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VOL. 104 NO. 12

March 21, 2025 - March 27, 2025

\$1.00



Tulsa Housing

Development of North Tulsa moves forward as many residents face new housing challenges

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FEATURED: TULSA HOUSING



The Envision Comanche project is a \$190M multi-year investment that will transform the identified portion of the 36th Street North corridor into a mixed-use, mixed-income community while ensuring a one-for-one replacement of all existing apartments and right-to-return for residents at Comanche Park, a Tulsa Housing Authority property, with an end goal of highlighting, enhancing and improving economic opportunity and prosperity within this neighborhood of North Tulsa. PHOTO ENVISIONCOMANCHE.COM

Envision Comanche Park, the Anchor of the Phoenix District, Is Catalyst for Residential, Commercial Growth

Comanche
Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle

The redevelopment of Envision Comanche Park anchors the Phoenix District on the 36th Street North corridor in north Tulsa and is already demonstrating its capacity to be a catalyst for more business and residential development in north Tulsa. The bid to bring more affordable housing, shopping and other retail options to residents of this often-overlooked sector of the Northside, years in the making, is finally coming to fruition.

Cont. A6, Comanche

Tulsa Housing Authority Board Faces Potential Federal Rental Assistance Shortfall

THA
Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle

Trump Administration Unresponsive To Requests To Provide Additional Funding for 2025

In the nearly 60 years since it was first created, the Tulsa Housing Authority (THA) has not had to do disaster planning for the Section 8 voucher program. It has never been called upon to make contingency plans for operations as the result of potential federal budget shortfalls in its housing rental assistance program. That has all changed now. President Donald J. Trump’s ongoing efforts to dramatically reduce staffing and funding of federal agencies and administrative

operations in his first 80 days in office brought about the change. The U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the federal agency that provides funding for housing programs, has so far been unresponsive to THA’s requests to consider an additional \$3 million in funding for the year. As a result, the THA leadership has reported to the board of directors its intention to begin planning for a shortfall this year in

Cont. A3, THA



The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is one of the executive departments of the U.S. federal government. It administers federal housing and urban development laws. It is headed by the secretary of housing and urban development, who reports directly to the president of the United States and is a member of the president’s Cabinet. PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

FEATURED: TULSA HOUSING

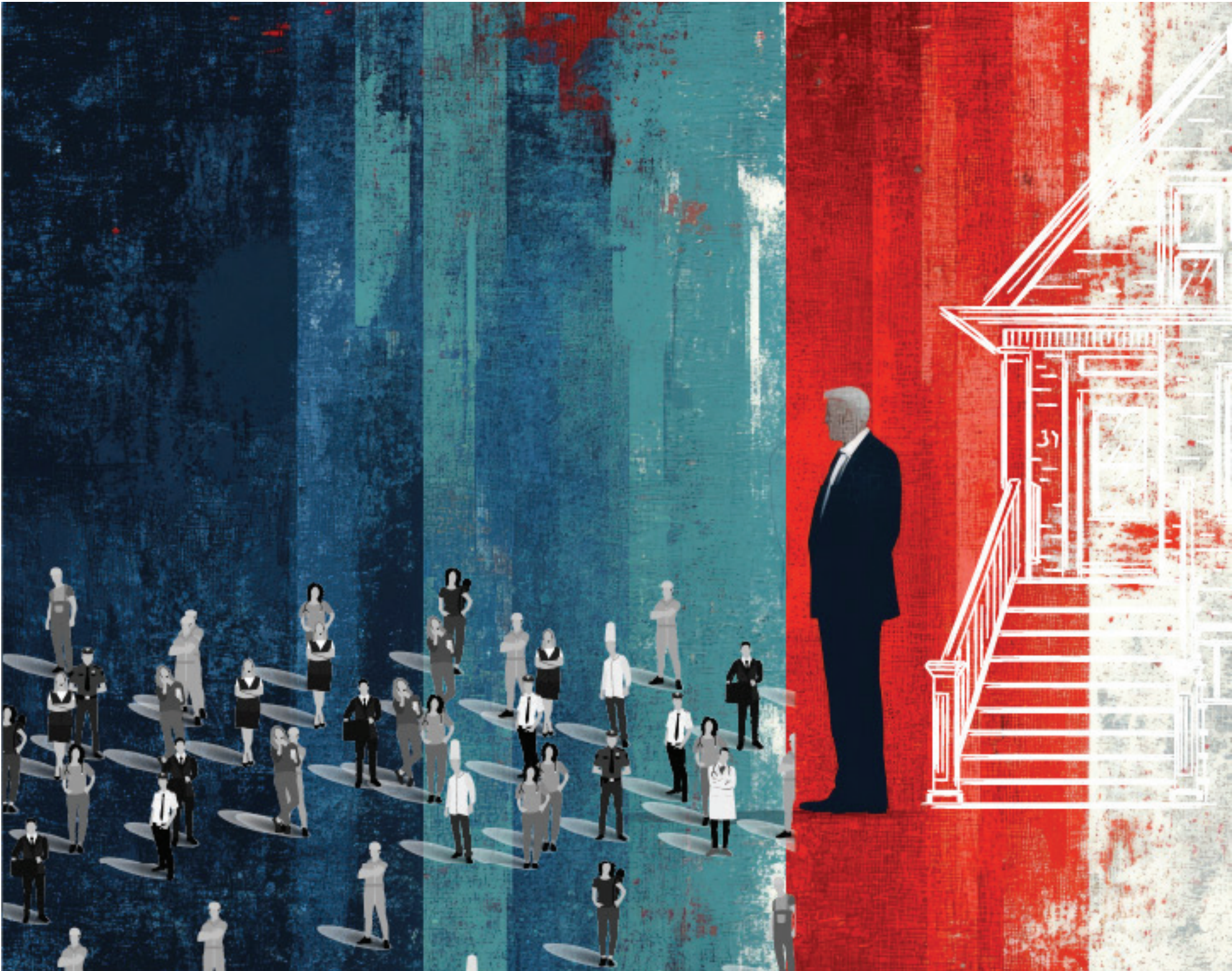


ILLUSTRATION THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

Trump Administration Unresponsive To Requests To Provide Additional Funding for 2025

FROM A2
THA

case no additional federal money is available. As a result, the fate of hundreds of Tulsans who receive housing vouchers is in jeopardy. Conversations continue at the State level with the HUD field officer. THA reported what it is doing to keep administrative costs down. However, if they do not hear from HUD by May, they will need to make budgetary and operational shifts in housing assistance that would begin in July.

“The only silver bullet, if you want to look at it that way, would be HUD steps up and says we’re going to provide you the shortfall funding for this year,” said THA President/Chief Executive Officer Aaron Darden.

“There’s been zero indication that that’s gonna be the case. We have been trying to get a hold of the shortfall team that we’ve worked with before. We’re not certain at this point that they’re even still employed.”

Darden said THA spoke with the

“
The only silver bullet, if you want to look at it that way, would be HUD steps up and says we’re going to provide you the shortfall funding for this year.

Aaron Darden, President/
Chief Executive Officer,
THA

director of the HUD field office in Oklahoma City who was very non-committal, but he was going to try to at least get in contact with someone...to get in contact with us so we can have those conversations.

“But as it stands right now, we are not in the shortfall cue. You don’t have any shortfall funding coming our way. This is the deficit that we’re looking at if we’re going to try to continue to administer our program this year.

The potential shortfall of more than \$3 million is in the Housing Assistance Program, the rental assistance that funds choice vouchers and pays private landlords who have agreements with THA to receive subsidies for renters. Without additional federal funds from the Trump Administration’s HUD office, nearly 700 vouchers would be removed from the system. Communications Director Ginny Hensley emphasized that the agency is not in an emergency situation right now, but it must plan for a potential shortfall if HUD does not respond, and thus publicly report it to the board of directors.

Hensley said THA will do all it can to mitigate the impact of a shortfall. Only if it is needed, she will activate a communications program to notify the public. Hensley said THA staff will not know for certain what the

funding level will be from HUD until May.

“We are planning as if there will be a shortfall for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program based on the current House Continuing Resolution budget, but there is the possibility that shortfall funding could be made available. THA made the Board of Commissioners aware now so that they will be informed in the event that we need to make changes to our Administrative Plan.”

What the public can do right now is contact the Tulsa area congressional delegation to request that they intervene to get a response from HUD and help activate communication with the federal agency on behalf of their constituents, Darden said.

Hensley clarified that the projected shortfall is the result of current federal legislative funding for HUD’s Section 8 program. This is a national issue, not just for Tulsa. She reiterated that THA is working with community partners to establish a plan in the event that a subsidy would need to be removed from existing voucher holders.

“The hope is that this wouldn’t be necessary, but in an effort to be as prepared as possible if it does, we are having discussions with appropriate parties,” she said.



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

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).

Featured Last Week



Key Legislation Impacting Tulsans Has Advanced At The State Capitol



InnovateHER Women’s Summit Honors Local Entrepreneurs



Forced Housing, Hidden Kickbacks: How Stay-to-Play Squeezes Sports Parents

The Oklahoma Eagle

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

Minister RJ Smith

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

CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard

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

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

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

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

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Elder Julius W. Bland
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918-810-3882

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3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391

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9:30 a.m.

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

Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

"The Righteous Are As Bold
As A Lion." - Prov.28:1a

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

Pastor Rick Bruner

Sabbath School (Saturday)

9:30-10:45 a.m.

Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.

Choir Rehearsal

Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

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God's Sabbath"

Northside Christ Gospel Church

3101 N. M.L King
Jr. Blvd.
Tulsa OK
(918) 625-2374

Sunday School -
10 am

Sunday Morning
Worship - 10:45

Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm

Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm

Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm

Wednesday worship - 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

VERNON AME CHURCH

307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.

P: 918-587-1428

F: 918-587-0642

vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

Sunday
Church School
8:30 am

Worship Service
10:00 am

Wednesday
Bible Study
6:00 pm



Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

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THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

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Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday
Prayer Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Bible Study - Noon & 7:00 p.m.

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.

Tulsa, OK 74103

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Senior Minister

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Sunday School
9:40 a.m.

Sunday TV
Worship
11:00 a.m.

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Sunday Morning Worship
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(918) 425-1071

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Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

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19364 S. S. Mingo Road.
Bixby, 74008

Phone: (918) 366-8870

Rev. Robert Givens

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

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Breakthrough Services every
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month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am
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- 6:30 p.m.

