

*Presidents of the Association of Negro Teachers*



(Photo: Currie Ballard Collection—Oklahoma Historical Society)

*Oklahoma African American Educators  
Hall of Fame, Inc.*



*The Seventh Annual Hall of Fame  
Ceremony and Banquet*

*Oklahoma History Center  
800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

*Friday*

*September 29, 2017 7:00 p.m.*



*2017 Induction Ceremony - Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.*

*Oklahoma  
African American Educators  
Hall of Fame, Inc.*



**Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.**

*“Thoughts from the President”*

One of the greatest motivational concepts accessible to mankind is “Recognition.” Recognition is the action or process of recognizing for being recognized in particular. Two synonyms for recognition are remembrance and acknowledgement. Thus, we pause tonight to remember and acknowledge the accomplishments of ten outstanding African American contributions in the field of education.

Education has and always will be the ingredient which provides opportunities for the masses, while stimulating the individuals to press onward fulfilling their potential. The inductees this year have served in various capacities within the realm of Oklahoma education and their influence is evident by the successes attained by their fruit.

Along with three distinguished educators who’s credentials speak for themselves and remain with us, seven honorees will be honored posthumously for their dedication and service. It is imperative to collect, preserve, and share their stories as their relatives and colleagues are mindful of their impact. As a state, nation, community, and school district, we are always one generation from loosing the history of our trailblazers.

The educational system in Oklahoma has and continues to flourish because of the character of those recognized tonight. The sacrifices of our inductees make it possible for the new generation of educators to enjoy the conveniences, accommodations and compensations they receive today. Please take time to acknowledge these inductees by saying, “Thank you.”

The Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. museum, located in Clearview, Oklahoma, has become a historical tourist destination, attraction, and place of interest for history enthusiasts. The Town is one of the original Thirteen All-Black towns of the Oklahoma and is centrally located between Tulsa and Oklahoma City in Okfuskee County, accessible from Interstate 40. This is a “must see” museum.

May we all hold firm to the belief in all people and embrace the vision of the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. which remains: “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.” Proverbs 3: 27.

This evening would not be possible without the dedicated OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc. Board of Directors and Committee Members. Please recognize their efforts throughout this event. I sincerely hope you enjoy the occasion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donnie Nero". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.  
President: Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



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## Oklahoma African American Educators

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Mrs. Shirley A. Nero  
Mrs. Sharon Ray*

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Mr. Bruce Fisher  
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### *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.*



*Mrs. Hilma L. Barnes - Paterson, N.J. (deceased)*

*Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.-Clearview, OK*

*Mr. Albert Johnson Sr. - Lawton, OK*

*Mrs. Eunice Edison - Lawton, OK*

*Mrs. Shirley A. Ballard Nero– Clearview, OK*

*Mr. Don Shaw, Esq.– Idabel, OK*

*Dr. Jack Paschall– Ada, OK*

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*Dr. Harold C. Aldridge, Jr.- Tahlequah, OK*

*Ms. Lou Eddie Goodlow Burris - Broken Bow, OK*

*Mr. Eugene DePriest Jones, III - Oklahoma City, OK*

*Rep. Kevin Cox—Oklahoma City, OK*

# Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



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## 2011 Inaugural Induction

Mr. Curtis Brackeen  
Muskogee, Oklahoma  
Mrs. Willie Mae Etheridge  
Checotah/Warrior, Oklahoma  
Dr. Henry Kirkland Jr.  
Atoka, Oklahoma  
Rev. Willie B. Parker  
Spencer, Oklahoma  
Mr. William Robert Patterson  
Lawton, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

Dr. Meshack M. Sagini  
Langston, Oklahoma  
Mr. Eddie Walter Warrior  
Muskogee, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Jimmie Beatrice White Williams  
Idabel, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Dr. La Verne Ford Wimberly  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Mr. Tom Anthony Withers Jr.  
Clearview, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

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## 2012 Second Annual Induction

Mr. Harold C. Aldridge Sr.  
Taft, Oklahoma  
Dr. Chalon E. Anderson  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Dr. Loretta Brown Collier  
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Gladys Marie Foshee  
Sapulpa, Oklahoma  
Mr. Sylvester "Prof" Franklin  
Haskell, Oklahoma

Mr. Willie Frank Hurte  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Dr. Mendell L. Simmons  
Norman, OK (Posthumously)  
Mr. Albert Johnson Sr.  
Lawton, Oklahoma  
Mr. Herbert Clarence King  
Lawton, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Dr. Frederick D. Moon  
Oklahoma City, OK (Posthumously)

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## 2013 Third Annual Induction

Mrs. Eva Gallimore Boyd  
Chickasha, OK (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Lou Eddie Goodlow Burris  
Broken Bow, Oklahoma  
Dr. Ada Sipuel Fisher  
Oklahoma City, OK (Posthumously)  
Mr. Charles L. Henry  
Lawton, OK (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Lettie Ruth Hunter  
Oklahoma City, OK (Posthumously)

Dr. Freeta Jones-Porter  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Dr. Betty G. Mason  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Dr. Willard G. Parker  
Muskogee, OK (Posthumously)  
Ms. Thelma Reece Parks  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Dr. Wanda J. Pollard-Johnson  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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## 2014 Fourth Annual Induction

Dr. Charles E. Butler  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Mrs. Valerie Inez Carolina  
Wewoka, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Lola Parker Dean  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Mrs. Juanita Lewis-Hopkins  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Mr. Millard L. House  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Mr. Jesse "J. D." Johnson  
Altus, Oklahoma  
Ms. Mary "The Fox" Johnson  
Ardmore, Oklahoma  
Mr. Charles B. McCauley  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Violet A. Patterson  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Dr. Willa Allegra Strong  
McAlester, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

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## 2015 Fifth Annual Induction

Mrs. Nancy Ola Randolph Davis  
Spencer, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Mr. Manyles B. Gaines, Jr.  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Dr. Ernest L. Holloway, Sr.  
Boley, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Mrs. Marilyn Ballard Jackson  
Clearview, Oklahoma  
Mr. James Roy (J.R.) Johnson  
Muskogee, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

Mrs. Clara Mae Shepard Luper  
Hoffman, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
Dr. Gloria Joan Pollard  
Spencer, Oklahoma  
Dr. Jimmy V. Scales, Sr.  
Idabel, Oklahoma  
Dr. Virginia L. Schoats  
Muskogee, Oklahoma  
Dr. Valree Fletcher Wynn  
Lawton, Oklahoma

# Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



2016 Sixth Annual Induction

*Mr. Jerry Lee Belton, Sr.*  
Boynton, Oklahoma  
*Dr. Karen M. Clark*  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
*Dr. Leon Edd, Jr.*  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
*Mrs. Jo Ann Goodwin Gilford*  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
*Ms. Claudette Goss*  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

*Mr. Cedric Johnson*  
Muskogee, Oklahoma  
*Dr. Anquanita Kaigler-Love*  
Lawton, Oklahoma  
*Mr. Wallace Owens, Jr.*  
Guthrie, Oklahoma  
*Mr. Herman Cornelius Robbins*  
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)  
*Mrs. Lena Lowry Sawner*  
Chandler, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

## ***Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment Fund*** ***Focus on All-Black Towns***

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) is honored to announce the creation of the Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment to benefit historical programming for historical black towns. Dr. Donnie Nero donated the initial amount to the fund. The OHS will continue to fundraise to increase the endowment, including an annual Juneteenth event at the Oklahoma History Center.

