

Association of Negro Teachers Presidents



(Photo: Currie Ballard Collection—Oklahoma Historical Society)

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



*The Eleventh Annual
Ceremony and Banquet*

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

Friday September 30, 2022 7:00 p.m.



2022 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"

Aspirations, ambitions, goals, and dreams come true when we rise-up and pursue them. Eleven years ago, Shirley and I had a concept of creating an avenue designed to express our appreciation, admiration, and devotion to those teachers and administrators who influenced us along our path to what we have become today. With their sometimes-strict rules, never harsh or demeaning, these individuals gave us the discipline to continue the straight and narrow road to success. These educators exhibited characteristics which, we did not know at the time, embodied our lives.

African American educators are the cornerstones in copious communities. During the dismal times of segregation, these educators wore "many hats" admirably. They were more than educators; they were chauffeurs, counselors, cooks, outfitters, and parents. Today, the African American educator continues to exceed expectations for the benefit of all students.

Tonight, we celebrate the accomplishment of eleven influential individuals and their achievements during this "milestone" of the creation of the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. Each recipient is unique in their consummate journey. Stony was the path for African American educators but along the course it became smoother while doing more than was required. James Weldon Johnson puts it eloquently,

"We have come over a way
That with tears hath been watered

We have come treading our paths
Through the blood the slaughter

Out of the gloomy past
To now we stand at last

Where the white gleam
Where the bright star is cast."

Congratulations to all honorees. It is an honor for Shirley and me to receive this prestigious award with such an esteem class: and remember, continue to dream!

Sincerely,

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



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Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.

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*Become A
Life-Time Member Today
www.oaaehof.org*

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



2011 Inaugural Induction

Mr. Curtis Brackeen
Muskogee, Oklahoma
Mrs. Willie Mae Etheridge
Checotah/Warrior, Oklahoma
Dr. Henry Kirkland Jr.
Atoka, Oklahoma
Mr. 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)

2012 Second Annual Induction

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

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

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

2014 Fourth Annual Induction

Dr. Charles E. Butler
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mrs. Valerie Inez Carolina
Wewoka, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Lola Parker Dean
Porter, 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)

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

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

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)

2017 Seventh Annual Induction

Mrs. Olive Ruth James
Wewoka Oklahoma
Mr. Calvin Rob Johns Sr.
Seminole, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Helen Louise Franks Miner
El Reno, Oklahoma
Dr. Cecelia Nails-Palmer
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Dr. Henry Ponder
South Carolina - Wewoka, Oklahoma

Dr. Dennis L. Portis III
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mr. Nathaniel Quinn Sr.
Boley, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mr. E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.
Edmond, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Mildred Tilford
McAlester, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Charlotte J. Walker
Clearview, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

2018 Eighth Annual Induction

Mrs. Amelia Louise Swain Alford
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Dr. Ann Marie Allen
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mrs. Marilyn Frances Duncan
Wilburton, Oklahoma
Mrs. Emma Lee Jones Freeman
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mr. James L. Furch
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Mrs. Joyce Ann Henderson
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mr. Benjamin Harrison Hill
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Judith Ann Carter Horton
Guthrie, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Dr. Delois Ann McGee
Checotah, Oklahoma
Mr. James A. Senter
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

2019 Ninth Annual Induction

Mrs. Montecella Lucinda Driver
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Mr. Joe B. Gordon
Wagoner, Oklahoma
Mr. John Edward Haney
Guthrie, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Gertrude Marie Lewis
Broken Bow, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mr. Lee Virgil Patterson Sr.
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

Mr. Leander "Lee" Roland
Spencer, Oklahoma
Mr. Louis Irving Ryan Jr.
Vinita, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Joyce Ann Stripling
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Dr. Goldie V. L. Thompson
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mrs. Mildred Nadine Wallace
Wewoka, Oklahoma

2020 Ninth Annual Induction - COVID YEAR

2019 Ninth Annual Induction

Mrs. Captoria Wells Aldridge
Taft, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mr. Leroy H. Alfred
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Dr. Raushan Ashanti-Alexander
Chickasha, Oklahoma
Mrs. Ycedra Daughty
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mr. Orlando Hazley
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Ms. Shirley Hurd
Idabel, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Marsha Akins Jordan
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mr. Jimmie L. White Jr.
Warner, Oklahoma
Mr. Marvin R. Williams
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Ardell E. Drake Withers
Clearview, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

2023 Induction Ceremony - September 29th

Nominate an educator, administrator, or support personal

Must have taught or worked in the Oklahoma School system for at least five consecutive years

