating with a tailgate and homecoming football game. Traditionally, the student activities board hosts anywhere from one to three events daily for students to participate in, but with the cancellation of “Thirsty Thursday” — later renamed “Turn Up Thursday” to eliminate the implications of students drinking on a dry campus — Lowery predicts students will be looking for events to participate in.

“[Students have] been saying how they want to have something fun to do,” Lowery said. “After homecoming week, there is a little dry spell, so there might not be any on-campus events to have fun at all. I most definitely see the students being willing to find some type of way to

have that fun [by] going off-campus and having that relationship with the town of Langston.”

Lowery also said the police officers who attended the Oct. 10 meeting acknowledged and voiced their appreciation toward the students improving their communication with local law enforcement. While the ordinance still stands, Lowery believes the conversations with town leaders have been a step in the right direction.

“It wasn’t really about a lift (of the ordinance),” Lowery said. “Toward the end, they weren’t talking about a lift per se, but basically trying to have things to where we can eventually get to that lift.”

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.

Pandemic Assistance

End of Pandemic-Era Rental Assistance Could Cause Evictions Spike

HEATHER WARLICK
Oklahoma Watch

Sheniqua Johnson is part of the Sandwich Generation, caring for her 14-year-old daughter and 72-year-old mother. The family of three has lived at Heritage Point Apartments in Oklahoma City for six years.

In July, Johnson couldn’t pay her \$1,114 rent.

Five months earlier, Johnson, 41, was fired from her management job at a Subway restaurant on her fourth employment anniversary.

Compounding Johnson’s stressful situation, her mom’s health was fading, requiring 24-hour health care.

“The only thing that was going through my mind, I just thought that we were going to get put out,” Johnson said. “We were going to be on street side.”

Johnson needed rental assistance or she would likely be evicted. Oklahoma landlords file about 4,000 eviction cases monthly in small claims courts. According to Legal Services Corporation’s Eviction Tracker, 32,108 evictions were filed in Oklahoma between January and August.

More than \$400 million of pandemic-era federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program finally ran dry for Oklahomans in September, signaling a new era of scarcity for tenants behind on rent and for landlords who extended grace periods.

The end of ERAP funding might also



Property Manager Cindy Steward inspects apartments she manages after a recent heavy rain.

signal an uptick in eviction filings and homelessness in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma tenants seeking rental assistance still have a few options. Community Action Center and Neighborhood Services Organization in Oklahoma City, and Restore Hope Ministries in Tulsa assist Oklahomans like Johnson, who face losing their homes over one month’s rent.

In a stroke of what Johnson considers God’s grace, she secured a job as a home health assistant, with her mother as her first client.

Johnson also felt grace, she said, when Community Action Center approved her application for rental assistance, paying her late rent and helping Johnson back on track financially.

“That’s God, showing me he’s working,” Johnson said.

Covid Relief Deterred Evictions

Beginning in March 2021, Oklahoma City deployed \$330 million and Tulsa, \$70 million in ERAP funding, a set of U.S. Treasury allocations totaling \$46 billion nationally. The money was earmarked to support housing stability for eligible renters throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds were disbursed through Community Cares Partners in Oklahoma City and Restore Hope Ministries in Tulsa.

Though several groups still offer limited resources for rental assistance, granted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local donors,

advocates agree that the dearth of rent assistance availability following ERAP leaves Oklahoma renters and landlords without a safety net. The end of a period that included an eviction moratorium and rental assistance up 15 months of back rent could lead to a rise in housing instability among Oklahoma’s low-income renters.

“Now that there aren’t significant federal funds, what’s next?” said Jeff Jaynes, executive director of Restore Hope, the state’s best-funded source of rental assistance. “There’s a certain high level of need consistently in our state.”

Before the pandemic, the biggest year Restore Hope experienced was helping 471 households with rent assistance totaling \$305,000, Jaynes said.

“At the height of the pandemic, we were distributing about a million and a half dollars every week,” Jaynes said.

Oklahoma has the 46th highest housing wage in the country, with 518,633 renter households, 127,817 of which earn less than 30% of the area’s median income. Oklahoma households must earn at least \$19.91 per hour to afford a typical two-bedroom unit.