Shirley Nero, a native of the all-black town of Clearview, Okla., taught at Sapulpa and then Porum public schools for thirty years. Nero received four different teachers of the year honors. In 1994 the Sapulpa School Board presented her the Distinguished Service Award. She sits on several boards, including the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame. In 2016 she was a recipient of the Pinnacle Award, which honors outstanding women for their work as role models to women and children in the Tulsa community.

The Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment provides money every year for research, programming, exhibits, and/or events related to the Historically Thirteen Original All-Black Towns of Oklahoma. One of Shirley's passions is Oklahoma history and especially the state's unique story of these black towns. No other state had as many all-black communities as Oklahoma. This occurred for several reasons, primarily the granting of land to freed slaves of the Five Civilized Tribes, and African Americans making land runs and settling near one another.

Because of you and your generous support, many superior programs will be offered, one-of-a-kind artifacts will be preserved and unique and interesting exhibits will be created. Your special gift will help the OHS take a major leap forward with collecting, preserving and sharing the extraordinary history of Oklahoma!

You will be pleased to know that you will be listed as a donor in a future issue of *Mistletoe Leaves* and the OHS EXTRA! Newsletter. In addition, you will be recognized as a member of the Oklahoma History Legacy Circle which was created to recognize donors, both living and deceased, who have made contributions of \$1,000 or greater to an OHS endowment fund. Because endowment donations provide perpetual income to the OHS, membership in the Legacy Circle also is perpetual.

If you are able, please consider the OHS with your generosity in the future? There is so much more to be collected, preserved and shared and your support is vital.

Thank you for your support. We appreciate it.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Donnie L.  
Shirley A. Nero Sr.

Please make a tax exempt donation tonight to the Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment Fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation:

To: Shelly Crynes  
Development & Membership Coordinator  
Oklahoma Historical Society  
800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-7917  
405 521-2491 Fax 405 521-2492 [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org)



2017 Induction Ceremony - Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



## *2017 OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc. Program*

***Welcome***

*Dr. Harold C. Aldridge, Jr.  
Board of Directors  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma*

***Invocation***

*Mr. Jimmie White, Treasurer  
Board of Directors  
Warner, OK*

***Dinner***

***B & B Catering***  
*Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

***Opening Remarks/  
Introductions***

*Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr., President  
Clearview, Oklahoma*

***Citations/  
Acknowledgements***

*The Honorable Roger Thompson  
Senate District 8  
Okemah, Oklahoma*

***2017 Induction Ceremony***

*Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.  
President  
Clearview, Oklahoma*

### ***2017 Inductees***

<b><i>Mrs. Olive Ruth James</i></b> <i>Wewoka</i>	<b><i>Dr. Dennis L. Portis III</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>Oklahoma City</i>
<b><i>Mr. Calvin Rob Johns Sr.</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>Seminole</i>	<b><i>Mr. Nathaniel Quinn Sr.</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>Boley</i>
<b><i>Mrs. Helen Louise Franks Miner</i></b> <i>El Reno</i>	<b><i>Mrs. Mildred Y. Watkins Tilford</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>McAlester</i>
<b><i>Dr. Cecelia Nails-Palmer</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>Tulsa</i>	<b><i>Mrs. Charlotte L. Jackson Walker</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>Clearview</i>
<b><i>Dr. Henry Ponder</i></b> <i>Wewoka</i>	<b><i>Mr. E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.</i></b> <i>(Posthumously)</i> <i>Boley</i>

***Closing Remarks***

*Mr. Larry O'Dell  
Director of Special Projects/Development  
Oklahoma Historical Society*

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mrs. Olive Ruth Payne James* *"No-Nonsense Educator"*

*Mrs. Olive Ruth Payne James* was born August 27, 1922 in Lima, Oklahoma where she grew up and attended school through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She went on to graduate with honors from Douglass High School in Wewoka, Oklahoma. She was married to her high school sweet heart, Clyde James, Jr. from Clearview, Oklahoma for 60 years. This union produced nine children, Gerald, Ronald, Wanda, Jacqueline, William Bruce, Rita, Cecille, Clyde III, and Johnny, twenty-three grandchildren and forty-one great-grandchildren.

Mrs. James furthered her education at Wiberforce University, Ohio, where she received degrees in English and Math. It was here at the Beta Chapter that she began her over 60 year service with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Mrs. James went on to earn her Master's Degree in Elementary Education from the University of Oklahoma.

Mrs. James began her teaching career at Booker T. Washington in Seminole, Oklahoma. Thereafter, she taught English at Douglass High and Math at Douglass Elementary Schools in Wewoka. Following integration of schools, she taught four years as an elementary teacher in Lima, Oklahoma concluding her forty year career in education.

During her career, Mrs. James was known as a no-nonsense educator. She conveyed the importance of being serious about learning the specific curriculum taught and being the best that you can while realizing the importance of the big picture in life. Former students still reflect on her teaching prowess and the impact she had in their lives, instilling the values and knowledge needed to help facilitate the direction of their lives.

Mrs. James received numerous recognitions during her career and retirement, to include Outstanding Teacher of the year, Andrus Foundation VIM Award, an award for dedicated service to the youth of the Wewoka Public School System, recognition for Dedicated Service as well as a Distinguished Service Award as a former Douglass teacher. She was also presented with The Booker T. Washington Alumni Association award for distinguished service to that school. In social activities, she received The City Personal Board, Wewoka Foundation for Excellency in Education, Secretary of the Peon Flower Club and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Awards. Mrs. James served as a dedicated, honorable and respected secretary and treasurer of the long standing Douglass Reunion committee. She also maintained membership of the Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association where she served as Chair of the Community Service Committee of Seminole County Retired Educators. from 2001 thru 2010.

Mrs. James has been a member of the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church since 1942. She is a former Sunday School Teacher and Director of Vacation Bible School. She conveyed her love for teaching to her church and her Christian faith provided her with a solid balance of Christian and Academic education.

Mrs. James' life has and continues to span over nine decades. She has been unrelenting in her effort to make a difference in the lives of people she touches. She was a leader and was recognized by her scholastic peers and teachers as an outstanding, exemplary teacher. The statement, "it takes a village' to raise a child exemplifies Mrs. James as a leader in that village for every child that she taught or influenced. Her contributions made a difference and had a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of students and young people in the community and state.