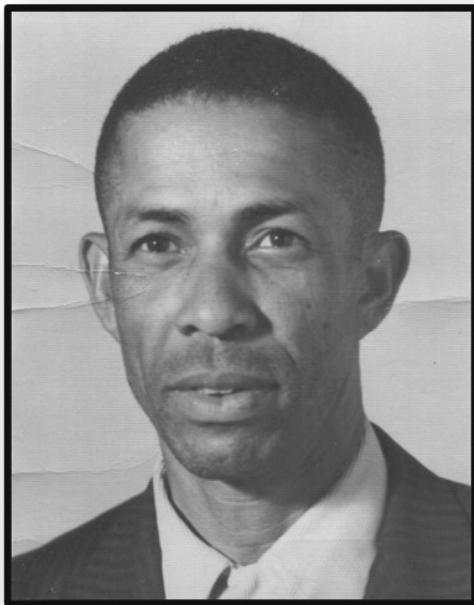
Download the nomination form

www.oaaehof.org website

E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Scholarship

2022 Recipients

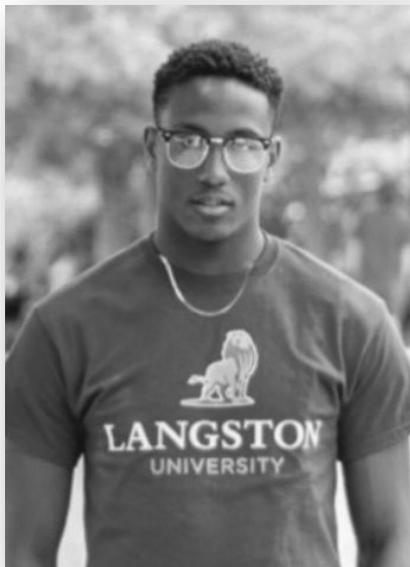
E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.



Mr. William "Bill" Ford and friends of Shawnee, Oklahoma generously donated monies to jumpstart the E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Scholarship. Watson had been a teacher and coach at Dunbar, the segregated Black school in Shawnee. When the school closed, only his coaching position transferred to Shawnee High School. Bill Ford played on Coach Watson's football team. Ford described Watson as being genuine, caring, and a great leader for the team. He was so influential to the team that Ford initiated a scholarship to honor him.

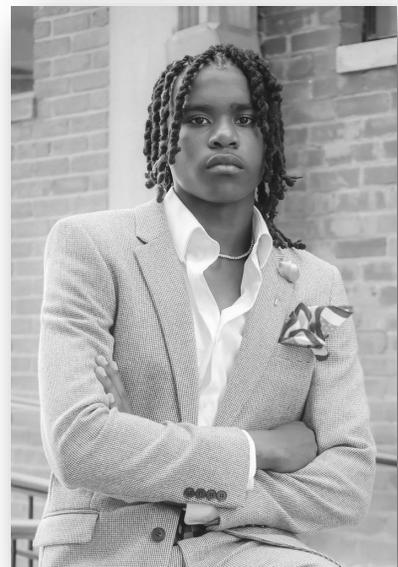
When E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. was inducted into the 2017 OAAE HOF, Ford established this scholarship to express his gratitude and to continue the legacy of making a difference in the lives of young athletes as Coach Watson did for so many. The scholarship is awarded to outstanding athletics in Oklahoma.

This scholarship is open to male and female athletes who graduate from an Oklahoma Public school with plans to a college or university at an Oklahoma accredited institution. Preference is given to African American students. The amount given is contingent upon monies available each year and may vary. Recipients are honored at the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Ceremony each year, the last Friday in September



Kaya Danae Wilson

Kya Danae Wilson is a graduate of Glenpool High School. Kaya was named honorable mention in basketball and was a member of the 3rd place 4x1 State track team. She is attending Connors State College where she is playing basketball and pursuing a degree in physical therapy. Kaya is the daughter of Meaghan Williams and granddaughter of Lisa Hunt of Glenpool.

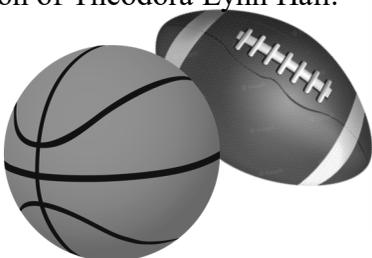


Tanner Allen Williams

Tanner Allen Williams is a graduate of Emond Santa Fe High School. Tanner was named to the All-Tournament Team for the Varsity men's basketball team and led his team to the OSSAA 6A Boys State Championship Tournament. He is attending Oklahoma State University where he will tryout as a walk-on for the OSU Cowboys Men's Basketball team and major in Graphic Design. Tanner is the son of Reginald and Tiffini Williams.

Drelin R. Pollard

Drelin R. Pollard is a graduate of Oklahoma City Douglass High School. Drelin was named MVP line backer of the year for Oklahoma City and his District. He is attending Langston University to pursue a career in agriculture and to play football. Drelin is the son of Theodora Lynn Hall.



2022 OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc. Program

Entertainment

Taylor/Made Jazz - Walter Taylor III
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Welcome

Mrs. Bobbie Allen Booker
Board of Directors: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Invocation

Dr. Raushan Ashanti-Alexander
Board of Directors: Chickasha, OK

Dinner

B & B Catering - Demetria Bailey
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

*Reflections of the Past -
"The First Ten Years"*

Claudette Goss, Bruce Fisher, Joyce Jackson
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

*Master of Ceremony
Introductions*

Mr. J. C. Watts Jr.
Chairman: Black News Network
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.
Scholarship Recipients

Dr. John Hardgrave - OAAE B.O.D.
William "Bill" Ford - Shawnee Milling Co.
Principal Founder E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.