Church Ministries:
Children's Church, CIP Praise
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"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

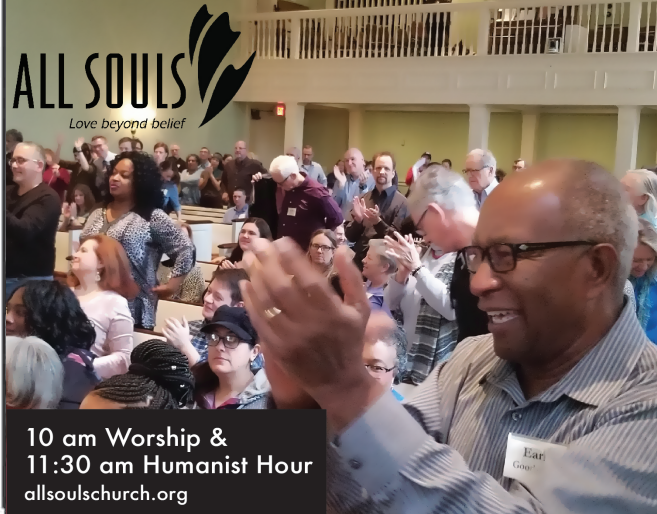
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Office:

918-584-0510

Fax:

918-584-1958

Prayer Line:

918-584-PRAY

Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

Morning

Worship 10:45

Wednesday

Bible Study

Noon and 7:00



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6:30 p.m. Community Dinner
7:00 p.m. Bible Study

Sunday Worship
Church School
9:45 a.m.
Worship
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Rev. Sharyn
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FEATURED: TULSA HOUSING

Affordable housing, shopping and other retail options on the horizon for North Tulsa

FROM A2

Comanche

Reaching this stage would not have been possible without the handiwork of Phoenix District Council President Tracie Chandler. In a companion piece to this article, The Oklahoma Eagle features Chandler. She spearheaded the community planning that led to the Master Plan that includes blueprints for the new complex and a vision of more progressive development in the Phoenix District.

With the first phase of Envision Comanche set to open this summer, Tulsa Housing Authority (THA) officials have provided an update for all seven phases of the project. It is expected to be completed by 2029.

- THA Envision Comanche Phase I: Phoenix@36N**
- 100 units: Mixed-income in a midrise, four-story, multi-family complex with affordable one and two bedroom units for CHOICE Voucher holders, workforce rate and units at below market rates.
 - Commercial space: Approximately 3,000 square feet on the ground floor.
 - Planned Tenant: Grocery Box operated by RG Foods.
 - Target Completion: Mid to late summer 2025
 - First Move-ins anticipated late summer to early fall 2025

- Phase II (Starts Summer 2025)**
- Total Number of Units for All Phases: 545
 - The former Comanche Park Complex has been demolished and the infrastructure installations are underway on the site. Construction on the next phase of housing, mixed use, mixed income and ground floor commercial space, is expected to kick off in June/July.
 - The site will feature a working farm, Phoenix Rising Urban Farm, led by Tulsa Urban Ag Coalition. Land preparation and planting will begin this summer and is expected to be fully operational by Spring 2026. The farm will involve youth workforce training in sustainable farming education.

- Phases III–VII (2026–2029)**
- Varied housing types: Mid-rise, walk-ups, garden/family-style



Cecilia Montgomery, Comanche Park Apartments tenant, appreciative of the chance to be involved in the planning. PHOTO BASIL CHILDERS

buildings with plazas, green spaces between buildings and community gathering zones. All phases are expected to be completed by the end of 2028.

Tenants relocation, right to return

The Envision Comanche Park Master Plan was created through an 18-month planning process that involved residents and was led by the community.

During construction, Comanche Park tenants relocated to other complexes. Some live in the same complexes so they still have their community aspect, according to Travis Tinnin, assistant vice president of development for THA. Tinnin explained that tenants may return to the new Envision Comanche as part of the Choice Neighborhoods grant requirements. All residents who were living at Comanche Park at the time of relocation have the first right to return to the new housing being built, across all seven phases. If a tenant previously lived in a three-bedroom unit, for example, they can wait until a similar unit becomes available in any phase and still have priority to move back, Tinnin said.

Tenants have been supported through Urban Strategies Inc. (USI) which provides case management and support to tenants, and The Tulsa Housing Authority, which covered all relocation expenses for residents.

“Essentially residents (to return) just have to be in good standing... making sure you’re current on utilities, current on rent, and then if you did have a past balance at Comanche, making sure that that is taken care of before you come back,” Tinnin said.

Broader Neighborhood Investment

The signs of progress and broader neighborhood investment are already showing up in the area, Tinnin said. Capital Homes is planning a single-family homes just east of Envision Comanche. About one mile north, City Lights is building a village concept with 75 units of permanent supportive housing for the chronically unhoused. Muncie Power Products, which has their operations at the Mohawk Business Park just east of Envision Comanche, is supportive of workforce housing for its employees who now live many miles away from their workplace.

Kimberly Marsh, who reported and wrote this story, is a senior contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle. She has devoted a big part of her career to chronicling the policies of Tulsa’s city leaders.



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FEATURED: TULSA HOUSING

“I am the community activist that tells it like it is until it isn’t anymore. And when you see me out at public meetings...that’s me working on the anymore.” Tracie Chandler, neighborhood advocate and activist, president of the Phoenix Development Council

The Oklahoma Eagle is reviving 918, a column in which the newspaper features a question-and-answer column with members of the community who are engaged in positive, spirited missions. We pose nine questions to each participant. Kimberly Marsh, a contributing writer for The Oklahoma Eagle, conducted the interview.

Chandler, who has long championed Tulsa’s Phoenix District, is a natural for this column. Chandler, known to most as Miss Tracie, has worked for a decade to see the 36th Street North Corridor become a hub of business activity. Working with the City of Tulsa and Tulsa Housing Authority planners, she helped shape what is happening there today.

Now 77, Chandler said “I need to see something done, because I don’t know how much longer I got. And I’ve been working on this since 2014 as you know.”

Chandler has helped raise money for a school, including \$10,000 of her own money, chaired and sustained the Phoenix Development Council, seen the Comanche housing complex demolished to make way for a new mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood and led a branding campaign to give the area a name, a culture, and an identity.

She hopes to see a flourishing community soon, anchored by housing and spurring more businesses to foster a vibrant place for generations.

“I like to close my eyes and dream of what 36th Street North, the heart of the Phoenix District, would look like with me just focusing on the new renovations,” she told The Oklahoma Eagle. “This is what I see. A street lined with beautiful, colorful trees and vegetation. The sidewalk will be stamped with the Phoenix District logo that was chosen by approximately 1,000 people.”

Chandler continues, “I see benches and tables with the logo emblazoned on them. The street has mixed-use buildings with all kinds of retail shops and variety stores. There are restaurants, coffee shops, and there is a bakery. There is a food truck park containing picnic tables with chess and checkerboards painted on them. The park would have accommodations for pop-up business(es). This encourages the residents to come out and get to know each other. There are places of entertainment that meet the needs of the young as well as seasoned residents and everyone in between.

“There is a grocery store that has a restaurant that uses the vegetables grown in the community gardens. There would be statues of famous individuals. Children would be able to learn their numbers, geometric shapes, and the alphabets from concrete blocks along the street. There would be an all-purpose building that would serve as a community center, a school, and a church. There would be a fantastic hotel that would draw people from near and far. You would be able to see awesome artwork as well.”

Q: Miss Tracie, you have called yourself “the activist who tells it like it is, until it isn’t anymore.” Can you explain what drives that mindset?

Chandler: I just believe in saying things directly. I tell people, “It is what it is... until it isn’t anymore.” And I’m working on that ‘anymore’ part every day. I’m not afraid to show up, speak out, and stay consistent until something actually changes. My focus is the Phoenix District. I have not seen anything change that I did not believe would change. I believed things would change. It never occurred to me it wouldn’t. I just hate that it takes sooo long!

Q: You’ve been part of this effort for a long time. How did you get started in community work?

Chandler: I am from East Texas, and I came to Tulsa in 1971 for a job at Nathan Hale. I taught there for 10 years. I went to Edison Middle School and Street School for a year. I went to work for The Margaret Hudson Program (for teen mothers). I worked there for 23 years. I retired in 2007 and became a full-time activist. I have worked to improve the area where I lived and I started that work with (the late) Sharon Hanson, president of the Phoenix (Development) Council. I became the vice president.

Sharon came to me one day and asked me, was I aware that there was money in the city’s budget for economic development for other parts of Tulsa, but nothing for north Tulsa? I said no, and she said, ‘We’ll see about that.’ I can still see her marching out of my laundry room going downtown to talk to Dwain Midget (a long-time City of Tulsa leader under several mayors and advocate for north Tulsa.)

After that, a former mayor came to our neighborhood for an event. I asked him if he had ever heard of the Northland plan, and he said no. So, I presented him with a copy after Dwayne Midget brought it to him, too. We were included in the budget. We worked with the City of Tulsa Council for 18 months to complete the 36th Street North Small Area Plan in December of 2013.

918 Q&A



Tracie Chandler Has A Vision For Tulsa’s Phoenix District

Q. What role did your career in education play in leading to years of activism?

Chandler: When I was teaching, I just saw so many issues that I was concerned about...some of the problems that my students at Margaret Hudson had to deal with and what I had wanted to do get done. I tell people my ideas, because I don’t have the wherewithal to get them done. I just want to see them done. If I had the money, I would have built a housing establishment for those girls and their babies, in which they would be responsible for taking care of it, the cleaning, and the cooking and I would have various playgrounds based on the kids’ ages. I remember sharing that idea with Myrtle Watson, who was one of the nurses there, and she said, Miss Chandler, I’ll help you with that...and right now, Myrtle Watson is doing that. It’s in operation. The thing about it is, I know what my calling is. A lot of people do not know. And my calling is as a community activist, as a helper and as a connector.

Q. How do you approach resistance?

Chandler: Sometimes when something is bad and hard to say, the best thing to do is just go ahead and say it and get it over with. It makes me feel good to make people laugh. I’m a closet comedian...I have a tendency to be a little naughty, or as one lady put it, ‘Tracie is earthy.’

Q: What do you consider the major accomplishments so far?

Chandler: I think they’re all major, really. The first thing, from the very beginning, was the branding of the area. The other thing was the street improvement, and the other major thing was the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit). The next major, major thing was the construction of Envision Comanche. That’s going up now. Envision is the flagship. It will have a grocery store and that’s something we desperately need. We’ve got sidewalks, bike lanes, a community center, benches, trees, and streetscape improvements. And let me tell you, we’re just 10 minutes from everything—the airport, downtown, Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa Zoo, Botanic Gardens. But still, it’s hard to get businesses to invest here. The negative perception of north Tulsa is a huge barrier, but we are making progress.