Although *Mrs. Olive Ruth Payne James* retired from teaching after forty years, she continued to educate, motivate and counsel until prohibited by illness but continues to be an inspiration to her family and the many friends and former students who continue to visit. Former student, Hollie I. West wrote, "*In the midst of her multi-tasks, she infused her teaching with references to African American history and culture, and emphasized the need for us to be aware of our background so that we could embrace the future.*"

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mr. Calvin Rob Johns, Sr. Persevered "In Spite Of"*

*Mr. Calvin Rob Johns, Sr.* was born in Ville Platte, Louisiana on March 12, 1903 to Alvina and Melvin Johns. In 1907, the family relocated to Okmulgee, Oklahoma where Mr. Johns attended Banneker Elementary School. He graduated from Dunbar High School in Okmulgee; then matriculated to Langston University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree. In 1935, he earned his Master of Education degree from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma.

Mr. Johns often referenced the adage, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." His mother had instilled in him a strong work ethic; so, throughout his years of striving to attain his degrees, he always held a job. In 1925, he began his career in education as an elementary school teacher in Hughes County, Oklahoma. He moved to Seminole in 1927 to become principal of a one-room, segregated school located on the east side of town. From there, he was appointed principal at Booker T. Washington High School in Seminole.

With the urgent need for a new school building at the forefront, he campaigned for and was instrumental in getting a bond passed, and in 1949 the new frame building of the all-Black Booker T. Washington School was construction at its new site on Gale Street. As a young administrator, he was often faced with disciplining students who were close to his own age. Even in the confines of a new building, it was difficult to procure properly working equipment for the science lab, and second hand textbooks were the norm for the student at Booker T. Washington.

In addition to Mr. Johns being principal, he coached football and basketball. His basketball team made multiple appearances in the state basketball championships. The basketball team made an appearance at the National Negro High School Championship in Tuskegee, Alabama where they were runner-up to the champions. Coach Johns was known to transport the team in his own vehicle to games across the state of Oklahoma; in fact, he wore out many vehicles doing so.

Mr. Johns was exceptionally proud of the students who entered and exited the doors of Booker T. Washington High School. More than once he proudly stated, "We have some who are in every avenue of life, ministers, teachers, artists, doctors, nurses, professors, computer programmers, housewives; you name it, we have it."

Mr. Johns served as Principal until integration forced the closing of Booker T. Washington School in 1966. While many of his colleagues found it necessary to relocate to other states to obtain employment, he and his wife maintained employment in Seminole; she at the Seminole elementary school and he at Seminole Junior College. Prior to retirement, he had amassed 45 plus years in education.

He was actively involved in his community and the city of Seminole. Mr. Johns organized the first Boy Scouts for Blacks in Seminole. He served on the Board of Affairs at the State Training School in Taft, Oklahoma; Chairman of Control for the State Athletic Association; President of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers, Chairman of the Deacon Board and Sunday School Superintendent at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Seminole.

Mr. Johns also served three terms on the Seminole City Council; was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Seminole County Committee of Farmers Home Administration, Lions Club, and the Seminole County Excise Board. In 1965, he was honored with selection as Seminole County Teacher of the Year. The Wewoka Civic Club awarded him a Citation of Pride for his accomplishments as an educator. In addition, he was inducted into the Seminole Hall of Fame in 1983.

As a young man living in Okmulgee, he met the love of his life and future wife, Hattie M. Clark. Their marriage lasted for 69 years. The two were parents to two sons, Billy Johns and Dr. Calvin R. Johns II. Mr. Calvin Robert Johns, Sr. died on November 25, 1998.

*Mr. Calvin Robert Johns, Sr.* was a teacher and administrator during an era when segregated schools were the norm. He and his teachers and students persevered "in spite of" inferior educational materials.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mrs. Helen Louise Franks Miner* *"Fearless and Tireless"*

*Mrs. Helen Louise Franks Miner* was born April 14, 1935 in Tatums, Oklahoma to Willie E. and Winnie Mae Leonard Franks. She attended Tatums schools from 1941 through 1947 and received her high school diploma from Booker T. Washington School in Purcell, Oklahoma in 1952. She matriculated to Langston University where she graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Music in 1956. She later received a Master of Education in 1963 from Oklahoma University in Norman, OK.

Mrs. Miner early years were instrumental in forming her educational career in teaching music. Her grandfather hosted evening programs in his country home which included singing songs, reciting Bible verses, nursery rhymes, and telling stories. She had to participate which led to the premise of inspiration in her many experiences encountered with others.

Mrs. Miner began her teaching career in as a vocal elementary teacher at Wheatley School in Brownfield, Texas in 1956. In 1959, she became the vocal music teacher, junior high English and social studies teacher at Lawton Douglass School in Lawton, Oklahoma from 1959 through 1963. From there, she taught music and English at Booker T. Washington in Wellington, Texas; Head Start and elementary at Booker T. Washington in El Reno, Oklahoma, vocal music at Cheyenne/Arapaho School in Concho, Oklahoma; and from 1966 to 1972, she taught Junior High School Vocal Music at Etta Dale Junior High School in El Reno, Oklahoma. She retired with a long career of forty years of teaching.

Contributions made during Mrs. Miner's educational career were in the area of performances, music competitions, and concert preparation which resulted in performing in a concert with other choirs at Carnegie Hall in New York City and later with a performance at the Liberty Bowl half time show in Memphis, Tennessee. She was instrumental in organizing and hosting many vocal music festivals. One of which was the "Three Reno's on the Prairie" which she wrote and created on the history of El Reno, Oklahoma. This vocal music project commemorated the 1976 Bi-Centennial Year of the city. The performance was not only presented at the school, but a segment was presented at the Oklahoma State Teachers meeting, and was later sponsored by the El Reno Chamber of Commerce.

Mrs. Miner has been recognized as the Teacher of the Year at Lawton Douglass School; Teacher of the Year at El Reno Education Association; Breakfast for MiLady Honoree, Oklahoma City Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; Co-Woman of the Year-Professional Business and Women's Club; Roy Stevenson Meritorious Service Award, El Reno Chamber of Commerce; Grand Marshall, El Reno Christmas Parade; Public Service Award, Federal Bureau of Prisons; Meritorious Award for Public Service presented by Attorney General Eric Holder (traveled to D.C. to receive award); and the Western District, Oklahoma Baptist Association-Women of Year Award.

Mrs. Miner's civic responsibilities include the Delta kappa Gamma Women's Organization; Evergreen Chapter No. 6, Order of Eastern Star (Musician); Progressive Eight Club, Federation of Colored Women's Club; Ideal Reading and Art Club, Federation of Colored Women's Club; Professional Business Women's Club of El Reno; Board of Directors Canadian Count Health Association; Board of Directors Russell Murray Hospice; Board of Directors Redland's Community College Foundation Committee Columnist, "El Reno Tidbits: Black Chronicle Newspaper, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; member of Mt. Moriah Women's Missionary Union; and member Deaconess, Moriah Baptist Church.