*Citations/
Acknowledgements*

Senator George Young
Senate District 48 - Oklahoma City, OK

2022 Induction Ceremony

Mr. J. C. Watts Jr.
Chairman: Black News Network
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

2022 Inductees

Mr. Samuel Harper
Eufaula, Oklahoma

Mr. Robert J. Mayes Sr.
(Posthumously)
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Mr. Malcolm Hilburn
(Posthumously)
Chickasha, Oklahoma

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.
Clearview, Oklahoma

Ms. Dolores Del Rio Jones
(Posthumously)
Seminole, Oklahoma

Mrs. Shirley Ann Ballard Nero
Clearview, Oklahoma

Dr. Mautra Staley Jones
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Mr. Clayton Eric Nolen
Enid, Oklahoma

Mr. Opal Willard Lee
(Posthumously)
Idabel, Oklahoma

Dr. Wessyllyne Alford Simpson
(Posthumously)
Langston, Oklahoma

Mrs. Juanita Williams
(Posthumously)
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Closing Remarks

Mr. Larry O'Dell
Director of Communications & Development
Oklahoma History Center

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mr. Samuel Harper

“Dedicated to Serving”

Eufaula, Oklahoma

Mr. Samuel Harper is the middle child born on June 25, 1938, to Laura White Harper and Rev. Daniel Harper in Eufaula, Oklahoma. He grew up in a Christian home, became a member of the Sulphur Springs Baptist Church at an early age, and was baptized by his father who was the pastor. He completed his basic education at Eufaula’s segregated Booker T. Washington School, graduating as salutatorian of the class of 1957. Mr. Harper received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and Art from Langston University in 1962. He followed up with additional course work at the University of Missouri at Kansas City and completed staff development workshops at the University of Missouri, Warrensburg, Missouri.

He began his teaching and administrative career in 1962 at Warrior Elementary School, located ten miles west of Checotah, Oklahoma. Warrior was a segregated school which often operated under unfavorable conditions - ranging from outdated instructional materials, faulty equipment, substandard building facilities, and students who had not been exposed to the outside world. A colleague recalls how Mr. Harper, a teacher and later their principal, combined common sense principles, arduous work, innovative use of resources, and unique teaching and learning strategies to compensate for the deficiencies.

He was a leader in academic and extracurricular activities, volunteering his time and expertise to recruit volunteers from within and outside the community to help create a well-rounded educational environment. Mr. Harper was instrumental in starting a Boy Scout troop and served years as scout master. He was basketball coach, classroom instructor, building supervisor, and Mr. Fix-it whenever necessary. He was one of the last administrators of a segregated school in McIntosh County prior to integration. In 1967, he relocated to Kansas City, Missouri where he continued teaching at several elementary schools in the Kansas City Public School System until 1981.

Mr. Harper returned to Eufaula to be near his aging parents and accepted a position with the Eufaula Public Schools as a traveling elementary art teacher in 1981. He provided art instruction for students at three schools, a job this art major genuinely loved. He was able to use art as a catalyst to teach them skills like improving self-confidence, respect for self and others, as well as practical life skills.

He became involved in the development of the community. The McIntosh County NAACP was organized with the collaboration of interested supporters, and he was elected its first president. Later, he became the McIntosh County Legal Redress Chairman, a position he still holds. In 1981, Harper became the first African American to serve on the Eufaula Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter. He ended his tenure in 2001 after twenty years of service and received an appreciation plaque for his years of devoted service. Mr. Harper was also one of the first African Americans to serve as a reserve police officer in Eufaula.

On November 1, 1992, he was appointed a deacon at Sulphur Springs Baptist Church, serving in this role until he answered his call to the ministry. In 1995, Samuel Harper was ordained as the pastor of the Sulphur Springs Baptist Church in Eufaula; his home church where his father pastored for 48 years. Under his pastorship, the church continued to thrive, and he was elected as Moderator of the Collate District. He continued to teach as well as pastor for two years. He retired from the Eufaula Public Schools in 1997. Mr. Harper continued as pastor at Sulphur Springs Baptist Church until he retired in 2015.

Mr. Harper’s professional affiliations and honors include National Education Association, Oklahoma Educational Association, Oklahoma Association of Elementary School Principals, McIntosh County Retired Teachers Association, NAACP Life Member Plaque, and 2018 “Mr. Heritage Award” – Eufaula Chamber of Commerce.

Samuel Harper and Alma Lee Grayson Harper have been married for 49 years. Two children were born to their union, Samantha, and Samuel N. Namdi. Mr. Harper has five daughters and five sons. They are loved and blessed with grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Mr. Samuel Harper’s careers epitomize the definition of service; it is his life-long mission. In her letter of recommendation, former colleague DeLois McGee stated, “Many former students and community patrons still seek his advice; and many religious, educational, and civic organizations rely on his wisdom and expertise for direction.”