Q: What kind of support have you had from the City of Tulsa?

Chandler: The city’s been involved from the beginning. We met with planners, hosted community meetings, and had strong collaboration, especially during the formation of the Small Area Plan. I’ve also worked with people like Michelle Barnett (senior vice president of Economic and Workforce Development at PartnerTulsa) on attracting businesses.

But we need more. We need incentives for businesses, and we need someone to fight for us when it comes to investment. I’ve even personally reached out to Braum’s and other restaurants to try to get them here.

Q: You’ve invested not just time but money in the district. Can you tell us about your support for Crossover Preparatory Academy that opened last year on 36th Street North?

Chandler: I donated for five years, and my part was \$10,000. Then I asked other people to donate. So, I don’t know how much they gave, but I know that I raised over \$10,000 because I gave \$10,000 of my little meager earnings as a teacher, sacrificing and doing without, because I believe in what they are doing and when they fundraise they could tell my story.

Q: What’s the engagement like from residents and businesses?

Chandler: Honestly, it varies. A lot of people are passive until something directly affects them. But we need people to be active all the time, not just when they’re upset.

Right now, folks can help by joining the Phoenix Development Council. We meet every third Tuesday, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at Crossover (Preparatory Academy at 1010 36th St. N.). And we’re trying to start a north Tulsa Community Federal Credit Union—locally owned and controlled. We need 500 survey responses to move forward, and people can do that right now at northtulsacfcu.org. We need to keep dollars in our community. The credit union can help north Tulsans achieve their dreams.

Q: Looking ahead, what gives you hope?

Chandler: We need younger leaders to step up and carry the vision forward. I’m not going to be here forever. I tell them to ask God for guidance and stay the course. The heart in the body is what keeps the life blood flowing, and 36th Street North is the heart of the Phoenix District.

PHOTOS BASIL CHILDERS

Kimberly Marsh, who reported and wrote this story, is a senior contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle. She has devoted a big part of her career to chronicling the policies of Tulsa’s city leaders.



Sheridan Church’s Tax Status Holds Up, Despite *Unabashed Political*

Church Tax Status
J. C. Hallman
Oklahoma Watch

In 2023, the Tulsa World published a letter to the editor from Tulsa resident Sherwin Kahn, responding to Sheridan Church’s Tulsarusalem event, which featured current FBI director Kash Patel, Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters, and a phone call from an on-stage Lara Trump to her father-in-law and then-candidate for president, Donald Trump.

Kahn’s letter described the event as an egregious campaign rally. The event’s host, Sheridan pastor Jackson Lahmeyer, was politically motivated, Kahn said.

“Walters needs to be impeached,” Kahn said. “The pastor needs to be removed or tax his church as a political organization.”

For Lahmeyer, such claims were hardly new.

“If I had a dollar for every time my church was reported to the IRS, I would be a very wealthy man,” Lahmeyer said.

As 501(c)(3) organizations, churches are subject to language in Title 26 of the United States Code, establishing which organizations are exempt from income taxes.

Title 26 prohibits groups that operate for religious purposes from attempting to

influence legislation with propaganda or otherwise.

The law further proscribes attempting to influence any political campaign on behalf of any candidate — a provision known as the Johnson Amendment because it was proposed by Lyndon B. Johnson and adopted in 1954.

Tulsarusalem, and Sheridan’s ongoing and increasingly chummy relationship with the Trump family, may appear to violate the spirit of Title 26.

Or it might not be as simple as that.

Tulsa attorney Dan Beirute, who has represented hundreds of churches and ministries across the United States, warned against leaping to the conclusion that religious organizations were prohibited from discussing political issues.

“It doesn’t mean churches can’t participate in advocating for issues that have a political tint to them,” Beirute said. “They can talk about these things without any hesitation. What churches can’t do is spend a substantial part of their time advocating for or against specific pieces of legislation.”

For example, a church could choose to spend all its time preaching against intact dilation and extraction abortion, which has been labeled partial-birth by opponents of the procedure. But a church is prohibited from spending a substantial amount of time arguing against a specific act of legislation to outlaw the procedure.

“It’s very simple to get around, isn’t it?” Beirute said. “Rather than speaking about the legislation, they can talk about the religious or doctrinal issues around the legislation.”

As to the second half of what is prohibited in Title 26 — the Johnson amendment— it makes a significant difference whether an individual is running for office, or already holds one, Beirute said.

Regardless, the prohibitions of Title 26 have proven to be very difficult to enforce, and churches on both sides of the political spectrum regularly challenge the spirit and letter of the law.

“Here’s the dirty little truth,” Beirute said. “There is no stomach at the IRS to enforce



Sheridan Church, 7901 E 41st St, Tulsa, OK 74145
PHOTO GOOGLE MAPS

this whatsoever. If they tried to enforce it, they would probably lose — and they would have to do it against thousands, or tens of thousands, of churches across the political spectrum.”

Lahmeyer did not disagree, but he adopted a more combative pose particularly in regard to the Johnson Amendment. What was peculiar was that it had never been applied, he said. Not even when churches had flouted its prohibitions specifically in order to challenge it.

Lahmeyer cited his own unsuccessful senate run in 2022, a campaign waged while he continued to pastor at Sheridan, as evidence of the unworkability of the law, as written.

“The Johnson Amendment is unconstitutional,” Lahmeyer said. “That’s why it hasn’t been applied.”

In fact, the Johnson Amendment was

successfully applied once, in a 1992 case known as Branch Ministries v. Rossotti, which resulted in a New York church losing its tax exempt status.

Lahmeyer, who now serves in the White House Faith Office, said he was unaware of any church, left or right, that had truly violated the prohibitions in Title 26. In providing a final defense of his church’s activities, Lahmeyer appeared to hark back to the Tulsarusalem event.

“Neither churches on the right or the left are in violation of the Johnson Amendment,” he said. “Churches that host candidates, or elected officials, or whatever the case may be — there’s nothing in violation, there’s nothing wrong with that. That’s the way our country was founded in the first place.”

J. C. Hallman is a Tulsa-based contributor to Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at jchallman@gmail.com.

DOJ retains lawsuits against Oklahoma DAs despite switch to Trump administration

DOJ
Tristan Loveless
NonDoc

After some speculation the administration of President Donald Trump might dismiss a pair of U.S. Department of Justice lawsuits filed against district attorneys pursuing criminal cases against tribal citizens who committed crimes on Indian Country Reservations, federal attorneys appeared to stay the course by submitting briefs in support of the Cherokee, Chickasaw and Choctaw nations’ motions to join the litigation.

On Jan. 22, the three tribal governments filed joint motions to intervene in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma case against District Attorney Matt Ballard and in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma case against District Attorney Carol Iski. Trevor Pemberton, Ballard and Iski’s attorney, criticized the federal government for launching an “attack on an elected Oklahoma district attorney and this state’s judicial system” while requesting the court deny the nations’ requests.

On Feb. 10, the DOJ requested additional time before filing their next motion so the Trump administration could review the cases, which were filed just before Christmas. Even before the department subtly announced it was reconsidering its position, Tulsa County District Attorney Steve Kunzweiler said he was unconcerned with the suits because they were filed “under the outgoing (President Joe Biden) administration.”

However, on Feb. 20, the DOJ appeared to signal it was continuing its position on tribal sovereignty, despite the change in administration, by filing motions in support of the tribes in both cases. The same day, Pemberton, a former judge on the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals and former general counsel to Gov. Kevin Stitt, filed his briefs opposing the nation’s request. On Feb. 28, Pemberton filed motions to dismiss in both cases.

While the first month of the Trump administration saw tribal governments concerned with birthright citizenship arguments, whether federal funding will be cut and the detention of tribal citizens in immigration raids, the administration’s

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The complaint should be dismissed for lack of standing, or alternatively,
under the Younger abstention or Colorado River abstention doctrines.

Trevor Pemberton, former judge on the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals and former general counsel to Gov. Kevin Stitt.



U.S. Department of Justice building, Washington, D. C.
PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

overall policy towards Native Americans is more “uncertain.” Some tribal leaders have embraced Trump, citing the appointment of U.S. Supreme Court Neil Gorsuch amongst other accomplishments, and he reportedly won the popular vote among tribal citizens by six points. More locally, Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton attended the 2024 Oklahoma City fundraiser headlined by Vice President J.D. Vance. Trump is known for wanting to reward supporters, which could be a boon to tribal sovereignty advocates, but it is too soon

to tell exactly what Trump’s Native American policy will be.

‘Effectively reverse’ O’Brien: Pemberton critiques federal intervention

In the lawsuits filed by the Department of Justice, Pemberton represents both Ballard — the DA for Rogers, Craig and Mayes counties — and Iski, the top prosecutor for Okmulgee and McIntosh counties. On Feb. 21, he filed responses to the tribes’ motions to intervene in both cases. On Feb. 28, he filed motions to dismiss in both cases. Aside from certain



A dispute between Oklahoma County Sheriff Tommie Johnson III and Oklahoma County District Court Judge Amy Palumbo in 2024 involved several levels of law enforcement

PHOTO NONDOC

Judge Amy Palumbo reprimanded after beef with Sheriff Tommie

Palumbo
Matt Patterson
NonDoc

The Oklahoma Supreme Court’s chief justice has reprimanded Oklahoma County District Court Judge Amy Palumbo after Sheriff Tommie Johnson III filed a judicial complaint last April related to a bizarre saga about courthouse noise levels and a threat to arrest the sheriff for contempt.

Along the way, the unusual scenario also involved Oklahoma’s attorney general and Oklahoma County’s district attorney, and it remains unclear what discipline Palumbo received from the court’s highest officer. While the situation began last spring and played out amid the backdrop of Johnson’s reelection campaign last fall, it has spilled into the public eye now.

In response to a request under the Open Records Act, Johnson provided NonDoc with a packet of documents that included statements from deputies who were chastised by Palumbo, a letter from Supreme Court Chief Justice Dustin Rowe and screenshots of messages between himself and Palumbo.

The dispute began when Palumbo contacted Johnson on April 17, 2024, while he said he was attending an event with his children. Johnson said he did not take the call but texted Palumbo back.

“I’m in a meeting, how can I help you?” Johnson asked Palumbo via text.

Palumbo replied, “I need you in my courtroom today at 1:30 p.m.”

Johnson asked what was going on in

Palumbo’s courtroom at that time.

“I am going to be addressing contempt and you’re gonna need to clear your schedule. I’ll see you at 1:30 p.m.,” Palumbo texted.