*Mrs. Helen Louise Franks Miner* married Clifford Riley (deceased). They have two children: Cedric (Patrice) and Clifton (Inez), five grand children, and four great grand children and one brother, William Franks, who is a Ph. D. Physical Chemistry-Harvard Fellow. Fellow student La Nita Forte-Pedican wrote, "*Mrs. Miner has established a solid reputation for consistency, reliability, honesty, premiere quality of production, excellence, tenacity, dedication, a love of God, music, education and people without prejudice.... She is fearless and tireless.*"

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Dr. Cecelia Nails-Palmer* *“Exemplary Educator”*

*Dr. Cecelia Nails-Palmer* was born October 28, 1919 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the daughter of Black Wall Street Entrepreneurs and 1921 Tulsa Race Riot survivors James Nails Sr. and Vasinora Nails-Green. She attended Paul Lawrence Dunbar Elementary School, George Washington Carver Junior High School, and Booker T. Washington School. She matriculated to Langston University at Langston, Oklahoma where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English. She later received a Masters of Arts Degree and a Doctoral Degree from

Oklahoma State University.

Dr. Nails-Palmer taught in many of the same schools she attended as a student. After receiving her Doctoral Degree, Dr. Nails-Palmer taught at the Texas College in Tyler, Texas; College of San Mateo in San Mateo, California; and the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Dr. Palmer was the first Black professor at the University of Tulsa and continued teaching there for ten wonderful years. In 1974, the Association of Black Collegians awarded her the University of Tulsa’s Teacher of Year. That same year, she founded the first Black Greek Sorority on the University of Tulsa campus (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc). She also sponsored the first Black Heritage Week on campus. Additionally, she hosted many community events that included notables such as Niki Giovanni, Dick Gregory, Ossie Davis, Sonia Sanchez, and many others.

Dr. Nails-Palmer received many other accolades including: Sigma Tau Delta English Fraternity membership; a Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society membership; an Associate of the Danforth Foundation; a Fulbright Scholar from Shortwood College in Kingston, Jamaica; a national Association for the Advancement of Colored People member; Oklahoma State Association of Black Personnel in Higher Education honor; featured in the Who’s Who in Oklahoma 1975; and in the World Who’s Who of Women. Dr. Palmer was a charter member of the Alpha Zeta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. at Langston University; and a longtime member of the Alpha Chi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

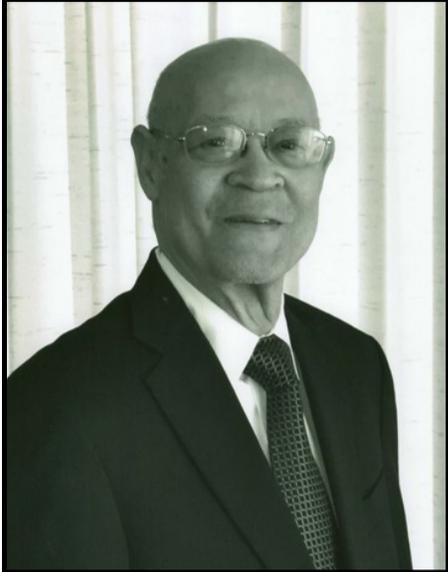
The Department of Health, Education and Welfare selected Dr. Nails-Palmer as one of ten field supervisors for a nationwide research project on the contributions of American Black women across the United States. She has been honored with numerous citations, awards plaques, trophies, and certificates for her work in Education, English, youth, and the community. In addition, Tulsa University has a tree memorial and plaque dedicate in her honor of Dr. Nails-Palmer in front of Lorton Hall where she had her office. In October, 2017, Tulsa University will unveil and erect a portrait of her on the campus as the first Black faculty/professor member.

Dr. Nails-Palmer was an influential, enthusiastic member of her community. She strived to strengthen her community and its people. She envisioned a dream that North Tulsa needed a Black Culture Center to piece the community’s broken fragments together. Dr. Nails-Palmer envisioned a center that could house a writer’s workshop, a dance center, a black studies focus, and much more. The center would also be a place where elderly African Americans could orally pass on historical information to the youth with hopes of conveying the struggles and successes of their ancestors’ history and culture.

Lauren Cecelia Reed, her godchild said this of Dr. Nails-Palmer. “ Her personality would attract all young girls, who observed her exotic attire, tasted her delicious cuisine and observe her in her role as educator. On the day of my birth, she was present, and my parents chose her name as my middle name. Although she had acquire her B.S. in Education, she worked at Moten Hospital in Tulsa until she was hired as an English teacher in the Tulsa Public School system.

*Dr. Nails-Palmer* worked tirelessly, boldly and endlessly for the rights of people of color until her untimely death. Her personality, character, and integrity, were exemplary. Dr. Nails-Palmer passed on February 7, 1980 after 30 plus years in education.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Dr. Henry Ponder* *“Leader of High Expectations”*

*Dr. Henry Ponder* was born March 28, 1928 in Wewoka, Oklahoma, the eleventh of fourteen children born to farmers Lillie Mae and Frank Ponder. He excelled in academics, becoming a student leader during his primary and high school years. After hearing a speech by legendary Mary McCloud Bethune as a youngster, he was inspired to become a college president. In 1946, he graduated with honors from Fredrick Douglass High School in Wewoka, Oklahoma. He enrolled at Langston University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture in 1951.

Dr. Ponder was appointed Farm Superintendent at the State Training School for Negro Boys (Boley State School for Boys) in Boley, Oklahoma. From 1953-55, he served in the United State Army during the Korean War; graduating third in his class from the 298<sup>th</sup> Leadership Training Class at Ft. Chafee in Arkansas. He achieved the rank of Sergeant during his service in Korea and Japan.

In 1958, he earned a Master’s degree in agricultural economics from Oklahoma State University; then a Ph. D. in the same field from Ohio State University in 1963. He began his career at Virginia State College, where he served as Assistant Professor and Department Chair of Agri-Business. He then went on to serve as Chair of the Department of Business and Economics at Fort Valley State College in Georgia followed by a stint as Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Alabama A&M University.

In 1973, he fulfilled his childhood aspiration when he was inaugurated President of Benedict College in South Carolina, where he cultivated a “fiscal-turn around expertise’ for which he became widely known by increasing the institution’s endowment from \$250,000 to \$13 million. During his career, he was president of four Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Benedict College (1973-1984), Fisk University (1984-1996), Talladega College (2001-2003), and his beloved alma mater, Langston University (2011-2012). He also served as CEO and president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (1996-2001).

At Talladega University, Dr. Ponder led the revitalization and enhancement of the curriculum to retain the institution’s accreditation status; which had been in jeopardy. He returned to Langston in 2010 as Lillian Hemmit Endowed Chair in Institutional Advancement but was asked by the Oklahoma Board of Regents to take the helm of the institution in 2011. In the summer of 2016, Dr. Ponder moved to North Carolina to serve as a consultant of fundraising, student enrollment, and accreditation.

Dr. Ponder has received honorary degrees from Alabama A&M University, Alderson-Broadus College, Fisk University, the Medical University of South Carolina, Ripon College, Shaw University, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He was awarded the “Distinguished Alumni Award” from Langston University, Oklahoma State University, and Ohio State University.