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mr. Malcolm Hilburn

*Posthumously
"A Change Agent"
Chickasha, Oklahoma*

Mr. Malcolm Hilburn was born May 29, 1922, to Carlye and Cornilla Hilburn, in Kilgore, Texas. The second of six children and the oldest son, he spent his early years in the rural areas around Kilgore, in what he called the piney woods of east Texas, where his Grandparents owned property. His family eventually moved to town in nearby Tyler where he continued his education.

After graduating from Emmitt Scott High School in Tyler, Texas, he enlisted in the United States Army and served in the Pacific during WWII. During his rehabilitation and convalescing from war inflicted injuries, the medical unit transferred him to a military unit, Borden General Hospital, in Chickasha where he met and married Eddie B. Brown. After leaving the military, he enrolled in trade school where he received his barber's licenses and became a long-term active member of the Chickasha African American community. Mentored by influential, community black educators, Hilburn took advantage of his veterans' benefits. As a result, he enrolled in Langston University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Industrial Arts, while supporting a young family with two children under age six. Mr. Hilburn committed himself to balance: supporting and raising his family, earning a degree, and commuting to Oklahoma City to work the night shift at Tinker Field Air Force Base. Later, he attended the University of Tulsa, but received his Master of Education Degree in School Administration from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma.

In 1954, Mr. Hilburn began his 34-year career in education at Carver School in Hominy, Oklahoma, teaching Industrial Arts, Science, and Math with Harold Hudson, one of his mentors and principal. In 1956, he accepted a position at Lincoln School in the Chickasha Public Schools teaching Industrial Arts, Science, and Math teacher, in addition to coaching basketball. Colleagues described him as a reserved and modest man, and never knowing to be boisterous or self-promoting. He along with other African American educators created positive climates of academic excellence despite meager resources and funding and built strong relationships with their peers, parents, and people in the community. The instructors were instrumental in exposing students to the best that was available despite the segregated conditions.

Mr. Hilburn became the first African American Vice-Principal at the Junior High after the Chickasha Public Schools were fully desegregated in the mid-1960s. He later became the first African American in the Chickasha Public Schools to serve as Principal, serving in that capacity for 14 years, until his retirement in 1988. He was known as a wise and effective administrator who provided structure, discipline, leadership and encouragement to faculty, staff, and students. His zeal for education was only matched by his personal interest in equipping and encouraging every person (especially African American individuals) to accomplish their goal and to succeed.

Mr. Hilburn was an active member of Miles CME Church where he served as Sunday School teacher, trustee, and steward. He and his brother-in-law Adolph Brown were instrumental in preserving the legacy of Miles-Brown CME Church. He gave of his time, talent, and resources in maintaining the church's religious and social mission. In addition to his church involvement, Hilburn held member ships in Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, civic and social organizations, and served as a Little League Coach and Official.

Malcolm and Eddie B. Brown Hilburn raised two children Julius and Maxine. Mrs. Hilburn passed in 1970. Later, Mr. Hilburn married Malyne Lee Gallimore adding Gail and Tommy Gallimore to his list of children. His devoted family, Julius Hilburn, Tommy Gallimore, and Gail (Gallimore) Arnett, and loving grandchildren join in on the celebration of Mr. Hilburn's induction into the hall of fame.

Mr. Malcolm Hilburn is remembered for living a purposeful and an impactful life of service, while treating people with kindness and fairness. His motto, "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." Hilburn's son, Julius, reflects on his dad's accomplishments and priorities with this quote from Maya Angelou, "People will forget what you said and what you did, but they will remember how you made them feel." During his career and even in his retirement, Dad made it a priority to make those he came in contact with to feel respected and valued."

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Ms. Dolores Del Rio Jones

Posthumously

“Accolades for Accomplishments”

Seminole, Oklahoma

Ms. Dolores Del Rio Jones was born September 8, 1929, in Seminole, Oklahoma to William Bruce and Alberta Jones. Ms. Jones was the youngest of three girls, Geraldine A. Jones Patterson, and Willie Marie Jones Cudjoe. Ms. Jones' educational journey began in Seminole, Oklahoma at Booker T. Washington Elementary. During her junior high years, the family moved to Denver, Colorado. She returned to Seminole and attended Booker T. Washington High school where she graduated in 1947.

Ms. Jones attended Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri and Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma where she received her BS in English in 1955. Ms. Jones was afforded the opportunity to go back to school where she completed her bachelor's and received her master's degree while raising three sons. While at Langston, Ms. Jones became a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. After graduation from Langston, Ms. Jones lived in Omaha, Nebraska for a few years. Moving back to Seminole, Oklahoma she attended one summer at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in preparation for the Head Start Program. She worked with Head Start as a teacher's aide. Ms. Jones also attended East Central State College in Ada, Oklahoma and received her Master of Education Degree in 1972. She was hired as a Special Education teacher at North Wood Elementary in Seminole, Oklahoma. Ms. Jones retired in 1991 after dedicating twenty-five years to education.