Johnson said he quickly contacted Attorney General Gentner Drummond for assistance. According to Johnson, after Drummond called Palumbo about the matter, she texted him again.

“I’m meeting with your attorney at 1:30 p.m.,” Palumbo wrote. “Not requiring your personal appearance at this time. If and when I issue a summons, you will know.”

The incident left Johnson angry and confused, and it motivated him to file a formal judicial complaint against Palumbo one week later. Had he shown up to the courtroom April 17, Johnson said he believes he would have been arrested, paraded in front of TV cameras and booked into the Oklahoma County Jail.

“If I had showed up, or if I would’ve cooperated, the end result would’ve been me being carried out in handcuffs, because that’s what she believed she could do,” Johnson said in an interview with NonDoc.

Palumbo did not respond to phone and text messages requesting comment on the dispute with Johnson or the reprimand she received from the Supreme Court, which was communicated to Johnson in a Jan. 24 letter from Rowe.

“You are notified pursuant to [Title 5, Section 4(f) of] Rules Governing Complaints

on Judicial Conduct, that on this date I issued a private reprimand with instructions to Judge Amy Palumbo,” Rowe wrote. “The Council on Judicial Complaints has been made aware that this matter has been addressed and resolved.”

Diana O’Neal, the chief administrative officer of the courts, did not respond to voicemails inquiring as to the details of the reprimand prior to the publication of this story.

The Oklahoma County Sheriff’s Office is responsible for security screening at the entrance of the Oklahoma County office complex and also transports detainees to and from the jail for court appearances. Deputies also roam the facility for security purposes.

Johnson said he’d never had any personal or professional disputes with Palumbo before she contacted him in April 2024. Before that exchange, the last message shown in Johnson’s screenshots of their communications involved Palumbo wishing Johnson a merry Christmas in 2023.

Johnson said he believes Palumbo’s actions were intended to disrupt his 2024 reelection campaign by creating a public spectacle.

“I don’t know why she did this,” Johnson said. “The timing is certainly suspicious.”

Palumbo was first elected to the bench in 2018 with 65 percent of the vote. She was reelected in 2022 with 55 percent. In 2015, she finished third in the GOP primary for

Cont. A10, Palumbo



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Oklahoma County Courthouse

PHOTO BENNETT BRINKMAN

Deputies allege admonishment by Palumbo on several occassions about hallway noise control

FROM A9

Palumbo

Oklahoma House District 85. Before her election to the bench, she worked as a public defender and later was an attorney in an OKC law firm.

Johnson first won election to his current job in 2020, and he again defeated Democrat Wayland Cubit in 2024 with 58 percent support. Previously, Johnson had served as an officer with the University of Oklahoma Police Department and, later, the Norman Police Department.

Deputies castigated by Palumbo

According to letters provided by Johnson, Palumbo admonished several deputies over noise levels outside her eighth-floor courtroom. Those deputies later made written statements about the two incidents as part of Johnson’s investigation into the matter.

Palumbo is currently assigned to a criminal docket, and on April 17, 2024, she was presiding over a blind plea in a manslaughter case. During the presentation of victim impact statements, Deputy Michael Burton apparently escorted an in-custody defendant into Palumbo’s courtroom for an appearance in a later case on the docket. Deputy Timothy Pearson wrote that, after Burton arrived, he was called to another floor to escort another in-custody defendant to another courtroom. Before Pearson exited Palumbo’s courtroom, the deputies present were admonished by Palumbo, they wrote.

“Judge Palumbo started yelling that she had requested on several occasions and Sheriff Johnson had ordered that a deputy shall be in the hallway of the eighth floor on pre-trial weeks, but that for several weeks, it has not happened,” Pearson wrote. “Judge Palumbo then yelled to ‘get someone out there and quiet down that hallway now.’”

In his statement, Pearson wrote that he previously observed Palumbo telling

“
Judge Palumbo started yelling that she had requested on several occasions and Sheriff Johnson had ordered that a deputy shall be in the hallway of the eighth floor on pre-trial weeks, but that for several weeks, it has not happened.

Timothy Pearson, Oklahoma County Sheriffs Deputy.

attorneys involved in other cases to exit her courtroom and speak to their clients in the hallway instead of in her courtroom. He saw those attorneys do as she had asked. Pearson wrote that, in his view, the attorneys were not talking loudly, but he told them to be quiet, as court was in session.

In his separate statement, Burton corroborated Pearson’s version of events.

“While waiting for my defendant’s case to be called, I observed and heard Judge Palumbo stop a plea hearing already underway and began shouting at deputies present in her courtroom. Judge Palumbo’s shouting indicated she had repeatedly asked for deputies to be present on the eighth floor of the courthouse,” Burton wrote. “Judge Palumbo continues making statements expressing her deficiencies with courthouse security and at one point instructing deputies to get out in the hallway and quiet down the loud talking. Deputy Pearson exited the courtroom and could be heard instructing unknown parties in the lobby of the eighth floor to lower their voices.”

The documents released by Johnson include another statement from someone only identified as “Deputy McGinnis.” Records indicate that Johnson’s office employs a Dominique McGinnis as a sheriff’s deputy. McGinnis wrote that he was the deputy targeted by Palumbo. As someone had opened the door to the courtroom, McGinnis wrote, chatter from the hallway could be heard.

“Judge Palumbo then interrupted the unknown female while she was giving her victim impact statement and proceeded to scream at me while the courtroom was full of people,” McGinnis wrote. “She stated, ‘This is the third week in a row that I requested a deputy on this floor.’”

McGinnis said in his statement that the experience left him feeling “humiliated and disrespected.”

Palumbo also said she would be in contact with Johnson later that day over the dispute

involving deputies and the perceived noise levels outside her courtroom.

Johnson said his internal investigation found that the amount of noise in the hallway outside of Palumbo’s courtroom was typical for a day in the life of the facility.

“There was no unusual noise in the hallway or noise that someone would deem egregious,” Johnson told NonDoc. “Just regular court noise that you would hear from time to time in court. It’s just a busy place. You’ve got people coming in to see the judge to get their rulings. They’re outside talking with their counsel, back and forth. So it’s just normal noise of people having to compete with other people talking. But it’s not loud. It’s not egregious.”

‘I’m not trying to run and holler and scream’

On April 18, one day after receiving the texts from Palumbo, Johnson said he met with Oklahoma County District Attorney Vicki Behenna to discuss how he should approach the dispute. In the end, he said the conversation was not productive.

“I’m not trying to run and holler and scream. I want to do things by the book, the way I would ask my citizens to do, the way I would ask my deputies to do. Hey, there are rules and there are steps in place to protect you when people have wronged you. And so I asked Vicki Behenna,” Johnson said. “Clearly, [Palumbo] was wrong. She completely abused her power and authority. If me or another officer would have done that, our mugshot would have been up on the news at the end of the night. People would have screamed abuse. And what we’d have been looking at is charges filed on us for all of that stuff, as well as our job being taken. Is there any recourse for what she just did? And Vicki Behenna goes, ‘Nope, a judge can do whatever they want.’”

The response surprised Johnson.

“I said, ‘Ms. Behenna, you have to be kidding me,’” Johnson said. “There is no recourse for the action of a judge who

Cont. A13, Palumbo

CONTEXT

Oklahoma County Sheriff’s Office

The Oklahoma County Sheriff’s Office is the primary law enforcement agency for Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, responsible for maintaining order and providing services within the county, including jail operations, and is headed by an elected sheriff.

The Oklahoma County Sheriff’s Office has jurisdiction over the entire county, including unincorporated areas and smaller towns within Oklahoma County.

Education Watch: Walters Settles One Ethics Complaint, Another is Pending

Walters
Jennifer Palmer
Oklahoma Watch

Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters’ social media accounts look a little different this week. New profile picture. New handle.

Walters agreed to the changes to settle an ethics complaint for promoting President Donald Trump’s election on a social media account with his official title. He also agreed to pay \$5,000.

Public officials are prohibited from using official accounts for campaigning for or against specific candidates. The Ethics Commission said there was no evidence Walters knowingly violated any ethics rules.

He removed “Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction” from the title of his X account, and changed the handle from @RyanWaltersSupt to @RyanWalters_. He also replaced his official state picture with an unofficial photo.

Walters still faces a second investigation into whether he violated campaign finance laws in his 2022 run for superintendent. Read the full story in The Oklahoman.



Ryan Walters at a Board of Education meeting on Jan. 26, 2023.
PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/
OKLAHOMA WATCH

Jennifer Palmer has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2016 and covers education. Contact her at (405) 761-0093 or jpalmer@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @jpalmerOKC.



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

OK Supreme Court: Jail, prison health contractors entitled to sovereign immunity

Sovereign Immunity
Tristan Loveless
NonDoc

A unanimous Oklahoma Supreme Court reversed a published opinion of the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals this week and held that Turn Key Health Clinics, a private company that contracts to provide medical services in jails, is entitled to sovereign immunity under the Oklahoma Governmental Tort Claims Act.

Sovereign immunity prevents lawsuits against governments unless the immunity is waived. The unusual opinion found the appellate courts lacked jurisdiction to hear the case as filed, but also “recast” the filings to give the Supreme Court jurisdiction to make the ruling on an important issue of law. The case involves a lawsuit filed by the husband of a woman who died in the Creek County Jail in 2016. District Court Judge Douglas Golden ruled that sovereign immunity prohibited the claim, the Court of Civil Appeals reversed that decision, but the Supreme Court reversed the lower appellate panel Tuesday.

“The trial court understood, and we agree, that [the plaintiffs] argument was based upon Turn Key’s status as an independent contractor employing (or contracting with) licensed medical professionals for the jail, and as such the trial court ruled the alleged cause of action was subject to sovereign immunity,” Justice James Edmondson wrote for the unanimous majority. “We conclude the Governmental Tort Claims Act makes licensed medical professionals to be ‘employees’ of this state, regardless of the place in this state where duties as employees are performed, when the licensed medical professionals are under contract, including when under contract as an independent contractor,

with city, county, or state entities and providing medical care to inmates or detainees in the custody or control of law enforcement agencies.”

The decision makes it substantially more difficult to successfully sue a licensed medical professional who contracts with city, county or state detention facilities or in the state. Turn Key’s director of communications, Kenna Griffin, provided a short statement following the outcome of the case.

“The loss of any person’s life is sad, and we understand why that might lead to wanting to misplace blame on others. We’re pleased with the outcome in this case,” Griffin said. “We think the court made the right ruling.”