The Oklahoma Legislature has not raised the minimum wage since 2009; it stands at the federal minimum of \$7.25 per hour.

As wages stagnate and rental costs soar, Oklahomans struggle to pay rent, Jaynes said.

The top reasons Jaynes said people

Paxton

Hilbert set to lead the house

From A7

- In District 9, former state Rep. Avery Frix won by default in April as the only person to file for the seat left open by Sen. Dewayne Pemberton (R-Musokgee);
- In District 11, Rep. Regina Goodwin (D-Tulsa) is replacing Sen. Kevin Matthews (D-Tulsa), who was term-limited;
- In District 13, Wingard is replacing McCortney after defeating him in the June primary;
- In District 15, Lisa Standridge is replacing her husband, Sen. Rob Standridge (R-Norman), who was term-limited;
- In District 21, Dr. Randy Grellner is replacing Sen. Tom Dugger (R-Stillwater), who did not seek reelection;
- In District 25, Brian Guthrie, the mayor of Bixby, is replacing Sen. Joe Newhouse (R-Tulsa), who did not seek reelection;
- In District 31, Spencer Kern is replacing Sen. Chris Kidd (R-Waurika), who did not seek reelection;
- In District 33, Broken Arrow Vice Mayor Christi Gillespie is replacing term-limited Sen. Nathan Dahm (R-Broken Arrow);
- In District 37, Aaron Reinhardt of Jenks is replacing Sen. Cody Rogers (R-Tulsa) after defeating him in the June primary;
- In District 43, Kendal Sacchieri of Blanchard is replacing Sen. Jessica Garvin (R-Duncan) after defeating her in the June primary;
- In District 46, Mark Mann of Oklahoma City is replacing term-limited Senate Minority Leader Kay Floyd (D-OKC), who was term-limited;
- In District 47, Kelly Hines of Edmond is replacing Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC), who was term-limited; and
- In District 48, Nikki Nice of Oklahoma

In District 11, Rep. Regina Goodwin (D-Tulsa) is replacing Sen. Kevin Matthews (D-Tulsa), who was term-limited.



Members of the Oklahoma Senate talk on the chamber floor on Tuesday, April 18, 2023.

PHOTO: BENNETT BRINKMAN

City is replacing Sen. George Young (D-OKC), who chose not to run again.

Hilbert set to lead House

While the Senate's electoral shakeup left its leadership uncertain for months, Oklahoma's House of Representatives has had plenty of time to plan for the tenure of Speaker-elect Kyle Hilbert (R-Bristow). Hilbert handily won the House GOP Caucus designee election in February, underscoring the body's massive stability advantage over a Senate that has been defined by internal —

albeit mostly hidden — strife in recent years.

Still, House leadership fell shy of throwing a perfect game in the 2024 electoral cycle. Longtime House Appropriations and Budget Committee Chairman Kevin Wallace (R-Wellston) lost his final reelection bid to challenger Jim Shaw, whose criticisms of Wallace, wind energy and human waste application on farmland landed among voters in Lincoln County.

The 60th Oklahoma Legislature is set to convene for the 2025 regular session on Monday, Feb. 3.

Tres Savage (William W. Savage III) has served as editor in chief of NonDoc since the publication launched in 2015. He holds a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma and worked in health care for six years before returning to the media industry. He is a nationally certified Mental Health First Aid instructor and serves on the board of the Oklahoma Media Center.

Pandemic Assistance

End of ERAP stop-gap funding creates greater risks for landlords and tenants

From A8

request rent assistance at Restore Hope include wages that don't cover expenses, family health problems and transportation issues.

"Earlier this year, as we've started to ramp down (from ERAP spending), we were spending about \$200,000 a week," Jaynes said. "Last month we got down to about \$100,000 a week. Where we need to be with our funding going forward is about \$100,000 a month."

Landlords Benefitted From ERAP

Tulsa landlord Cindy Steward said the end of federal rent assistance might add to the discouragement landlords experience when tenants fail to pay rent and could result in landlords deciding to ditch the property ladder in favor of less risky investments.

Steward manages 160 properties through her Tulsa company, Blue Mountain Properties, and said she nearly lost everything during the pandemic. She has always been sympathetic to the plights of her tenants, and when they fell behind on rent during the pandemic, she said she helped them apply for rental assistance at Restore Hope. That was her best bet for ensuring she

could cover her mortgage payments.