Ms. Jones has been given accolades for her accomplishments in education and in the community. In 2019, Ms. Jones was honored with the key to the City of Seminole by the Mayor Jeff Griffin. Furthermore, the Mayor proclaimed September as Dolores Jones Civic Involvement Month in the City of Seminole. Ms. Jones received the declaration on her 90th birthday celebration for her decades of civic contributions to various City of Seminole public meetings. She was given honors by the Seminole Association of Classroom Teacher Retirement, Seminole ACT- Teacher of the year (1983-1984) and Ebenezer Baptist Church (Seminole, OK) for thirty plus years of spiritual service.

Ms. Jones holds the honor of being the first Black educator in Seminole Public Schools to be named Teacher of the Year (1983-1984), is a member of Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) and holds the honor of VIM — Very Important Member of OEA, National Education Association (NEA), and Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association.

Those close to Ms. Jones and who indorsed her induction shared that “She was an intelligent, goal oriented, and motivated person. She knew how to get things done and is a collaborator. More importantly, she had an inventive mind and an independent work ethic. Ms. Jones possessed other character traits and associated skills that bodes her well. Ms. Jones had always been, dependable, conscientious, and courteous. In her walk-through life. she surrounded herself with a solid base of family, friends, church, and community. Ms. Jones was a major influence in the growth and development of children.”

Ms. Dolores Del Rio Jones, an avid fan of Oklahoma University football and who, once with her students met Barry Switzer, traveled extensively with the OU football team. Ms. Jones was continually active in her church and community. She was President of Pastor Aid and was the Mother of the Church. She attended the City Council meetings and was known for getting things done.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Mautra Staley Jones

“Plethora of Accomplishments”

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Dr. Mautra Staley Jones was born on October 9, 1978, in Oklahoma City to Donna and E.L. Staley. She and her four siblings were reared in humble beginnings by their grandmother, Mrs. Mulsie Caldwell, in Ardmore. From her grandmother, Mautra learned the importance of education, faith, and community at an early age. Throughout her time in primary and secondary school, she was an honor student who demonstrated a high aptitude for education. She fully immersed herself in her studies and community and spent summers in enrichment programs, community service projects and worked part-time jobs. She graduated from Ardmore

High School with honors.

Dr. Jones earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma 2002, and immediately relocated to San Diego, California. While there, she earned an M.B.A. from University of Phoenix at San Diego in 2006. In 2020, she received a Doctor of Education degree in Leadership and Learning in Organization from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Dr. Jones began her career in education in 2006 as the Director of Development and Marketing with KIPP Reach College Preparatory School. During her tenure, she established educational programs that ensured students from underserved communities had the tools to succeed. She created a partnership with Chesapeake Energy that yielded over \$300,000 in financial support, materials, and supplies for three hundred students.

In 2009, she took her talent to The Foundation of Oklahoma City Public Schools as its Director of Development. In that capacity, she managed all aspects of the foundation’s fundraising, assisted in creating and implementing a comprehensive strategic plan, diversified the board through recruitment, and secured a \$75,000 gift from Dell Foundation.

In 2011, Dr. Jones stepped away from education to work in the non-profit sector. As Vice-President of Development for Prevent Blindness Oklahoma, she was charged with directing all aspects of the organization’s external affairs, fundraising, donor relations, dedicated events, marketing, and communications. She secured a grant from Rotary Club 29 to purchase new equipment that would improve efficiencies in vision screening across all seventy-seven counties in the state. In 2012, she became Director of Development for the non-profit, White Fields, located in Piedmont, Oklahoma. There, she created a culture of philanthropy by establishing and implementing fundraising strategies.

Dr. Jones began employment with Langston University, an 1890 Land-Grant University in 2015 and worked in multiple capacities at the university. She began as Vice-President of Institutional Advancement and External Affairs where she directed fundraising, donor and alumni relations, marketing and public relations, communications, and government and community relations. Additionally, she served as Executive Director of the Langston University Foundation (LUF) and LU-OKC Campus Site Administrator. She was instrumental in increasing assets and holdings, increasing public and private donations, and establishing the LUF website as its executive director. As site administrator, she was accountable for managing daily operations on the university’s urban campus including recruitment of students. She was successful in securing multi-million-dollar grants for the campus, assisted in obtaining \$1.25 million to expand the nursing program as part of the consortium of institutions of higher education housed in the University Center of Southern Oklahoma (UCSO) in Ardmore, Oklahoma.

Dr. Jones began her tenure as the 11th President of Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) on March 1, 2022, making her the first female and 1st African American to serve in that role. She is the quintessential leader with a focus to increase student enrollment, elevate OCCC’s name recognition statewide, and lead OCCC into previously untreaded waters. Under her leadership, OCCC has been named one of Movie Maker’s 40 Best Film Schools of 2022 in the U.S. and Canada (July 2022), partnered with Walgreens for pharmacy internships (July 2022) and was awarded a \$35,000 grant from the U.S. Department of State’s Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) Program (August 2022).