Creek County death spurred case

On Oct. 17, 2016, Brenda Jean Sanders was booked into the Creek County Jail. Just a month later, on Nov. 20, she was transferred to a hospital with “severe sepsis with shock, acute hypoxic respiratory failure, acute kidney injury, hepatopathy, coagulopathy, anemia, and thrombocytopenia.” She died the following day. In 2023, her husband, Philip Sanders, filed suit against Turn Key Health Clinics, the company contracted to provide medical care at the county jail.

Sanders’ attorneys argued the Oklahoma Governmental Torts Act prevented independent contractors from being treated as government employees entitled to sovereign immunity. Turn Key’s lawyers pointed to a section of the act which specifically extended immunity to licensed medical contractors working in county jails. Turn Key won a dismissal in Creek

County District Court, but the decision was reversed by the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals.

In reversing the Court of Civil Appeals, the Supreme Court found that the appeal was not based on a final appealable order, but an unappealable preliminary dismissal order. However, instead of sending the case back and waiting for a final appealable order, the court “recast” the case to a petition for original jurisdiction to rule on the legal merits of the argument.

“More than 30 years ago we explained: ‘This court on occasion, and when justice so requires, will treat a petition in error as an original action for a writ, or vice versa,’” Edmondson wrote. “We have explained our recasting must be ‘procedurally proper,’ and we have recast when it serves the interests of judicial economy and when the scope of the adjudication presents an issue of law.”

Turn Key has faced numerous lawsuits in various states

The Supreme Court’s ruling is a major boon for companies like Turn Key Health that contract with jails and prisons in Oklahoma to provide medical services. With a footprint spanning jails in more than a dozen states, Turn Key Health was founded in Oklahoma by businesspersons that include former House Majority Leader Jon Echols, who recently launched a 2026 campaign for attorney general. While Echols no longer maintains a majority stake in the company, he remains in its employ.

Last July, The Marshall Project and The Frontier published a multi-chapter report examining deaths at

jails where Turn Key has provided services, including at the Oklahoma County Jail and the Cleveland County Jail. The company has also contracted with Tulsa County, Garvin County and many other counties in Oklahoma. In December, a Turn Key employee was among six people indicted by a federal grand jury for “deprivation of rights” and “deliberate indifference to medical needs” related to the death of Kayla Lee Turley.

Turn Key and certain employees have been sued in federal court for the 2022 death of Shannon Hanchett in the Cleveland County Jail. On Friday, Turn Key’s attorneys filed a notice of supplemental authority in the Hanchett case to ensure U.S. District Court Judge Charles Goodwin’s awareness of the new Oklahoma Supreme Court ruling. Goodwin is the third judge to handle the case after two prior judges recused.

Defendants in county jails are typically awaiting adjudication of their criminal cases, although in Oklahoma people convicted of certain crimes can be sentenced up to one year in a county jail. Many jail deaths stem from drug-related causes — including withdrawal during detention and access to contraband like fentanyl — inside of facilities. Health care providers play a key role in identifying at-risk detainees who may need acute medical attention or transport to a hospital for more significant services. A common a tort claim filed in jail death cases alleges that such care or referral is delayed in a way that contributes to a person’s demise.

Tristan Loveless is a NonDoc Media reporter covering legal matters and other civic issues in the Tulsa area. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Turley and Skiatook, he graduated from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 2023. Before that, he taught for the Tulsa Debate League in Tulsa Public Schools.



Chuck Hoskin, Jr. serves as the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the largest tribe in the United States with more than 450,000 citizens.

PHOTO: CHEROKEE.ORG

Gary Batton is the 47th Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the third-largest Indian tribe in the United States. He was sworn into office on April 28, 2014, upon Chief Gregory E. Pyle's retirement.

PHOTO: CHOCTAW NATION.COM

FROM AS

DOJ

sections specific to the facts for each DA, the arguments and texts are identical.

In their filings, Ballard and Iski argue the suit, and the nations' motion to join it, were clearly a direct response to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals' decision in *City of Tulsa v. O'Brien*, which held the city has criminal jurisdiction to prosecute non-member tribal citizens who commit crimes within Indian Reservations.

"Both [the U.S.] complaint and [the nations'] motion were filed weeks after a recent decision by the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals that directly addressed and resolved their arguments," Pemberton wrote in the Feb. 21 brief. "Granting any relief would require this court to effectively reverse that decision and interfere with ongoing state district court and OCCA proceedings."

Both Ballard and Iski filed at least seven criminal cases against non-member tribal citizens within Indian Country reservation boundaries before the O'Brien decision. In McIntosh County District Court, defense attorneys filed motions to dismiss charges for lack of state jurisdiction against tribal citizens in at least four cases, but Associate Judge Brendon Bridges rejected each.

In Rogers County, Ballard has charged at least three non-member tribal citizens accused of committing crimes within the Cherokee Reservation, but he appears to lack a cooperative judge like Bridges. Navajo citizen Brayden Bull's case was initially dismissed by Special Judge Terrell Crosson before the OCCA reversed Crosson's decision and ordered the case to continue. (Bull, who was also charged in tribal and federal court, is currently serving a federal prison sentence.) The motions to dismiss charges against Chickasaw citizen Tony Demond Williams and Choctaw citizen Eric Ashely are currently pending in Rogers County District Court.

Pemberton argues the lawsuit should be dismissed and that the proper method for tribes or the DOJ to stop district attorneys in eastern Oklahoma from prosecuting tribal

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The United States brought this action in part to protect the inherent sovereign power of tribes to exercise criminal jurisdiction over Indians in Indian Country, but the United States cannot adequately represent all the nations' interests here.

U.S. Department of Justice attorneys, Feb. 21, filed legal brief supporting the tribes' motions.

citizens would be by appealing an Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court. (DOJ attorneys face a March 28 deadline to respond to Pemberton's motions to dismiss the two cases.)

"There has long existed in our judicial system 'a national policy forbidding federal courts to stay or enjoin pending state court proceedings.' Grounded in notions of federalism and comity, this policy demands that '[w]hen there is a parallel pending state criminal proceeding, federal courts must refrain from enjoining the state prosecution,'" Pemberton wrote in the Feb. 27 brief. "The complaint should be dismissed for lack of standing, or alternatively, under the Younger abstention or Colorado River abstention doctrines."

In a broad reading of the O'Briend decision, Pemberton also argued that the state's highest criminal court decided that district attorneys — not just municipalities — have criminal jurisdiction over non-member tribal citizens. As a result, he tribes should brief their arguments against state jurisdiction to the Court of Criminal Appeals.

"Though movants may be dissatisfied with the outcomes, Oklahoma state courts have adjudicated the issues raised by them. If the criminal defendants at issue wish to further challenge state jurisdiction, they'll be afforded the right to seek relief from the OCCA," Pemberton wrote. "And if movants prefer a voice in such proceedings, they may participate as amicus curiae, as they or other tribes have done in Williams and did in McGirt and Castro-Huerta. However, this federal litigation is not the appropriate venue to address movants' unspecified interests."

Every tribe attempting to intervene in the federal lawsuits has already filed at least one brief, if not more, on the issue of criminal jurisdiction with the Court of Criminal Appeals. Tribal leaders have appeared hesitant to bring another criminal jurisdiction case to the U.S. Supreme Court since the *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta* decision held that state governments have concurrent jurisdiction when a non-Indian defendant commits a crime against an Indian victim, narrowing the effects of the McGirt decision and upending decades of federal precedent.

"As a tribal elected official and an attorney, I would advise to think long and hard about an appeal in this instance," Osage Congressman Billy Keene tweeted after the O'Brien decision.

For tribal leaders worried a majority of the current U.S. Supreme Court's justices may take an appeal as another opportunity to further limit or overturn the McGirt decision, focusing on district court lawsuits to enforce federal Indian law — which currently contradicts the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals' decision in O'Brien — likely seems a safer option.

Pemberton, on the other hand, wrote the issue was "now ripe for appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court."

Despite admin change, DOJ keeps lawsuits, criticizes 'Bracker balancing'

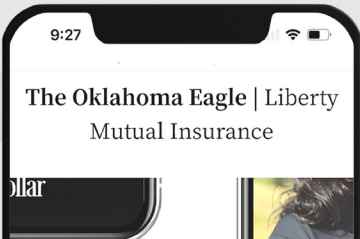
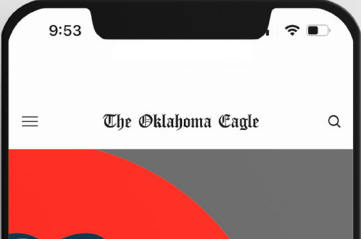
Like Pemberton, federal attorneys practiced their efficiency by filing virtually identically briefs supporting the tribes' motions in both cases on Feb. 21.

"The United States brought this action in part to protect the inherent sovereign power of tribes to exercise criminal jurisdiction over Indians in Indian Country, but the United States cannot adequately represent all the nations' interests here," attorneys for the DOJ wrote. "As the nations put it, each nation has 'a specialized interest,' not shared by the United States, 'in the scope of state jurisdiction within its reservation arising from its 'specific interest' in its 'political sovereignty.'"

The DOJ also agreed with the tribes' argument that the "Bracker balancing test" should not have applied in the criminal context, while noting if the test is applied then the tribes should be included in the litigation.

"Although the United States and nations agree that Bracker balancing is not appropriate in determining criminal jurisdiction over Indians in Indian Country, if the Bracker analysis is applied, the nations are uniquely and best situated to articulate their own interests in exercising exclusive criminal jurisdiction over Indians in Indian Country," the DOJ brief said. "The nations have a specialized interest in and unique knowledge about the issues in the case, as well as their own claims against defendant, and their participation would assist the court — making clear that intervention is appropriate."

Tristan Loveless is a NonDoc Media reporter covering legal matters and other civic issues in the Tulsa area. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Turley and Skiatook, he graduated from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 2023. Before that, he taught for the Tulsa Debate League in Tulsa Public Schools.





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Threats of contempt & jail for Sheriff Johnson

FROM A10
Palumbo

wanted to throw me in jail so they can do whatever they want to do? I have a hard time believing that. Well, they can just do whatever they want to do.”

Johnson later asked Behenna to recuse herself from any potential consideration of charges against him or his deputies. He said Behenna declined.

“So you won’t represent me, but you won’t recuse yourself so I can pursue other representation?” Johnson said.

A spokeswoman for Behenna did not respond to a message seeking comment about the situation.

The day he received the text messages from Palumbo, Johnson said he reached out to Attorney General Gentner Drummond via phone for an opinion.

“I said, ‘Sir, I have Judge Palumbo who is trying to throw me in jail for contempt and telling me to be in her courtroom at 1:30 p.m.,’” Johnson said of his conversation with Drummond. “He said, ‘Do you have any business in her courtroom?’ I said, ‘No, sir.’ He said, ‘You don’t have any business dealings?’ I said, ‘No sir. I literally have nothing.’ He goes, ‘Well, OK, let me call her.’”