Dr. Ponder pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. while a student at Langston University. In the early 1970s, Dr. Ponder established the Alpha Phi Alpha “Leadership Development – Citizenship Education” program for high school students across the nation. In 1975, he was honored as “Alumni Brother of the Year.” In 1988, he was elected 28<sup>th</sup> General President of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. During his tenure, the fraternity moved into a new multi-million-dollar national headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. Following his tenure, Dr. Ponder served as vice-chair of the fraternity’s World Policy Council and continues as an active member.

Dr. Ponder is a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Prince Hall Mason, active member of Archon of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, the first Greek-letter fraternity for African-American post collegiate professionals.

*Dr. Henry Ponder* wed Eunice Wilson Ponder, Ed. D on November 22, 1952. They met as teenagers, married a year after graduating at Langston, and earned their Master’s degrees together at Oklahoma State University. They have two daughters: Cheryl, a Ph. D. candidate at the University of Oklahoma in Norman; and Anna who holds a Ph. D. and lives in South Carolina. The Ponders currently reside in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Dr. Dennis L. Portis III* *“Stretched Beyond The Normal”*

*Dr. Dennis L. Portis III* was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on May 27, 1980 to Dennis and Sheryle Portis Jr. He was blessed with two sisters: Rubye Coulter and April Portis and one brother, Julian. He grew up in Oklahoma City and attended Millwood Public Schools. To many, he was known as “DeBo” who played the tuba in the school band. In addition, he played basketball and golf. After graduation in 1998, Dr. Portis attended Grambling State University in Grambling, Louisiana where he double majored and earned bachelor’s degrees in pre-engineering and education. He earned a Master of Education from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma in 2005 and a Ph. D. from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma in 2013. He maintained a 3.73 and above in all his degree work.

He began his career at Metro Technology Center as a Pre-engineering Instructor. In 2010, he was the Chief Officer of Instruction at Metro where he provided strong leadership to personnel who required his instructional expertise. He was known to promote innovative means to engage students. He also worked tirelessly to ensure that educational courses addressed the needs in the community.

In 2013, he was promoted to Associate Superintendent of Instruction with Metro Technology Centers in Oklahoma City. In that capacity, he was charged with organizing, managing, planning, and evaluating credit and non-credit offerings using the career cluster instructional model. He was instrumental in bringing innovative programs to Metro Tech including Sow to Grow Farmers Market, the Metro Tech STEM Academy, and the Metro Career Academy.

Dr. Portis was very involved in the community, always striving to meet the needs of the people. He served on the Regional Food Bank of OKC Leadership Council and was President of the Millwood Enrichment Foundation Board, and Oklahoma City Public Schools District Career Academy Advisory Board. He was also President of the Grambling State Alumni of Greater Oklahoma City and a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated. He also coached inner-city youth in the game of golf as part of the First Tee Program of Oklahoma City Metro Area.

Some of his professional outreach experiences included: Guest lecturer for University of Oklahoma Organization of Education course, coordinated 2009 Success and Beyond Conference in Oklahoma City, guest speaker at Millwood High School, attended NCLA Best Practices Conference in Hot Springs Arkansas, as well as others.

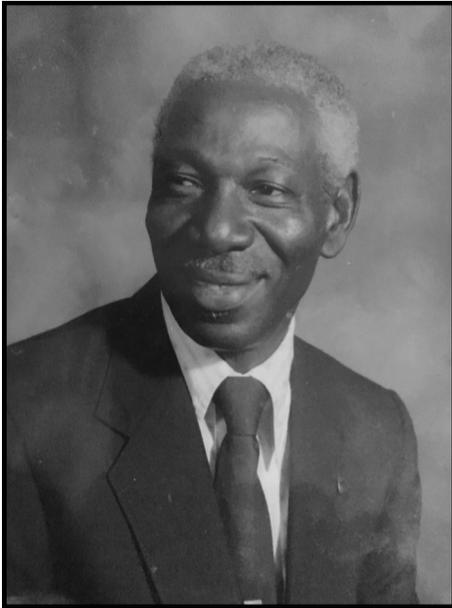
In 2006, Dr. Portis earned the “Focus on Quality Award” from Metro Tech due to his ability to serve as a role model to at-risk students. In 2010, he was awarded Metro Tech’s Exemplary Leadership Award and also in the same year, he garnered the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education Distinguished Achievement Award. Other honors include: Journal Record Innovator of the Year Honoree, 2011; Phi Delta Kappa Inc. Community Achievement Award, 2012; and Metro Technology Centers MetroQuest Award (highest honor given to Metro Tech employee), 2013.

It was said that Dr. Portis was the epitome of the type of new wave leader to shape Oklahoma’s landscape in the most positive way and the work he did will continue to make Oklahoma one of the most progressive and competitive places to live. He was completed to make a difference by utilizing his influence on the improvement and development of career training programs at Metro Tech.

Dr. Dennis L. Portis III was an educator who stretched beyond the normal to reach students – to teach students. His commitment to ensure that at-risk students did not fall through the cracks was a saving grace for many of them.

*Dr. Dennis L. Portis III* was married to Kristy Portis; they have a daughter, Sha’Marie. He passed suddenly on May 8, 2016. He was Associate Superintendent of Instruction of Metro Technology Centers in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mr. Nathaniel Quinn Sr.*

*"Never, Never, Give Up"*

*Mr. Nathaniel Quinn Sr.* was born and reared in the small, rural community of Lima, Oklahoma. He attended Lima Elementary; then Douglass High School in Wewoka, Oklahoma, where he earned a diploma. He relocated to Princess Anne, Maryland to attend the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from there and later, his Master's Degree from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma.

Mr. Quinn completed his eight years of obligation to the military by spending two years in the U.S. Army and six years in the Air Force Reserve. He began his career in education when he accepted a teaching and coaching position at Douglass High School, Wewoka in 1956. After several years, he made a change in schools when he was hired at Douglass High School in Ardmore, Oklahoma. His final teaching and coaching job was with the Boley School District in Boley, Oklahoma. At the time, Boley was a thriving African-American community with a rich academic history.

Mr. Quinn was a mathematician who also had a passion for coaching basketball. Boley needed a coach; Coach Quinn was that man! With him at the helm of the basketball program, the Boley Bears went on to win three state championship games in 1970, 1975, and 1976. His teams produced five all-state players.

Not only did Coach Quinn prove to be an elite coach, he also proved his ability to teach math to his students. His ability to connect with students and instruct them was well-known in Boley. He expected the best out of his students and the majority of them accepted his challenge and surpassed his expectations. Approximately eighty percent of the students went on to attend college.

In 1977, Coach Quinn authored an article, "Two Color Offense Against Man-to-Man Defense" in the book, "The Coaches Clinic." He perfected the 1-3-1 defense. After his teams demonstrated outstanding success with the 1-3-1, other high school teams in Oklahoma implemented the same defense.

Mr. Quinn continued in his profession as an educator when he was employed by the Department of Corrections with the state of Oklahoma (1978-1990). He was appointed Principal of John Lilley Correctional Center in 1984. Then, in 1987, he became the Superintendent of Schools for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections System at the John Lilley Correctional Center.