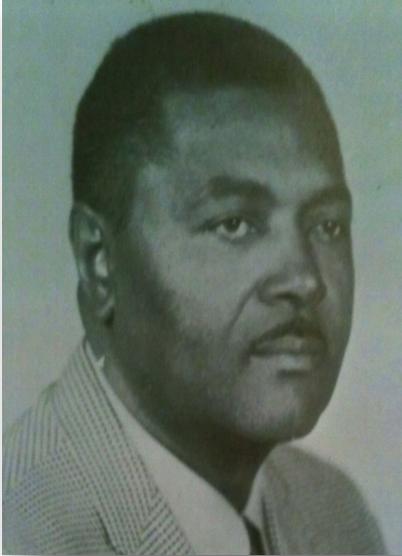
Dr. Jones serves as a Board Director for BancFirst and BancFirst Corporation; South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce; American Mothers, Inc., Oklahoma Hall of Fame, StitchCrew, Oklahoma Philharmonic Society, Civic Center Foundation, Oklahoma Watch, Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs, and Leadership Oklahoma City’s Alumni Association. She is a board advisor to the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, a Salt and Light Leadership (SALLT) Fellow, a graduate of Leadership Oklahoma City (Class XXIX), and a member of the MSI Aspiring Leaders Program at Rutgers University, and she is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Dr. Jones has been named Woman of the Year by the Journal Record, Perry Publishing and Broadcasting, and With Love OKC. She was named the 2021 *National Mother of the Year*, 2021 *Oklahoma Mother of the Year*, and 2012 Oklahoma Mother of Achievement by American Mothers, Inc. She has also been honored as an Achiever Under 40 by the Journal Record, OKC Biz and Oklahoma Magazine, among other noteworthy achievements.

Dr. Jones is married to United States District Judge Bernard M. Jones II, and is mother to Bernard III, Kennedy, and Brendan.

Dr. Mautra Staley Jones has proven herself to be resilient, competent, and highly qualified. In his nomination of Dr. Jones, Attorney Joshua M. Snavelly stated: “Mautra believes the ultimate service is not what she does in her career, but what she inspires and makes possible for the next generation.”

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mr. Opal Willard Lee

“The Great Influencer”

Posthumously

Idabel, Oklahoma

Mr. Opal Willard Lee born February 1, 1913, in Horatio, Arkansas to Robert and Dovie Lee. He understood at an early age education was key to all he hoped to accomplish. However, he did not understand at the time that he would be a change agent and a positive influence on many students. Mr. Lee did not know that by his example and influence that he would motivate students to push themselves further than they could imagine.

Mr. Lee, through his academic excellence and athletic ability earned a basketball scholarship to Wiley College in Marshall, Texas in 1933. He moved to Texas with a small suitcase and his meager belongings that included a couple of shirts, and a pair of pants. He received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Wiley College and moved back to Idabel to be an elementary teacher at a small, rural, segregated school, Riverside School District. He taught elementary school at Riverside for three years. Mr. Lee then joined the United States Air Force Academy where he served his country for five years. Again, after serving in the Air Force, he returned to Idabel to teach at the Booker T. Washington High School where he served as head basketball coach, English Teacher, Drama Teacher, and the Dean of Men. He attended Colorado University — Boulder where he received his Master of Education and East Central University where he received his Master of Teaching.

Mr. Lee, after preparing his students to attend college, he was fortunate enough to receive a position at East Central University, where he taught in the English Department where he was the first Black professor at East Central University. While at ECU, he implemented the charter of the Eta Theta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. in 1974, where he served as their Graduate Advisor. Mr. Lee left East Central University and returned to Idabel Gray High School and worked in the English Department until his retirement in 1978. Mr. Lee's work in education continued beyond retirement. The local superintendent sought him out to instruct the initial classes of the General Education Diploma (GED) program. Mr. Opal W. Lee was also active with the Booker T. Washington Grand Reunion Committee, Red Caps Boys Baseball Team Coach, Idabel Arts and Humanities, Oklahoma Jurisdiction Prince Hall Masons with his 33rd degree, Knights of Pythagoras Table Advisor and Lee was in ministry at St. James C.M.E. Church.

Additionally, Mr. Lee received awards and honors from Opal Willard Lee Amphitheater, Idabel, Oklahoma, Booker T. Washington/Slater/Riverside Alumni Association. East Central African American Alumni and as the first Black professor at East Central University.

Mr. Opal W. Lee met and fell in love with a new teacher in the Home Economics Department, Ms. Virginia Smith. They wed on September 12, 1952, and from that union, their daughter Denise Lee (Echols) was born.

Mr. Lee was a beloved Oklahoma Educator with over 40 years of teaching experience. His legacy has touched the lives of over 1,000 students who have been fortunate enough to have him, firsthand as an educator or from his offspring. The legacy of his love for education still lives on today. Mr. Lee was an inspiration to all who encountered him. He was also a strict disciplinarian whose passion was to inspire others to be the best they could be. To know Mr. O.W. Lee was to love him. It was shared that “Mr. Lee possessed the expertise and experience in developing and participating in culturally sensitive programs and initiatives within vested communities. His proficiency accentuates such core values as: Genuinely caring for others, Equitable with all cultures, Excellent communicator, and the Ability to transfer knowledge.