ERAP funds kept Steward from losing her life savings during a time she described as chaotic and heartbreaking. Now that the federal assistance has ended, Steward sees a problem with tenants thinking they can skip rent when they are sick or lose their income because they think the pandemic safety nets are still in place.

Some tenants received as much as 15 months' rent assistance with ERAP.

"Everything changed during COVID," Steward said. "And so the attitude I get now oftentimes is, well, 'I'm sick, so I'm not going to pay.' That's it."

Steward still points her tenants to Restore Hope Ministries when they need help with rent, though the assistance is much more limited than in the recent past.

Assistance for Some, Not Enough For All

Landlords can't afford to help people like they did when ERAP money was flowing, and once a tenant gets behind on two or more months' rent, Steward said, they have very little chance of catching up.

Steward said her tenants often don't realize how limited the affordable housing rental market is.

"They don't understand it," Steward said.

"They don't hear it."

Neighborhood Services Organization's rental assistance program opens its phone lines on Monday mornings every week. CEO Stacey Ninness said that the group accepts between 15 and 20 applications for assistance and closes its phone lines within about 30 minutes of opening them. Each week, as many as 150 Oklahomans apply for assistance.

Community Action Center came through for Johnson when she needed help, but she may have been less fortunate if she had waited a month.

This year, the group has spent the \$70,000 it receives from FEMA and community service block grants to help 54 families, including Johnson's. The funding ran out in August.

"The calls and the Contact Us requests don't stop," Thompson said. "Funding stops. But the need doesn't stop."

ERAP funding was a stop-gap for Oklahoma tenants and landlords during the pandemic years, but now that funding has reverted to philanthropy and relatively small FEMA grants, time will tell if evictions spike as a result, Thompson said.

Ginny Bass Carl, executive director of CCP, estimated the group assisted 85,000 Oklahomans with rent.

Now, CCP has turned its attention to distributing \$8 million in Treasury funds geared toward Oklahoma entities building or refurbishing affordable housing, Carl said.

"It's like the Treasury finally recognized that a big factor in the problem is lack of inventory of affordable, accessible, safe housing," Carl said.

Despite its benefits to landlords and renters, Carl said ERAP was problematic in certain areas: It paid for too many months of rent and was chaotic to disburse.

"What we learned is that people definitely needed monetary help with their rent, without a doubt, but they also need to know that there are enough apartments or houses that are affordable, and that's not always the case," Carl said.

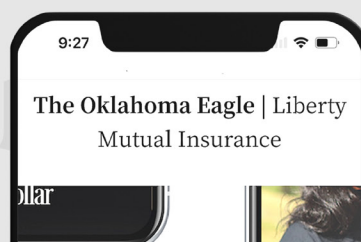
Carl said that rental assistance is important for bridging the gap between being late on rent and becoming homeless. But it's part of a multi-pronged approach to alleviating housing insecurity, including increasing the state's affordable housing inventory.

"Money, in and of itself, is not the answer," Carl said. "But the answer needs money."

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

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



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Elder Julius W. Bland
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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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Ph: (918) 425-2077

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Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm
Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm
Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm
Wednesday worship - 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

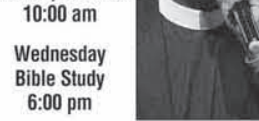
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307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.
P: 918-587-1428
F: 918-587-0642
vernnamechurch@sbcglobal.net

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Worship Service 10:00 am

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Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

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Fax: 918-584-1958
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FEATURED

Trump's Coming for Our Schools. Educators Are Ready to Fight

Teachers and union leaders are rallying
Trump, Schools, A11



FEATURED

New Orleans Schools: Still Separate and Unequal

70 years after Brown, schools are resegregated
Separate and Unequal, A13



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Mental Health

The race between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump was a roller coaster of stress and emotions for Black communities.

Self-care is key to coping with the aftermath.

How to Protect Your Mental Health After the Stressful '24 Election

JENNIFER PORTER GORE
Word In Black

Hopes in the Black community were raised when Harris, the first Black woman nominated by a major political party, ran even with Donald Trump in the presidential race. Now that Trump has retaken power, her devastating loss was an emotionally crushing blow.