Mr. Quinn received numerous accolades and honors of recognition during his years in education. In 1975, he was recognized as Basketball Coach of the Year; Boys All-State Basketball Coach, 1976; University of Maryland-Eastern Shore Athletic Hall of Fame, 1977; Oklahoma Coaches Hall of Fame, 1981; OASSP Outstanding Service Award, 1981; Okfuskee County Retired Educators Association, 1990; and the National Fallen Fire Fighters Hall of Fame, 1996.

His professional affiliations included Oklahoma Education Association, National Education Association, PAC Board 13 of the State Board of Mental Health Services, Okfuskee County Retired Educators Association, Prince Hall Masons, and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Retired Supt. of Boley Public Schools, Ronald P. Walker said that Mr. Quinn "was an Icon! He was a Rockstar! He was someone I wanted to be like when I grew up... He is known as a great educator in the communities...He was faithful to education and served the state of Oklahoma with respect!"

Nathaniel Quinn married Ruth Daniels, a high school math teacher, in 1957. They were parents to two sons; Nathaniel Jr. and Karl; and one daughter, Velecia. In February of 1996, he answered a call to fight a grass fire in the IXL community as a member of the volunteer fire department. After three days of extensive fire fighting, he suffered a fatal heart attack while on duty.

*Nathaniel Quinn, Sr.* was a faithful educator who dedicated 34 years to his profession. He persevered during hard times and encouraged his students to do the same. His advice, "Never, never, never give up" was the rallying call for them and they heeded the call.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mrs. Mildred Y. Watkins Tilford* *“Inspirational Educator”*

*Mildred Yvette Watkins Tilford* was born on December 8, 1907 at Muddy Boggy Bend (Indian Territory). Her parents moved from East Texas to join her grandparents to sharecrop in Muddy Boggy Bend. She was the youngest of several children; her parents never gave her a name, they referred to her as “baby.” She attended a one-room school and being the youngest in group and in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, she stayed behind to teach the younger children to color and the three R’s while the older children worked the fields planting and gathering crops. Between grades 4 through 8, she was often called on to substitute teach in nearby Macedonia, Atoka, and Springtown, Chockie, Chickie, and Limestone Gap. She did so for six years.

After 8<sup>th</sup> grade and serious about education, Mrs. Tilford moved to Okmulgee, Oklahoma to live with her dad’s brother and his wife. While attending Okmulgee Dunbar High School, she legally changed her name from “Baby” to Mildred Yvette.

She graduated from Okmulgee Dunbar High School. She met her future husband, Bernard Tilford, a football player from McAlester L’Overture High School. After graduation, she returned to Red Oak School in Atoka County to teach – grades one through eight – in a one-room school. Always seeking to advance, Mrs. Tilford enrolled at Langston Agricultural & Mechanical College in 1928 where she excelled in English, math, and writing.

Mrs. Tilford’s husband graduated from L’Overture High School at age 26 in 1930, they married in 1931. During that time, it was customary that when a woman married, she could no longer teach, so she started a family and had five children. Mr. Tilford was murdered on November 10, 1940, leaving her a widow with children ages 8, 6, 4, and 2 year- old twins. She left their 60-acre farm, rented a home within walking distance of L’Overture School, joined Eastern Star Baptist Church and with her courage and pride; which kept her from weakening before her adversities, went to work to become a strong educator for her children and students.

With the help of the L’Overture school community, support of Boggy Bend relatives, day-work, welfare, her children’s paper routes, and her Navy base job; she was able to make it through the second World War. She began to attend summer school sessions at Langston and earned her B. S. in Education in 1954 to prepare for her return to teaching. She also earned a Master’s degree from East Central State College in Ada. She obtained a teaching job at Coals Chapel near Hartshorne, Oklahoma where she not only taught but coached basketball, softball, and track. Her school was the focal point of community activities, she often invited parents and students to learn piano. Later, she applied and was hired as an elementary teacher at L’Overture. After retirement, she continued to substitute until her death.

Mrs. Tilford’s professional affiliations included the Oklahoma Negro Educational Association, the Oklahoma Education Association, and the National Education Association. Her honors included the McAlester Oklahoma Ada Lois Sipuel Club Mother of the Year Award 1958, and recognitions from the Red Oak Community and Coals Chapel.

During the eulogy of Mrs. Mildred Yvette Watkins Tilford, Superintendent of McAlester Schools, Mr. Arch Thompson, described her as an inspirational educator. Her children proved to be an extension of her educational successes: Baxter, B. S. in Chemistry from Langston University and Chemical engineering degree from Oklahoma State University; Kermit, three degrees and Ph. D. from Oklahoma State University; Michael, B.S. at Langston University and M. A. with double major in chemistry and mathematics from John Hopkins University and doctoral degree; and twins Gerald, B. S. in Music Education from Langston University and Masters in Instrumental band music at Oklahoma University; and Geraldine Dillard, B.S. in Education and masters degree from Illinois.

*Mrs. Mildred Yvette Watkins Tilford* died March 8, 1975 and is buried next to her husband, Mr. Bernard Tilford in North McAlester Cemetery in North Town, Oklahoma.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mrs. Charlotte L. Jackson Walker* *"Persevered Educator"*

*Mrs. Charlotte Louise Jackson Walker* was born August 15, 1915 to Floyd and Dessie Marina Jackson in Clearview, Oklahoma who were farmers in the area. She was the oldest daughter of six sisters and six brothers. She attended and graduated from Douglass Rosenwald High School in Clearview in 1927. After graduation, she worked at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City to earn money to attend Langston University. She was admitted to Langston University on September 12, 1935 and attended until her money was depleted. Mrs. Jackson would return to Tinker to work and later return to Langston, finally completing her Lifetime teaching certificate for grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and a degree in Home Economics on July 21, 1944.

Mrs. Walker began her teaching career in June of 1947 as a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at her home town school in Clearview, Oklahoma. As the norm, primary teachers taught two grades and it was her responsibility to prepare her students to separate from their mothers and cope with their new surroundings. Each morning, the students stood and recited the pledge to the U.S. flag and prayer. She taught without adequate books and materials but developed her own learning centers of art and writing, math and reading, while rotating between groups during the day.

Although she taught elementary grades, she instituted her Home Economics skills of sewing to make the costumes for the operetta plays, the girl's basketball uniforms, the homecoming dresses and costumes. She used her artistic skills for signs and posters used in the plays and homecoming performances. In addition, she maintained contact with her student outside of school. She walked to school most days and never missed a day during her entire teaching career.

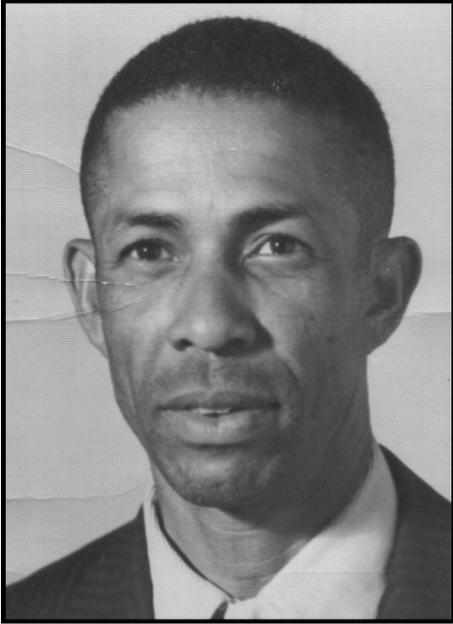
Because of her home economics degree, Mrs. Walker was promoted to teach Home Economics to Junior and Senior High students, which was her dream. While teaching, she had her eyes on something bigger, becoming a home economist in the community by working with families teaching them how to cook healthy meals, canning techniques, planting gardens and sewing. She reported her services to the Okfuskee County Extension Office in Okemah, Oklahoma.