Mr. Opal Willard Lee's qualifications distinguished him personally and professionally in the field of student and community advancement. Mr. Lee was a gentleman of high moral character who possessed qualities consistent with the qualifications desired for induction into the Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mr. Robert I. Mayes Sr.

Posthumously

"A Developer of Champions"

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Mr. Robert I. Mayes, Sr. was the youngest of five children born April 16, 1934, to Hayes and Nora (Jackson) Mayes, Sr. in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His siblings were Hayes, Jr., and Hazel Jean Mayes-Owens, Joe, Elbert, and William Stargell. However, Dr. Charles O. Stout and Judge Juanita Kidd Stout reared Mayes. He attended Booker T. Washington Elementary, Carver Jr. High, and as an outstanding student, co-football captain and senior class president, he graduated from Booker T. Washington High School's class of 1952. Mayes received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mathematics from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and noted as All CIAA in football, Master of Science Degree from Oklahoma State University, Administrative Certification from the Tulsa University with additional studies at Northeastern State University and Tulsa University

Mr. Mayes believed in education and gave his time and his energies to the people of Tulsa. He believed in giving back because his roots were there. In 1959, he accepted his first teaching assignment as a mathematics teacher at Carver Junior High. After that first semester, he spent the next fifteen years at Booker T. Washington High School teaching Mathematics, Business Education, and Driver Education, in addition to an assistant football coach position. Through his championship teaching and coaching tactics of the Hornets, Mayes instilled in his students the will to win, despite suffering defeat, which was a part of life, to never give up, and moral concepts for becoming a success in life. As a teacher-coach, he mentored thousands of youths throughout his tenure as an educator.

Mr. Mayes combined his love of education and community and started the "Ebony Awareness Bowl," through his fraternity. During Black History month, middle school students from Tulsa Public Schools would compete based on their knowledge of African American contributions. His chapter of Kappa Alpha Phi Fraternity was so grateful to him for creating the bowl, that it now bears his name, "Robert I. Mayes, Sr. Ebony Awareness Bowl."

Mr. Mayes (Coach) always motivated his students on and off the field! He believed that students should be well-rounded, and they need to hone their skills in the classroom as well as in athletic activities. He was an assistant baseball and wrestling coach. Yet, Mayes's stellar accomplishments include five state football championships with the Hornets as Head Coach and Defensive Coordinator, the first and only head coach to go undefeated his first year and have a 15th round NFL draft pick for the Baltimore Colts.

Mr. Mayes devoted more than thirty years in education to Tulsa Public Schools. In 1973, he became Assistant Principal and Head Football Coach at Booker T. Washington High School until 1976. Other administrative positions included turning at-risk schools around as principal of Gilcrease Jr. High and Carver Middle School, Coordinator of Facilities Utilization, Director of Tulsa Public Schools Transportation Department, and retiring from Tulsa Public Schools in 1987 as Coordinator of Facilities Utilization. Then, Mayes became the founder of the Tulsa Urban League's Male Rap Program, a member of the Tulsa Equalization Board and Tulsa Excise Board until 2009.

Mr. Mayes believed in education and devoted his time and his energies to the people of Tulsa as a leader and a giver, who lent his life and energies throughout the Tulsa Community. His countless commitments included National Middle School Association, President-Oklahoma Middle Level Education Association, North Tulsa Heritage Society, Deborah Brown Community School Board, Tulsa Urban League and Chairman of Fund-Raising Drive, State Delegate-Democratic Party, Booker T. Washington Alumni Board, Jack & Jill of America, Tulsa Park & Recreation Board Chairman, Gilcrease Museum Board, Citizens Board-National Park and Recreation Association; Life Member, and served in several Alumni and national positions in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. Mayes and his wife Blanchie (Gray) Mayes were married for 50 years. Four children were born to their union, Robert I. Jr., Roderick, Melonie Mayes-Tyler, and Reginald; Mayes had two daughters, Barbara Jefferson, and Jacqueline Banks. Eight grandchildren: Adrienne Powell, Thandi Brown, Kendra Banks, Jody Jones, Desmond Taylor II, Robert I. Mayes, III, Reginald Mayes, Jr., and Dominique Mayes, and two great-grandchildren: Brandon and Christian Morris. He was a devoted member and on the Trustee Board at First Baptist Church North Tulsa and Trustee Board at Paradise Baptist Church in Tulsa.

Mr. Robert I. Mayes, Sr., *"A Developer of Character and Champions,"* lived a life of endless work of educating and reaching beyond his family, friends, and others to truly epitomizes a standard of which so many admire. One of his highest compliments came from a student who said, "because of you.....I made it in life.....thank you." He showed young men and women what demanding work, caring, and dedication is all about.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Donnie Lee Nero Sr.

“Modeled Professional Excellence”

Clearview, Oklahoma

Dr. Donnie L. Nero, Sr., was born May 15, 1949, to Estella and Berlin Nero, Sr. in New Chance City, Oklahoma. He and his four siblings - Shirley, Berlin Jr., Maurice, Barbara - were reared in New Chance City (Spencer), Oklahoma. He attended Dunjee Public Schools, an independent school district in Spencer, Oklahoma, and is a proud graduate in the class of 1967. Dr. Nero received his Bachelor of Science degree in Health Physical Education and Recreation (HPER) from East Central State College (ECU) in 1971, Master of Science degree in Educational Administration at Oklahoma State University in 1977, and Doctor of Education degree in Occupational and Adult Education at Oklahoma State University in 1993.