Two days after daring to hope that Kamala Harris, the nation's first Black woman vice president could defeat Donald Trump for the presidency — belief built on Harris's enthusiastic, overflowing rallies, her record fundraising and dead-heat, poll numbers — Black America is still mourning an emotionally devastating outcome.

"I never thought an election could make me this sad but I've been literally feeling like I'm living soulless and out of body since the results..." a user with the X handle @JAPANESEBLACK wrote in a post on Friday afternoon.

Fellow X user @joedeenikia was down in the dumps with him: "The amount of anxiety this election has caused me is

actually insane ...just for the end results to be this ... yeah, I'm drained," she wrote.

Since she replaced President Joe Biden in July, mental health experts say, the Black community has had to deal with unhealthy, complex levels of stress and anxiety.

Cautious but growing optimism among Black people over Harris' unprecedented run competed against what was at stake for the nation in the 2024 election, concern that racism would hurt her at the ballot box, and worry about what a second Trump term would mean for them if she failed.

Now that Trump is headed back to the White House, the emotions are more complex. There is sadness over Harris's crushing defeat, frustration and anger about racism in the race, and more anxiety over how Trump will wield nearly-unchecked power.

Stress Test

"I've had a wide range of people who I've spoken to today and a lot of them can't believe that Donald Trump actually won," says Kiki Ramsey, a positive psychologist and executive coach in Atlanta.

Cont. A12, Mental Health

Trump, Schools

Trump's Coming for Our Schools, Educators Are Ready to Fight

Teachers and union leaders are rallying to protect Black students and public schools from Trump's Project 2025 policies.

AZIAH SIID
Word In Black

In the aftermath of Donald Trump's victory, many educators are among those worried about the future of the Black children they teach and protect. And many educators who supported Vice President Kamala Harris have decided to take her concession speech message — "Sometimes the fight takes a while" — very seriously.

"We need an uprising," Zinn Education Project organizer Jesse Hagopian tells Word In Black. "We need a mass multiracial uprising to challenge those in power. Nobody's coming to save us."

Frederick Ingram, Secretary-Treasurer for the American Federation of Teachers, has spent his career fighting the good fight for equitable education, fair treatment of teachers, and essential funding. Trump's win isn't the result he expected, and he knows the work to stand up to policies that will hurt children is just beginning.

"I'm certainly disappointed in the outcome," Ingram says. "We have to accept the results of what's going on, and Vice President Kamala Harris reminded us that we have to continue to fight."

Becky Pringle, President of the National Education Association, doubled down on the fact that teacher's unions like the NEA, as well as families and elected officials, need to show up for kids "now more than ever."

"Our students deserve safe and welcoming public schools," Pringle said in a statement. "Tomorrow, they will need us to stop his attempts to defund our schools, pass vouchers, ban books, and separate children from their parents."

Will Trump Close the DOE?

Donald Trump has repeatedly said he plans to shutter the Department of Education and dismantling it is central to Project 2025, the 900-page blueprint for a second Trump presidency. His proposals can inflict plenty

Cont. A12, Trump, Schools



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Mental Health

Finding balance, key to managing stress



From A11

“One of my clients specifically said she’ll go to her grave believing that Kamala didn’t win because of racism and misogyny,” she says. “These were her exact words.”

Ramsey and others say Black people should pay attention to their mental health, prioritize self-care and take positive steps to cope with the 2024 election results.

“Someone I know was saying they had a spot to get a massage,” says Dr. Damon Tweedy, a psychiatrist and professor at Duke University. “If that’s really going to help your well-being then do it. Don’t just neglect all those things because of what happened.”

The country was stressed about the election long before Election Day.

In October, an American Psychological Association survey found that 77% of respondents reported that their concerns over the nation’s future was “a significant source of stress in their lives,” and the most common. The 2024 election came in third, at around 70%.

Meanwhile, a 2018 APA report notes that higher stress among minority and low-income populations “can lead to health disparities and affect life expectancy.” That’s why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has declared racism “a serious public health threat.”

Polls show Harris’s groundbreaking campaign had energized Black voters. Hopes in the Black community grew along with the size of her rallies and polls showing she had pulled even with Trump just days before the vote.