Mrs. Walker had an excellent writing style and was a great artist. Superintendent Mr. F. D. Durham and the local Clearview School Board commissioned her to draw and paint the only portrait of the Clearview school which is still in use on most of Clearview's publications. In addition, she designed and painted the sign for the Clearview Post Office which is now a part of the collection of the Oklahoma History Center. She received many awards such as the most productive African American farmer/rancher in Okfuskee County. Clearview High School closed in 1964, leaving Mrs. Walker seeking employment elsewhere, but she remained in Clearview.

Charlotte Louise Jackson Walker married Ollie Walker, Jr. in 1952 and was rewarded with a bonus family of nine children. She brought to the family a wealth of knowledge in books and educational materials along with survival skills to enhance their family life. A daughter, Eunice Walker Edison wrote that Mrs. Walker loved to read and if someone needed to know about the news, local problems, child-care, or any other event, they would consult her. She was very knowledgeable in many areas. Book lined the walls of her home. Her motto was "Books are keys to wisdom treasures. Books are gates to land of pleasure. Books are path that upward lead. Books are friends, come let us read."

*Mrs. Charlotte Louise Jackson Walker* was considered to be a notable scholar, impeccable seamstress, artist, and community volunteer. Mrs. Walker's greatest gifts to society were her love, endurance and patience that she devoted to the many students and adults she touched in and around the town of Clearview during her twenty plus years as an educator in Okfuskee County. She was also a dedicated member of the First Baptist Church of Clearview. *Mrs. Charlotte Louise Jackson Walker* passed on July 29, 1989.

## *Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee*



### *Mr. E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. "Confidence Builder"*

*E. M. "Nat" Watson, Jr.* was born on May 2, 1910 in Boley, Oklahoma to Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Watson, Sr. who were educators. His father had an illustrious career in education and retired as principal of Dunbar High School in Shawnee, Oklahoma. His mother worked briefly as an elementary school teacher before devoting her life to raising seven children.

Mr. Watson graduated from Boley High School and matriculated to Langston University where he earned the nickname of "Nat" from his football teammates because of his fast moves and agile ability. He lettered in football and was an All-American quarterback at Langston. After graduation, he continued his academic pursuits at Oklahoma State University.

Mr. Watson began his professional teaching career in his hometown of Boley. He taught social studies and he often said, "If you know history, you know yourself." He taught his students to look beyond the textbook and discover history in their surroundings. Well known for his prowess on the football field, he became the football coach at Boley High School, leading the team to several winning seasons. After several years, he went to Wheatley High School at Beggs, Oklahoma, culminating 16 years at both schools.

In 1944, Coach Watson's reputation as a coach and social studies teacher intensified and he joined the faculty at Dunbar in Shawnee, Oklahoma. In 1948, the Dunbar Bears won the State Championship. From there, he coached the Shawnee Rotary Club Midget baseball team and won the title game in the playoffs. His connection with youth and team sports continued throughout his career. Mr. Watson's home was a hub for family gatherings, community events and round table discussions for educational and political alliances. This energetic atmosphere was the spark that fueled Mr. Watson's personality, he was gregarious, interested in and encouraging to his students, friends and neighbors.

When the predominately African American Dunbar was forced to close in 1956, Mr. Watson was not re-hired to teach at the predominately white school at Shawnee High School but worked as the assistant football coach and staff member until his children graduated high school. In 1962, he accepted a teaching and coaching position at Douglass High School in Oklahoma City. From 1966 – 1975, he accepted the positions of faculty member, assistant football coach, and head baseball coach at Langston University. On May 6, 1975, Coach Watson and two other coaches were honored as outstanding coaches for leading the Langston Lions to two Oklahoma Collegiate Conference titles and tied for another. In 1976, he was commended for outstanding service to Langston University. In 1996, Coach Watson was inducted posthumously into the Shawnee Football Hall of Fame prior to the Shawnee – Tulsa Washington game in the Jim Thorpe Stadium.

Mr. Watson's professional affiliations included: the Oklahoma Education Association, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletic Coaches, Langston University Alpha Association, and the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. Watson married Alta G. Brown (deceased) of Langston in 1942. His wife, Dr. Alta Watson, also taught at Langston University. To this union were born three children: John Ronald M.D in Oklahoma City (deceased); Kenneth C., Esq., Oklahoma County District Judge (2007-2014); Glenda Moss, and retired HS business teacher in Cleveland, OH. All three children are graduates of Langston University. They had three grandchildren.

*Coach E. M. "Nat" Watson, Jr.* was able to get the best from athletes and give confidence to students who thought they did not have a chance at success. After his retirement 1975, and he returned to teach social studies for a year at Northeast high School in Oklahoma City dedicating more than over 50 years to education. *E. M. "Nat" Watson, Jr.* passed on April 24, 1981.

# OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc.



*Honoring The Past - Celebrating The Present - Looking To The Future*



## Board of Directors & Committee

Pictured left to right: Henrietta Hicks, Dr. Donnie Nero, Euncie Edison, Esther King, Bobbie Booker Albert Johnson Sr., Anita Arnold, Jimmie White, Shirley Nero, and Dr. John Hargrave. Not pictured: Dr. Harold Aldridge Jr., Dr. Gloria Anderson, Dr. Deena Fisher, Orlando Hazley, Dr. Wanda Pollard Johnson and Sharon Hill-Wooten.

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Teachers are expected to reach unattainable goals with inadequate tools.  
The miracle is that at times they accomplish this impossible task.  
Haim G. Ginott

***Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment Fund  
Focus on All-Black Towns***

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) is honored to announce the creation of the Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment to benefit historical programming for historical black towns. Dr. Donnie Nero donated the initial amount to the fund. The OHS will continue to fundraise to increase the endowment, including an annual Juneteenth event at the Oklahoma History Center.

Shirley Nero, a native of the all-black town of Clearview, Okla., taught at Sapulpa and then Porum public schools for thirty years. Nero received four different teachers of the year honors. In 1994 the Sapulpa School Board presented her the Distinguished Service Award. She sits on several boards, including the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame. In 2016 she was a recipient of the Pinnacle Award, which honors outstanding women for their work as role models to women and children in the Tulsa community.

The Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment provides money every year for research, programming, exhibits, and/or events related to the Historically Thirteen Original All-Black Towns of Oklahoma. One of Shirley's passions is Oklahoma history and especially the state's unique story of these black towns. No other state had as many all-black communities as Oklahoma. This occurred for several reasons, primarily the granting of land to freed slaves of the Five Civilized Tribes, and African Americans making land runs and settling near one another.