According to what he was told by Drummond, Johnson said the call between the attorney general and Palumbo was tense. A spokesman for Drummond said the attorney general does not comment on private conversations, but Johnson referenced the discussion in the judicial complaint he filed against Palumbo.

“I was not present when any of the described events occurred in the courtroom nor was I even aware that these events had occurred. I was not and had never been directed or ordered by Judge Palumbo to do anything,” Johnson wrote in his complaint. “I was not aware of how I was in contempt of

court, so I then contacted Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond and asked him if I could be held in contempt of court for what had occurred. He told me that I could not. He then told me that he would call Judge Palumbo. General Drummond then called me back and said that Judge Palumbo told him that “he (Tommy Johnson) is in contempt.”

Johnson consulted with friends who are attorneys, and he said he did hire one at his own expense. Johnson said he was advised to file a complaint with the Oklahoma Council on Judicial Complaints, which he did April 24.

‘At home, it was tough’

Johnson said he never intended to discuss the dispute publicly, only doing so when he started receiving inquiries from local media. He said the entire saga left him angry, and even months later, it’s still unpleasant to think about.

“When I was going through it, you talk about being mad as a hornet,” Johnson said.

Asked if he believes Palumbo’s actions were politically motivated, Johnson implied people can draw their own conclusions.

“I mean, you could certainly look at the timing of it all,” he said. “And it is happening right before, you know, as I’m running for office for reelection.”

Johnson, who has four young children, said the dispute with Palumbo eventually permeated his home life. In discussions with his wife, they pondered what to do if he were arrested, including how to bond him out of jail and whom to contact.

“So at home, it was tough,” Johnson said, adding it was particularly difficult for his children. “‘Oh my gosh, Daddy’s getting arrested?’ Because we always talk about

accountability. We always talk about, ‘Hey, if you do something wrong, there’s a reaction to every action.’ And they can’t understand that. And they can’t understand, ‘Well, Dad you didn’t do anything wrong. Why would they put you in jail?’ Because people are using this system and they’re abusing their power and authority.”

Johnson said he believes that, had he not reached out to Behenna and Drummond, and instead showed up in Palumbo’s courtroom that day, he would have been arrested. He said Palumbo had requested the presence of other county officials in the courtroom to witness the possible arrest.

He also remains frustrated with the lack of resolution. While he knows Palumbo was disciplined to some extent, he said he doesn’t know what form that punishment took, if any.

“They wouldn’t tell me what the punishment was,” Johnson said. “Frankly, they didn’t apprise me of anything. I’m just stuck here with the complaint that I filed. And you validated that complaint, saying that you punished her for her actions. One, I don’t feel it was a harsh enough punishment. I mean, what if you’d have thrown me in jail? What if I had gone down there (to court) and I wasn’t aware of my legal situation? What if I didn’t consult the attorney general, and I came down there and I was hauled off in handcuffs? What does that do for me?”

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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FEATURED

From Heart Attacks to Heart Health: Tara Robinson’s Journey with the Black Heart Assoc.

Heart Health, A14



The Oklahoma Eagle



FEATURED

Target Stumbles as Black and Brown Shoppers Walk Away

Target, A17



PHOTO LUIS ALVAREZ VIA GETTY IMAGES

15 Years On: How The ACA Shaped Reproductive Care Access

With increasing threats to Medicaid and abortion care access, we asked policy experts how Obamacare has impacted Black women.

ACA
Anissa Durham
Word In Black

Fifteen years ago, at a White House ceremony, President Barack Obama signed into law what Vice President Joe Biden, in a hot-mic moment minutes earlier, called “a big f-ing deal”: the Affordable Care Act, a sweeping new law that changed the health care landscape. In his remarks, Obama touted the ACA’s benefits, including how it would improve access to health insurance, lower premiums, and cover a range of out-of-pocket costs. “The bill I’m signing will set in motion reforms that generations of Americans have fought for, and marched for, and hungered to see,” the president said. Obama didn’t mention it that day, but the ACA also quietly promised to usher in a new era for reproductive health for women in general — and for Black women in particular. That’s because the law

covered preventive screenings for health issues Black women disproportionately struggle with, like breast cancer, and required insurance companies to make birth control free. At Word In Black, we wanted to know precisely how the ACA has impacted Black women’s access to reproductive health care. Here’s what experts say and what the data shows. Monica Edwards senior manager of public policy at the nonprofit Power to Decide, says the law nicknamed Obamacare was transformational. “I do think the ACA is one of the greatest advancements for women’s health in a generation,” Edwards says. “Overall, it has been a good policy to make sure people get access to the health care that they need.”

Cont. A15, ACA

From Heart Attacks to Heart Health: Tara Robinson’s Journey with the Black Heart Association

Heart Health
Bliss
Dallas Weekly

After surviving multiple heart attacks, the health advocate set out to help ensure individuals in underserved communities have access to life-saving heart health education and screenings

Tara Robinson has always been strong. Not by choice, but by necessity. As the eldest in her family, she carried the weight of protection and resilience on

Cont. A15, Heart Health

The ACA Goal: Improve access to health insurance, lower premiums, and cover out-of-pocket costs



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

FROM A14

ACA

Expansion of Contraceptive Care

Reproductive health care, in general, includes contraception, obstetrics care, treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and abortion care. Since the mid-1990s, states have required health insurance plans that cover prescription drugs and devices to also cover contraceptives.

But the ACA took it a step further, according to Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive health research and policy organization. It now requires most private health insurers to pay for FDA-approved prescription contraceptive drugs and devices.

“This means people can get contraceptive

care in states that didn’t expand Medicaid access.

Downfalls of the ACA

But like any policy, there are limitations.

Although the law brought down the number of uninsured Black people, it did little to address institutional racism in the healthcare system. Compared to white women, Black women are still more likely to die during childbirth, caregivers are less likely to take their complaints of pain seriously, and they are more likely to struggle with medical debt.

And when it comes to reproductive care — one of the most popular aspects of the ACA — the landscape has changed significantly.

Since the Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, access to abortion varies significantly: some states protect it as a fundamental right, while others have declared it illegal. That’s had a

“

This means people can get contraceptive care that they need without having to pay out of pocket, which we know is a huge barrier for women of color

Monica Edwards, senior manager of public policy, Power to Decide, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit

care that they need without having to pay out of pocket, which we know is a huge barrier for women of color, specifically Black women,” Edwards says.

In 2020, the 10th anniversary of the ACA, The Commonwealth Fund reported that every racial demographic was more likely to be insured because of the law. Notably, it took just 6 years for the rate of uninsured Black Americans to drop 10%. And Black adults living in states that expanded Medicaid — a key provision of Obamacare — are less likely to forego health insurance than white adults

disproportionate effect on Black women, who are more likely than white women to live in a state that bans abortion, and less likely to be able to afford out-of-state travel to terminate a pregnancy.

“Since the overturning of Roe v. Wade, barriers to accessing reproductive health care for Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people have grown even more daunting,” says Regina Davis Moss, president and CEO of In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda. “We know that Roe was never enough on its own to secure

Cont. A16, ACA

The Black Heart Association: Inspired by a sense of purpose

FROM A14

Heart Health

her shoulders from a young age. “I had to be the strong one,” she says. “Even as a child, I felt like it was my responsibility to protect my mom, my siblings, everyone around me.” She watched her mother navigate struggles with a quiet grace that both frustrated and fascinated her. “I saw my mom endure so much, and she never wavered. But I told myself, I would be different. I wouldn’t let anyone take advantage of me.”

Strength came at a cost. “I was mean growing up,” she admits. “Not in the sense of being a bully, but I had this hard shell. I didn’t let people in. I was guarded, and I didn’t trust easily.” That toughness, she now realizes, was a survival tactic. “Being the oldest meant seeing everything—the good and the bad. And I think that makes you grow up a little faster than you should.”

Despite her hardened exterior, Tara had a vision for herself. She dreamed of being a school counselor, someone who could be a voice for children who felt invisible. “I always knew I wanted to work with kids because I never had that kind of support growing up. No one ever pulled me aside and asked, ‘Are you okay?’ So I told myself, ‘I’m going to be the best counselor there is.’” She had a plan: three years in elementary counseling, three years in middle school, three years in high school, and then onto college counseling. “I mapped it all out. I was going to help kids navigate life in ways I had to figure out on my own.”

But life had a way of disrupting even the most carefully laid plans.

In 2013, Tara began experiencing unusual symptoms—numbness in her left arm, persistent neck pain, extreme fatigue. “I wasn’t ignoring my health,”



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PHOTO LOREM IPSUM

she explains. “I had been connected to the healthcare system because of my time in the military. But when I went to the doctor, they told me it was stress.” She wanted to believe them. “I didn’t want bad news. Who does? So when they said, ‘You’re fine,’ I accepted it.”

Until she wasn’t fine

By 2014, Tara had suffered three heart attacks. “It felt like everything in my body was misfiring. It wasn’t like what you see on TV. I wasn’t clutching my chest in pain. I just knew something was wrong.” The first time, doctors still didn’t take her seriously. The second time, it was harder to ignore. By the third, her body was shutting down.

Her husband, Frederick, was the one who refused to let her give in. “I remember

“

I always knew I wanted to work with kids because I never had that kind of support growing up... No one ever pulled me aside and asked, ‘Are you okay?’ So I told myself, ‘I’m going to be the best counselor there is.

Tara Robinson, heart attack survivor and health advocate

telling myself, ‘I just need to lay down. I’ll feel better after I rest.’ But Frederick wasn’t having it. He looked at me and said, ‘You don’t get to die on me today.’ And that was it. He saved my life that day.”

Their love story was never part of her plan. “I wasn’t looking for love when I met him,” she laughs. “I had been in bad relationships before, and I was finally in a place where I was just focused on me.” But Frederick was different. “He saw through all my walls, all my defenses. He was kind; he was steady. And honestly, that scared me because I wasn’t used to it. But I had prayed for something different. And God delivered.”

When asked how she knew he was the one, she doesn’t hesitate. “I prayed. I went into my closet and told God, ‘I keep picking wrong. So this time, you pick for me.’ And then a year later, I met Frederick. I didn’t even think twice about him at first. But then I found out his middle name was Charles—the same name as a kind man I had once known and admired. I knew right then, that was God’s way of telling me, ‘This is the one.’”