Ramsey said even her 7-year-old daughter, who doesn’t normally pay attention to politics, paid attention to Harris: “She [was] definitely interested, as a black girl, seeing a black woman” run for president.

That hope may have made Harris’s defeat that much harder to deal with.

Tweedy, associate professor of psychiatry at Duke University School of Medicine, noted that his students and others he’d spoken with after the election were disappointed because they hoped Harris would win. That’s a significant shift from what he encountered as a Duke medical school student 25 years ago.

Back then, “I saw medical students, and these are my classmates, who would have been very much pleased with what happened on Tuesday,” says Tweedy.

‘You Still Have to Balance’

Although Harris’s loss was a bitter pill to swallow, Ramsey noticed clients, colleagues, and friends being more gracious to one another.

“You may not agree with me, but at the end of the day, I think that if we’re all human beings, we understand that there’s a time and place for everything and everybody has to process this, this in



PHOTOS ADOBE IMAGES

An American Psychological Association survey found that 77% of respondents reported that their concerns over the nation’s future was “a significant source of stress in their lives,” and the most common.

their own way,” she says.

Ramsey and Tweedy are urging people to practice evidence-based approaches to keep the negative effects of stress at bay. These include avoiding hard-to-manage stressors, seeking support from friends or family members, ignoring temptations to binge on junk food or becoming a couch potato. A nutritious diet can help one’s health and maintain the energy needed to exercise and manage stress.

Keeping up with the news is important, but so is the headspace and time to heal from disappointment. If you’re still feeling blue, angry, or dismayed for two weeks or longer, both Ramsey and Tweedy say it’s time to seek professional help.

“You still have to balance,” Tweedy says. “Is doomscrolling on Twitter or Instagram really helping my mental well-being? Is there anything I’m doing that’s going to actually help me take action to actually make something better?”

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, are thinking about suicide, or worried about someone else who needs emotional support, call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. Help is available 24/7. TTY users can dial 711 then 988 to get help.

Jennifer Porter Gore is a writer living in the Washington, D.C., area.

Trump, Schools

For Black parents, curriculums have “rarely” been responsive to the needs of community children

From A11

of other damage on schools and students, too. Shifts to larger class sizes due to budget cuts and bans against teaching accurate U.S. history could be on deck.

“We should be nervous about the way that — speaking from a Black person’s perspective — curriculum has rarely, if ever, actually been culturally responsive towards us,” says Jose Vilson, director of the national education nonprofit EduColor.

The continued erasure of the separation of church and state in schools and limiting the rights of LGBTQ+ students are also possibilities under Trump’s administration.

Of course, many critics of public education say it has failed one too many students and needs to be dismantled. Conservative politicians and policymakers are likely to continue promoting controversial school choice options as the solution to boosting student achievement. But nearly 50 million children from pre-kindergarten to 12th Grade are enrolled in public school, so school choice simply isn’t the universal solution its supporters make it out to be.

“From a shared convenience. There’s no system that’s going to be able to hold our children and educate them for six to eight hours a day while we’re trying to work,” Hagopian says.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Personal and Professional Worries

Some educators don’t think Trump has the power to demolish the Department of Education or Office for Civil Rights without massive pushback from communities and organizations.

But Vilson says the DOE would become easier to obliterate once targets like the Office for Civil Rights are weakened and no longer an ally for those filing complaints for disability, race-based issues, gender issues, and more.

Vilson also shared his personal disappointment in the amount of Trump support from the Latino community

despite Trump’s racist and stereotypical comments about their homelands, families, and more.

“I’m disappointed in Latino men,” Vilson says. “But I think that needs more breakdown. Those of us who aspire towards Blackness definitely voted for Harris, whereas those who aspire white, well, you already know.”

Hagopian, a veteran Seattle Public Schools high school teacher and co-editor of the books, “Teaching For Black Lives” and “Black Lives Matter at School,” worries both professionally and as a father to a son who attends public schools.

“It’s scary to have somebody who has embraced fascist ideology be elected president,” Hagopian says. “Putting my 11-year-old son to bed last night was really hard because he was worried about what a Trump victory will mean for him, for our family, for his friends — his very multiracial group of friends.”