Because of you and your generous support, many superior programs will be offered, one-of-a-kind artifacts will be preserved and unique and interesting exhibits will be created. Your special gift will help the OHS take a major leap forward with collecting, preserving and sharing the extraordinary history of Oklahoma!

You will be pleased to know that you will be listed as a donor in a future issue of Mistletoe Leaves and the OHS EXTRA! Newsletter. In addition, you will be recognized as a member of the Oklahoma History Legacy Circle which was created to recognize donors, both living and deceased, who have made contributions of \$1,000 or greater to an OHS endowment fund. Because endowment donations provide perpetual income to the OHS, membership in the Legacy Circle also is perpetual.

If you are able, please consider the OHS with your generosity in the future? There is so much more to be collected, preserved and shared and your support is vital.

Thank you for your support. We appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Dr. Donnie L. and Shirley A. Nero Sr.

Please make a tax exempt donation tonight to the Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment Fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation:

To: Shelly Crynes  
Development & Membership Coordinator  
Oklahoma Historical Society  
800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-7917  
405 521-2491 Fax 405 521-2492 [www.okhistory.org](http://www.okhistory.org)



***Gone But Not Forgotten***

**We Need Your Help Today!!!!!!**



Remember those "good 'ole teachers" we had back in the day? Those who are responsible for us being who and where we are today.

You can help keep their legacies alive by providing their names, the name(s) of a relative or a contact person to procure information to be included into our archival database.

This information will be evaluated and considered for future inductions into the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. Those who taught during the segregation era will be given priority consideration.

As we age and depart from this earth, it is imperative that we capture these contributions, averting further loss of past generations.

Please email your information to: Shirley Nero, [annnero@aol.com](mailto:annnero@aol.com) or Donnie Nero, [dr.donnielee@aol.com](mailto:dr.donnielee@aol.com).

## ***OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF NEGRO TEACHERS***

In Oklahoma Territory, the first separate schools (schools specifically designated for African Americans only) opened in Oklahoma City and Guthrie in 1891 and in Kingfisher in 1892. Annual training institutes, conducted in Oklahoma City for Oklahoma County teachers and aspiring candidates who were preparing for teaching examinations, were at first racially mixed. Among the black group were professionals with powerful intellect, broad social commitment, and common interests, including their small, primitive, isolated schools, an avid interest in reading, and an intense racial pride.

The institutes led to the organization of the Ida M. Wells Teachers' Association in 1893. It included black teachers in fourteen counties and twenty-six communities of Oklahoma Territory. By 1900, these teachers had enrolled a total of 3,929 children in the territory's separate schools. The association struggled to secure improved in school facilities and to promote professional advancement for black teachers. Jefferson Davis Randolph served as the first president. The group later expanded into the Territorial Association of Negro Teachers. By 1907 statehood, Indian Territory had a similar association, and the two provided a nucleus for the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers (OANT).

In December 1907, one month after statehood, sixty-seven black teachers of the former Twin Territories met at Colored Agricultural and Normal University in Langston to reorganize their associations into the statewide Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers. Inman E. Page, then in his ninth year as university president, hosted the meeting. According to Evelyn Strong, OANT historian, both environmental and professional challenges contributed to the nature of the group's early leadership and to the development of its mission. Presidents between 1907 and 1924, with one exception, were school principals. J. H. Brazelton served as OANT's first president, elected in 1907. In 1908, Inman E. Page succeeded him.

In the early period leaders focused on expanding membership, developing leadership, acquiring knowledge of the state school system and of the educational environment in black communities, and improving professional competence through in-service training. Toward the end of its life, the organization primarily pursued legislation to relieve problems of separate school finance. This evolved because most black educators were acutely aware of the unfair, inequitable funding for separate schools. Children endured poor quality instruction, dilapidated buildings, and inadequate books and supplies. Smaller black communities had little or no representation in the decision-making at local or state levels.

By the 1920s, many of Oklahoma's 1,170 black teachers expressed a need for opportunities in leadership and self-expression, although older leaders desired to retain professional power. The membership compromised on a new constitution in 1924. Under it, the association improved its organizational and administrative procedures. It initiated new media of communication, new district and departmental divisions, a broader statewide educational program for black teachers, students, and communities, new leadership destined to impact OANT's future programs, and renewed interest in legislation to improve facilities. The 1920s shaped the association's educational and legislative activities for the next two decades.

OANT pursued a variety of activities in the 1930s. Cooperative ventures with the Langston University Alumni Association were led by Frederick D. Moon. A 1935 project resulted in legislation that provided tuition to send black teachers and others to out-of-state colleges and universities (blacks then could not attend any college or university in Oklahoma other than Langston, by state law). This measure operated until 1948, when Oklahoma schools began to provide graduate and professional training, and 1954, when public schools were desegregated. Another development was the reestablishment in 1935 of OANT's official organ, *The Journal*, edited by W. E. Anderson of Okmulgee.

The 1940s were OANT's most productive era. During World War II, the association directed an intensive effort toward revising the Oklahoma Constitution and statutes to broaden public education's financial base and provide equitable funding to separate schools. As a consequence, in special referendum elections, Oklahoma voters approved constitutional amendments on July 2, 1946, and July 6, 1948. Between 1946 and 1953, these two measures brought about more than \$18 million in appropriations for separate schools.

On November 5, 1946, the people approved four constitutional amendments for "Better Schools." These resulted from an initiative petition jointly sponsored by the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) and OANT. One amendment brought additional financial support to separate schools through county levies of the "Moon mill," named by some blacks in honor of Moon, who had marshaled the drives to achieve voters' signatures for the initiative petitions that secured its inclusion as one of the four.

U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 1954 and 1955 augmented the social changes of the 1940s. In response, OANT organized a program to prepare for transition to school desegregation and to protect black teachers' welfare. OEA also geared various activities to those purposes. Most notable were the development of research studies and communications designed to retain black teachers in desegregated school systems. On October 28, 1955, OANT decided to merge with OEA. Even as it disbanded, OANT worked untiringly to retain employment for black teachers after 1955. Nevertheless, as many as four hundred of them, many holding graduate degrees, were replaced by inexperienced white teachers who were recent college graduates.

OANT members had earlier begun to join OEA, and OANT was entirely dissolved by 1958. During its half-century of existence, OANT had commanded unswerving support. Records reflect that in 1955, 1,500 of Oklahoma's 1,622 black educators were members. Historically, the association's primary mission had been to raise the standards of education for black children. OANT achieved that purpose, while making a major contribution to civil rights.

*Author: Dr. Melvin Todd (Oklahoma Historical Society)*

# OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc.

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*In 2010, The Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. was constituted and incorporated as a nonprofit organization to recognize and to honor those professional Oklahoma African Americans, who have taught at least five years in the State of Oklahoma, who have exemplified a commitment while demonstrating exceptional abilities in realizing ideals, service or leadership in the teaching and guidance of their students.*

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