Their love is a testament to faith, to trust, to knowing when to let go and allow something greater to take over. “I tell women all the time—stop looking. Focus on yourself. Because when you are aligned with your purpose, the right person will find you.”

Through all of this, the Black Heart Association was born. “It wasn’t my plan,” she says. “I had my whole life mapped out. But God had something bigger in store.” The organization has now provided over 20,000 free heart screenings, reaching people who might never have known they were at risk.

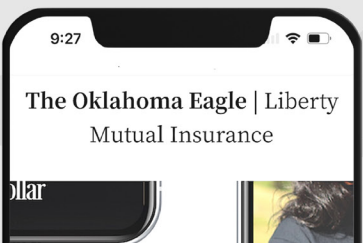
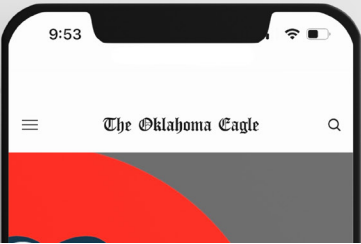
When asked about struggles the Black Heart Association is facing due to the current political climate, Tara is direct. “The hardest part is knowing that we are doing work that is saving lives, but we

Cont. A16, Heart Health

The Oklahoma Eagle

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



ACA expansion of Medicaid allowed states to cover nearly all low-income adults younger than 65 years old



FROM A15
ACA

full bodily autonomy for our communities.”

Even before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, the ACA was hamstrung by the Hyde Amendment— a provision that prevents the federal government from using taxpayer funds on abortion, except under extreme circumstances. As a result, the health care law allows states to ban abortion coverage in plans offered through the ACA Marketplace, and 25 states have done so. That means access to abortion care largely depends on what state someone lives in.

“Just last year we learned the stories of Amber Nicole Thurman, Candi Miller, and so many others who were killed as a result of abortion bans,” Davis Moss says. “Our own polling showed that since *Roe* was overturned, 40 percent of Black women of reproductive age feel less safe and are less sure about whether to have children because of abortion bans.”

“

Just last year we learned the stories of Amber Nicole Thurman, Candi Miller, and so many others who were killed as a result of abortion bans.

Regina Davis Moss, president and CEO of In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

The Future of the ACA

Since 2014, the ACA expanded Medicaid allowing states to cover nearly all low-income adults younger than 65 years old. As of 2025, 41 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Medicaid expansion and 10 states have not. Medicaid covers more than 40% of U.S. births and 65% of births to Black birthing people.

The Republican-led Congress is considering plans to cut Medicaid, with the House budget resolution targeting \$880 billion or more in potential reductions to federal Medicaid spending, according to KFF. On Truth Social, his social media platform, President Donald Trump “We need both Chambers to pass the House Budget to “kickstart” the Reconciliation process, and move all of our priorities to the concept of, “ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL.””

Jasmine Young, staff attorney at the National Health Law Program, an organization working to protect and advance the health rights of underserved communities, says the potential Medicaid cuts are very concerning. The Medicaid expansion provision has lowered maternal

mortality rates and narrowed racial maternity health inequities.

“It’s essential that we protect funding and resources that go towards Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act,” she says. “It would be damaging to so many communities, especially to Black women and femmes who rely on these resources.”

Section 1557 of the ACA bans health care discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disability. It’s the first federal law that banned health care discrimination, Young explains. Project 2025 aims to roll back these non-discriminatory practices that disproportionately affect Black Americans.

“It would be horrible if these funding cuts were to persist, and the ACA was eliminated,” she says. “I really do think the Affordable Care Act was a way to lean into the principles of reproductive justice, which is the human right to maintain bodily autonomy, the right to not have children, and to parent the children that we have in safe and sustainable communities.”

Anissa Durham is the health data journalist for Word In Black. She reports on healthcare inequities and mental health in the Black community.

“We know how to navigate difficult seasons because we’ve never had an easy road.”

FROM A15
Heart Health

don’t get the same access to funding that other organizations do,” she says. “We’ve had grant after grant denied. I don’t want to say it’s one thing or another, but what I do know is that as Black people, we have always had to fight twice as hard. That’s just the reality. And so, we press on.”

“We know how to navigate difficult seasons because we’ve never had an easy road,” she continues. “But it’s not just about us—it’s about the people we serve. It’s about making sure our community has access to the care they deserve. That’s why we’re here, and that’s why we will continue.”

Tara also shares an important distinction about the name Black Heart Association—a name that holds a dual meaning. “When we say ‘Black Heart,’ it’s not just about race. Yes, we serve Black communities because we are disproportionately affected by heart disease, but ‘Black Heart’ also represents the silent, unseen struggles of people dealing with heart conditions. It’s the heartbreak of losing someone too soon. The weight of an undiagnosed illness. It’s the reality of living in a system where your health often comes second to bureaucracy.”

She doesn’t dwell on the rejection, though. “We’ve never had it easy. And that’s not going to stop us now.” Instead, she focuses on the work ahead. “We need more doctors in our neighborhoods. We need insurance to stop being a barrier to care. We need food to be treated as medicine. We deserve the same resources as everyone else.”

Tara Robinson is more than a survivor. She is a force. A woman who has taken every hardship, every loss, every challenge, and turned it into a legacy. Through her unwavering commitment, the Black Heart Association continues to grow, ensuring that individuals in underserved communities



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

have access to life-saving heart health education and screenings.

For those looking to support the mission, donations, volunteer opportunities, and resources can be found at www.blackheartassociation.org. Every contribution, whether time, money, or spreading awareness, helps bridge the gap in healthcare access and saves lives.

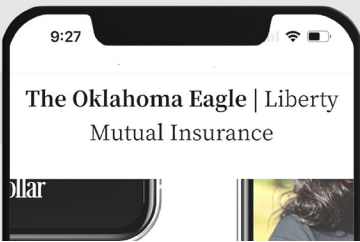
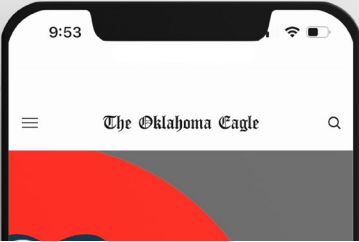
“God does not waste pain,” Tara says. “Everything I’ve been through—it wasn’t just for me. It was so I could help somebody else. And I will keep doing that, for as long as I can.” “God does not waste pain,” she says. “Everything I’ve been through—it wasn’t just for me. It was so I could help somebody else. And I will keep doing that, for as long as I can.”

Bliss, a London-born girl group is redefining the narrative in the music industry by blending the golden era of 90s R&B with modern-day flair.

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Target Stumbles *as Black and Brown Shoppers Walk Away*

Target
Stacy M. Brown
Word In Black

Since revising its DEI initiatives, Target has lost over \$12.4 billion in revenue, seen its stock plunge by \$27.27 per share, and is facing multiple lawsuits.

Target continues to face mounting financial and reputational fallout after reversing course on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The retail giant has lost more than \$12.4 billion in revenue, seen its stock plunge by \$27.27 per share, and is grappling with multiple lawsuits linked to its shifting DEI policies.

Separate but powerful actions from Black-led organizations and faith leaders have intensified pressure on the company.

The Rev. Jamal Bryant launched a national Target Fast, calling for continued community mobilization. Meanwhile, National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and the NAACP initiated public education and selective buying campaigns. While distinct in approach, the collective efforts have amplified scrutiny and economic consequences for Target.

“Black consumers helped build Target into a retail giant, and now they are making their voices heard,” said Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., president and CEO of NNPA. “If corporations believe they can roll back diversity commitments without consequence, they are mistaken.”

Early data from analytics firms Placer.ai and Numerator confirms a decline in consumer support. Numerator found that Black and Hispanic households are reducing their visits to Target at the highest rates. Placer.ai reported that on Feb. 28, the economic blackout day nationwide, Target saw an 11% decline in store traffic compared to average Friday visits.

Since the company’s Jan. 24 DEI reversal, Placer.ai data shows Target’s overall foot

Black consumers helped build Target into a retail giant, and now they are making their voices heard.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., president and CEO of NNPA



traffic has fallen every week.

In contrast, Costco has gained ground. The warehouse chain rejected a shareholder proposal to weaken its diversity programs and stayed firm in its DEI stance. Analysts say Costco’s consistency and longstanding commitment to high wages and strong employee benefits may attract consumers frustrated with Target’s retreat.

Costco’s shares have outperformed those of Walmart and Target over the same period.

Walmart has also seen a dip in foot traffic, though not as sharply as Target.

While grassroots boycotts are not always financially damaging in the long term, Target’s situation may prove different.

“Boycotts put a ‘negative spotlight’ on the company that can have reputational consequences,” Brayden King, professor at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management, told Forbes.

He noted that consumer trust, closely tied to corporate reputation, plays a critical role in shopping habits.

In addition to its woes, Target issued a string of recalls in 2025 involving products sold on shelves due to undeclared allergens and injury hazards. Affected items included Gerber Soothe N Chew Teething Sticks, Dorel Safety 1st Comfort Ride and Magic Squadchild car seats, Nuby stroller fans, Baby joy high chairs, Chomps beef and turkey sticks, and Pearl Milling Company pancake mix.

Bryant said the Target fast, in association with Lent, the 40 days and nights leading to Easter (April 20), has now mobilized more than 150,000 participants and persuaded over 100 Black vendors to withdraw their products from Target. He urged continued focus and unity in holding the company accountable.

“It is critical that Black people can’t afford to get A.D.D; we can’t taper off and lose synergy. It’s important that people stay the course and keep amplifying our voices because it is being heard from Wall Street to Main Street,” Bryant said.

Stacy M. Brown is a senior writer for The Washington Informer and the senior national correspondent for the Black Press of America. Stacy has more than 25 years of journalism experience and has authored two major biographies, including Blind Faith: The Miraculous Journey of Lula Hardaway, Stevie Wonder’s Mother.



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(LEFT,RIGHT) **Mackenzie Manning** is playing the lead role of Deloris van Cartier in “Sister Act – The Musical” to be performed at Booker T. Washington High School, March 28-30. “**Sister Act – The Musical**” will feature Booker T. Washington High School students, including Mackenzie Manning (c), a junior student, as Deloris van Cartier with Logan Jenkins (l), a senior, as Mother Superior and Aniya Ordenez (r), a freshman, as Sister Mary Robert

PHOTOS PROVIDED

Women’s Month: BTW To Present ‘Sister Act – The Musical,’ March 28-30

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

The Booker T. Washington High School Drama Club will present “Sister Act – The Musical” from March 28-30. The play will be performed at the high school, 1514 E. Zion St.