“We talked about his fears last night, and we also talked about the fact that many kids in Gaza go to sleep with a whole lot of fear and anxiety every night, and have for a long time, and we both talked about how we wish we could do something to help them.”

Trump, Schools

A call to safeguard Black children, their communities and schools



PHOTO WORD IN BLACK
"We need an uprising," says educator and activist Jesse Hagopian. "We need a mass multiracial uprising to challenge those in power. Nobody's coming to save us."

From A12

Organize Like You're Taking Down Jim Crow

Hagopian says regardless of what the rich and powerful have planned, building community and continuing to protect one another is necessary if the Black community wants to safeguard Black children and their schools.

"Four students who went into a drugstore and sat down at the lunch counter broke the segregation law and refused to move — that sparked a struggle throughout the South," Hagopian says.

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Getting together with people who want to resist Trump's overt fascism, his overt racism, transphobia, xenophobia, misogyny.

Jose Vilson, director of the national education nonprofit EduColor

"You see an injustice, you name it, and then you act against it. You can change the world, and I think that building community is the most important thing right now. Getting together with people who want to resist Trump's overt fascism, his overt racism, transphobia, xenophobia, misogyny."

Vilson says the best way to move forward is to continue rallying people behind the cause by ensuring they understand the importance of pushing back against right-wing ideologies in schools. Folks, he says, need to be ready to protect students' lives by paying attention to what happens where decisions are made: local school site meetings and school board meetings.

"I'm going to try to continue to help

organize students across this country to build the same kind of youth uprising that brought down Jim Crow," Vilson says. "We're going to be getting teachers and mentors together across the country to bring youth and educators together to strategize about how we build that uprising."

Larger entities like the AFT have long fought attacks on public education, with its 1.8 million members rallying for equitable school funding, safe school facilities, higher teacher pay, and adequate school staffing.

"We've been fighting a blueprint for Project 2025 in Florida for a couple of years now," Ingram says. "They're trying to do an all-out assault on public education, defund our

public schools, ban books, close libraries, make it difficult for teachers to teach honest and true history, oversized classrooms, an inundation of testing about your program that seeks to take students out of the public sector into private schools, parochial schools, and charter schools."

Ingram says the courage of district-level leaders, state superintendents of education, and state governments to push back policies that will destroy public schools is crucial.

"We're going to have to fight back if they are not good for kids," Ingram says. "If they're not good for teaching and the teaching profession."

Separate and Unequal

New Orleans Schools: Still Separate and Unequal

CONNIE L. SCHAFFER, MARTHA GRAHAM VIATOR & MEG WHITE
Word In Black

Sixty-four years ago this November, public schools in New Orleans began to desegregate. School buildings once designated as "white" opened their doors to Black students. The integration process, which deeply divided the city, was led by four first-grade girls.

Tessie Prevost, Leona Tate and Gail Etienne were the first Black students to attend the McDonogh 19 School. Ruby Bridges was assigned to the previously all-white William Frantz Public School. Newspapers worldwide ran photographs of the girls walking past protesters and entering the schools accompanied by federal marshals.

When Prevost died in July 2024, she was lauded as a Civil Rights hero. Oprah Winfrey paid tribute to her at the Democratic National Convention.

Prevost herself did not realize her role in history until high school, when a teacher assigned the class a project on Brown v. Board of Education, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that desegregated American schools. As she researched, she discovered her own name and story. She took this discovery to her parents, and they gave her a box of photographs and letters about her place in history, including a note from Eleanor Roosevelt praising her courage.

To some, Prevost represents the promises of the Civil Rights Movement: integration and equality. As our research on New Orleans Public Schools shows, however, neither of these promises has ever been fully realized.

New Orleans schools resegregated in the late 20th century, and the city's predominantly Black schools still lag behind white schools in many ways.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

'All deliberate speed'

In the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, the justices ordered U.S. public schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed" — language that allowed Southern cities and states to drag their heels.

New Orleans schools did not begin desegregating for six years. Even then, only four first-grade girls out of thousands of Black students were permitted to enroll in white schools.

The New Orleans district would subsequently desegregate one additional grade per year. As a member of that first desegregated class, Prevost was always in the grade being integrated. As such, all the grades above her remained segregated.