The producers for the play said the performance will be “an unforgettable theatrical experience.” The high-energy musical is filled with laughter, uplifting music, and inspiring performances. The play promises to be a must-see event for the Tulsa community.

The Oklahoma Eagle was informed that the cast and crew have been working tirelessly to bring this beloved story to life.

Among the outstanding performers scheduled to perform is Mackenzie Manning, the recent Audience Choice winner of Signature Symphony’s “Tulsa Sings!” competition. She will play the role of Deloris van Cartier as Whoopi Goldberg acted in the motion picture in 1992.

The production is under the direction of drama teacher Kaicee Mayo, who has been instrumental in growing the school’s theater program. Serving as the music director is Majesti Pearson. According to those involved with the play, The Oklahoma Eagle has learned the students are set to deliver an incredible production filled with joy and soul-stirring performances.

The Drama Department representative said, “Don’t miss this opportunity to witness the next generation of performing artists shine on stage!”

Businesses and individuals can also support the arts by purchasing ad space in the official play’s playbill. By placing an ad, it is an opportunity to showcase one’s business, send a shout-out to your favorite cast member, or show your support for local theatre.

The producers invite the community to join the students for a night of laughter, music, and inspiration as Booker T. Washington High School presents “Sister Act.”

For more information, see <https://www.onthestage.tickets/show/booker-t-washington-high-school/>. For media inquiries, call Kaicee Mayo at (918) 694-3338. For tickets, visit <https://www.onthestage.tickets/show/booker-t-washington-high-school/>.

Booker T. Washington High School

Booker T. Washington High School is a world-class high school. It has been awarded the distinction as a Blue Ribbon School by the U. S. government as an academically superior institution four times – 1983, 2009, 2016, and 2023. The school is ranked as one of the top high schools in the country. Founded in 1913 as an all-Black school, it later was established as a magnet school for the Tulsa school district’s desegregation program in 1973. Today, the school serves students from every racial, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic group in the city. For more information, visit <https://btw.tulaschools.org/>.

Greenwood Rising Presents ‘Uplift and Rise’, April 3



(LEFT,RIGHT) **Jasmine Ball**, MSW, CFP®, founded Bamboo Financial Partners, providing financial advice to clients nationwide, will be the guest lecturer. **Brentom Todd**, deputy chief of staff to City of Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols, will share information about the significance of the Greenwood District.

PHOTOS PROVIDED

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

GREENWOOD RISING, 23 N. Greenwood Ave., invites the community to “Uplift and Rise” program on April 3, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. The topic for the program will be “Rebuilding Black Wall Street: Money Moves for a Lasting Legacy.”

The guest lecturers will be Jasmine Ball, MSW, CFP®, and Brentom Todd, deputy chief of staff to City of Tulsa Mayor Monroe Nichols.

Originally from Northern California, Ball is the founder of Bamboo Financial Partners and works with clients from across the country. She said opening her firm was a tribute to the reputation of Black Wall Street on Greenwood. She is the first Black woman CFP (Certified Financial Planner) in Oklahoma.

She has been featured in The Oklahoma

Eagle, Journal Record, and Silicon Review among others.

(See Goodwin, J. (2023, September 8). Ball recognized as the only African American Certified Financial Planner in Oklahoma. (p. A15). The Oklahoma Eagle. https://theokeagle.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/The-Oklahoma-Eagle_09082023.pdf)

In addition to the Office of the Mayor, Todd serves on the board of the Kirkpatrick Heights Greenwood Master Plan Advisory Committee, and the Alzheimer’s Diversity Outreach Services, and is vice president of his north Tulsa neighborhood association. His consulting business has helped numerous entrepreneurs and nonprofits develop strategic, innovative, and creative solutions to grow their businesses and expand their

community impact.

For more information, visit www.greenwoodrising.org and www.bamboofinancialpartners.com.

Greenwood Rising

Greenwood Rising, a non-profit, is an award-winning, world-class history center. The center shares the story of the Tulsa Historic Greenwood District in a holistic, experiential presentation. The center takes inspiration from other prominent facilities in the United States that chronicle the African American experience, including the Legacy Museum and the Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Ala., and the Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio.

For more information, visit www.greenwoodrising.org.

Events

- Mar. 7-29**
- She Makes Art + Music exhibit, poetry and performances, and music concert to be hosted at Liggett Studio, 314 S. Kenosha. The exhibit will be on display from March 7-27, with an opening on March 7 at 5 p.m. The poetry and performances will be on March 27. The music conference is scheduled for March 29. For more information, visit www.liggettstudio.com/shemakesart.
- Mar. 21**
- Black Wall Street Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting at the 36th Street Event Center, 1125 E. 36th St. N., 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.bwschamber.com/>.
- Mar. 22**
- The Dance Affair and Fashion Show will be held at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave. The fashion show will begin at 7:30 a.m., and the dance will be from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. DJ Silky Soul will provide the music. The semi-formal events are BYOL and BYOF. MVP Dance Productions is hosting the program. For more information, contact Howard Barnes at (918) 951-5466 or Sheila Herbert at (918) 946-6697.
- Mar. 28**
- “Sister Act – The Musical” will be performed by the Theatre Department at Booker T. Washington High School, 1514 E. Zion St. The scheduled performances are March 28, 7 p.m.; March 28, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and March 30, 4 p.m. Majeste Pearson is the music director. For more information, see [Sister Act - The Musical](https://www.onthestage.tickets/show/booker-t-washington-high-school/).
- Mar. 29**
- The Links, Incorporated is sponsoring Black Family Wellness Expo at Tulsa Community College, Northeast campus, 3727 E. Apache St., 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. The program is a part of the organization’s National Impact Day of Service. For more information, contact tulsalinksbfwe@gmail.com or (918) 852-7456.
- Apr. 3**
- Booker T. Washington High School Distinguished Hall of Fame Foundation Ceremony and Scholarship Dinner will be held at 6 p.m. at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave. Honorees



Carol Rittner, Ph.D., a Catholic nun with the Religious Sisters of Mercy, is the guest speaker for the 2025 Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration at Temple Israel, 2004 E. 22nd St., on April 24. PHOTO PROVIDED

Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration To Address ‘Lessons From The Holocaust: Protecting Each Other In Perilous Times’, April 24

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The Tulsa Council for Holocaust Education invites the public to the 27th Annual YomHaShoah: An Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration on April 24 at 7 p.m. at Temple Israel, 2004 E. 22nd Pl.

Featured speaker Carol Rittner, Ph.D., a Catholic nun with the Religious Sisters of Mercy, will address “Lessons From the Holocaust: Protecting Each Other in Perilous Times.” The commemoration is free and recommended for ages 12 and older. Registration is required.

It is estimated that out of nine million Jews under Nazi domination, tens of thousands were rescued during the Holocaust by non-Jewish people. Many rescuers acted out of a sense of altruism. Some acted out of deeply held religious beliefs or moral codes, while others acted in the spur of the moment.

A distinguished professor of Holocaust and

genocide studies emerita, and Dr. Marsha Raticoff Grossman professor of Holocaust studies emerita at Stockton University of New Jersey, Rittner has dedicated her life to her Christian faith and to understanding the circumstances that allowed the Holocaust and other genocides to occur.

Since retiring from Stockton University in 2015, Rittner has taught several online graduate courses for Stockton’s M.A. program in Holocaust and genocide studies.

She is the editor or co-editor of numerous books on the subject, including “The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust” and “Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust.”

Her newest title, “Stress Test: The Israel-Hamas War and Christian-Jewish Relations,” co-edited by John K. Roth, will be released in early 2025.

The commemoration will also include music selections embracing and reflecting the theme of the commemoration, performed by Lyndon Meyer, principal pianist for the Tulsa

Opera. In addition, the commemoration will feature an exhibit of the winning entries from the 2025 Yom HaShoah Art Contest created by Oklahoma students of the Holocaust, a candle-lighting ceremony honoring protectors, victims, and survivors of the Holocaust, and a selection of Holocaust resources available for checkout from the Tulsa City-County Library.

The Holocaust Commemoration is presented by the Tulsa Council for Holocaust Education of the Jewish Federation of Tulsa in partnership with the Tulsa City-County Library, The Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art, Congregation B’nai Emunah, and Temple Israel.

For more information about Ritter, visit <https://carolrittner.com>.

Visit www.jewishtulsa.org/yomhashoah2025 to register for the commemoration or contact Sofia Thornblad at curator@jewishmuseum.net for more details.

Events

include Inez Black, Kevin Lockett, Nicole Lynn, Sabrina Goodwin-Monday, Bill Nelson, J. Kavin Ross, M. Reginald “Ice” Terry, and Pastor LeRon G. West. The guest speaker will be Milliard House II, superintendent of Prince George’s County Public Schools. For more information, contact tulsabtw.hof@gmail.com.

Apr. 16
Travis Guillory – Senior Concert at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6:30 p.m.

Apr. 17
Greenwood Cultural Center is presenting its Legacy Award Dinner. Nate Burleson of “CBS Mornings,” “The NFL Today,” and host of “Hollywood Squares” will be the Legacy Award honoree. For more information, call (918) 596-1020 or visit www.greenwoodculturalcenter.org.

Apr. 30
2025 Women’s Leadership Summit will be held at the River Spirit Casino Resort, 8330 Riverside Pkwy. According to the organizers, the full-day program will be dedicated to empowering, elevating, and celebrating women leaders. The program theme will be “Courageous Leaders Driving Impact.” The full-day summit For more information, contact <https://leadershiptulsa.org/womensleadershipsummit/>.

May 18
Witness! An Evening of Spirituals will be held at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Doors will open at 5 p.m. The sounds of rich history in the tradition of the spirituals, also known as “freedom songs,” will be performed. The featured singers will be Joel-Lyn McCormick (Soprano), Phil Armstrong (Tenor), Joseph Bias (Baritone), and Donald Ryan (pianist). The program is a benefit concert for the Greenwood Cultural Center. For more information, visit eventbrite.com

Jun. 13-14
African and Indian Table Talk presents “Across Generations: The Freedman’s Journey in Indian Territory” conference. More information to be provided soon.

Aug. 9
100 Black Men of Tulsa will be hosting the Marvin Blades Golf Classic at the Bailey Golf Course in Owasso. For more information, visit <https://www.100blackmentulsa.org/>.

Aug. 17-23
National Business League will host its 125th-anniversary pre-conference at Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Ala., Aug. 17-20, and conference in Atlanta, Ga., Aug. 20-23. For more information, visit <https://national-businessleague.org/>.

Sept. 6
NeonPrairie Music and Camping Festival to feature a variety of entertainers, Sept. 6-7. For more information, see www.neonprairiefest.com.



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