Indeed, McDonogh 19 remained segregated during the first year of integration because all its white students immediately stopped attending. By December 1960, the school's only students were the three Black girls. Two white students briefly enrolled in January, but their family succumbed to the pressure of the boycott and soon withdrew their children.

When Prevost, Etienne and Tate entered second grade, McDonogh 19 still had very low enrollment. In third grade, in 1962, the girls transferred to T.J. Semmes Elementary School, where enrollment of white students was much higher.

Within that white student majority, the girls encountered many cruel classmates. White students, encouraged by some

teachers and parents, tormented their Black peers. Prevost recalled this as the worst time in her life.

"The white teachers and students did not want us there," she said. "Every day there were beatings and cursing. They spat on us and ripped off our clothes."

After several years, Prevost's parents recognized the impact of this heinous racism on their daughter and transferred her into a predominantly Black junior high school. Prevost would again be separated from most of her white peers.

Equality in Name Only

The *Brown* ruling also promised an equal education regardless of race. In practice, that has yet to happen.

Most white teachers in New Orleans opposed desegregation, and the district initially allowed teachers to choose where they would teach. In 1972, however, the district reassigned many teachers to work in desegregated schools, and many quit in protest. Other white teachers struggled to connect and engage with their Black students, leading to disaffection among Black students. Their academic achievement declined, and dropout rates began to rise.

Simultaneously, white flight was working against integration. Between 1960 and 1980, the white population of New Orleans dropped 20%, resegregating many New Orleans schools. By 2004, 50 years after the *Brown* ruling, McDonogh 19 — which by then had been renamed Louis Armstrong Elementary — was again effectively segregated by race: Nearly 100% of its students were Black.

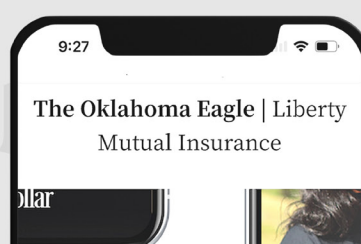
Across the district, academic performance declined in predominantly Black schools. By the 1990s, student achievement became increasingly measured by standardized tests known to be biased against students of color and

Cont. A14, Separate and Unequal

The Oklahoma Eagle

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Separate and Unequal

BROWN:

A promise of an equal education regardless of race. In practice, that has yet to happen.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

From A13

poor students. Black students were also more likely to be taught by teachers with fewer years of experience and less education.

By 1998, test scores at Louis Armstrong Elementary had fallen well below national, state and district averages. The school was also in a state of deep disrepair. In the summer of 2005, the city closed the school, and a few months later, Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans.

The abandoned school building sustained heavy wind damage and flooding. Water reached halfway up the walls of the first floor, leaving toxic mud, peeling chalkboards and mold-encrusted furniture.

U.S. Despite the change in governance, New Orleans schools remained segregated by race. Over a decade later, in 2017, roughly 75% of schools had populations of 95% students of color.

A Legacy

Following Katrina, the State Board of Education stripped New Orleans Public School District of its authority to manage public education.

The state of Louisiana and charter organizations took over city schools, making New Orleans Public Schools the first all-charter school district in the U.S. Despite the change in governance, New Orleans schools remained segregated by race. Over a decade later, in 2017, roughly 75% of schools had populations of 95% students of color, and test scores showed only incremental improvement.

Prevost, whose married name was Tessie Williams, lived in New Orleans her whole life, working at Louisiana State University for over two decades.

She returned to McDonogh 19 in 2022, when the restored building opened as the Tate, Etienne and Prevost Center. The site, once a symbol of resistance to civil rights, is now a community center and museum committed to advancing the unfulfilled promises of the Brown ruling.

As an adult, when Prevost spoke publicly about desegregation, she recalled the difficulty and disappointment she and others faced. But she tended to emphasize her hope for the future.

“The ways that we are different are things that we should celebrate,” she said in a Black History Month interview with Louisiana State University. “There is so much power and freedom when we see differences in a positive light.”

Connie L. Schaffer, Martha Graham Viator, Meg White, Professor of Teacher Education, University of Nebraska Omaha; Associate Professor Emeritus of Education, Rowan University; and Professor of Education, Stockton University



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