In 1971, Dr. Nero began his thirty-eight-year professional career in education at Sapulpa Junior High School teaching math, science, and social studies. In addition, he coached basketball and football. He was later named the head baseball coach, becoming the first African American to hold a head coaching position at Sapulpa High School. He soon ascended through the Sapulpa school system to become a counselor and then junior high school assistant principal in 1977. In 1980, he took a two-year hiatus to work as a program analyst with Rockwell International. Nero returned in 1982 to Sapulpa Public Schools as assistant high school principal and remained until 1985. His success in public education led him to the ranks of higher education. In 1985, Nero joined with Tulsa Community College where he served as Dean of Students at the southeast campus before becoming Provost in 1998. He was charged with guiding the mission and vision of the college and creating planning models for the strategic intent and development of the college. Dr. Nero spent the next fifteen years at TCC. In 2000, he departed to become the 15th President of Connors State College at Warner, Oklahoma.

Upon being named president of Connors State College, Dr. Nero became the first African American named to a non HBCU institution of higher education in the state. During his tenure as Connors State College President, Dr. Nero served as president and secretary/treasurer of the Oklahoma Council of Two-Year College Presidents and served as president of the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges. He founded the Oklahoma Legal Issues Conference and was Oklahoma State Coordinator of the National Association Student Personnel Administrators. He is a graduate of Leadership Tulsa Class XVIII and a member of the Oklahoma Global Education Consortium.

Dr. Nero has served on various boards and committees, spoken at countless high school graduations and various functions, chaired many meetings, and traveled thousands of miles for educational purposes. He has provided leadership to numerous students, teachers, administrators, and staff and has been a champion of higher education throughout his many years in Oklahoma education. Under his guidance, Connors State College experienced record student enrollment and campus renovation. When Dr. Nero retired in 2011, Connors inherited a valuable legacy of academic programs, innovation, and growth.

In 2002, East Central University named Dr. Nero the Distinguished Alumnus and he addressed the 2002 ECU graduation class during the commencement ceremony. In 2010, East Central University inducted Dr. Nero into the ECU Educators Hall of Fame along with Dr. Jimmy Scales, making them the first African Americans inducted into the ECU Hall of Fame. In 2011, the Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame and the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame inducted Dr. Nero into their Halls of Fame. And, in 2010, he founded the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. and is currently its president.

In 2016, he completed two terms as chair of the Office of Juvenile Affairs during his tenure on the Board. Other professional and community activities include Governor's "EDGE" Task Force, Oklahoma Council of Presidents, Oklahoma Council of Two-Year College Presidents, Alpha Phi Alpha Phi Fraternity, Inc., Oklahoma Community Institute, Warner Economic Development - Board Member, Oklahoma Quality Award Examiner, and Muskogee Chamber of Commerce - Board Member. Currently in his retirement, he is on the Okfuskee County Excise Board, Director of Okfuskee County Conservation District, and Clearview Trustee Board.

Being a proponent of higher education, he strives to aid and enrich the lives of students in their quest to obtain a college degree. Dr. Nero has established scholarships at several higher educational institutions. He and his wife Shirley sponsor a \$1,000 scholarship to be awarded yearly to an East Central State University student who aspires to become an educator. He established a needs-based scholarship at the College of Diversity at Oklahoma State University for \$1,000. At Connors State College in Warner, he established a \$10,000 Endowment for student scholarships. In addition, at East Central University, he contributed \$3,000 to the Coach Turner Endowment Scholarship. Dr. Donnie Nero East Central University Black Alumni Scholarship was named to honor him. Dr. Nero created a \$10,000 Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment for the Black Towns with Oklahoma Community Foundation under Oklahoma History Center. Dr. Nero and his wife also partnered with the Oklahoma History Center to start the first Thirteen All-Black Towns State Conference to be held in Oklahoma City on August 20, 2022, at the Oklahoma History Center. Additionally, he is a member of The Friends of the OHS Multicultural Board, Conference of Black Towns and Mayors and serves as its treasurer.

Dr. Nero is married to Shirley Ballard Nero, a native of Clearview, Oklahoma. They both are retired and now reside on their DNS Ranch in Clearview. They have two children and four beautiful grandchildren, Donnie, Jr. (D.J.) and wife, Carroll, and granddaughter Berlin of Glenpool, Oklahoma; Tanya and husband Marvin Blades Jr. and grandson Makai and granddaughters Jordan, and Jada of Glenpool, Oklahoma.

A colleague of *Dr. Donnie Lee Nero Sr.* wrote: “As Dean, he took time to learn names of each person on campus. Dr. Nero not only valued his own family and spoke about them positively, but he also learned about the families of his employees. He exhibited professional characteristics and behavior in every encounter and consequently was honored and respected by both faculty and staff.”

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mrs. Shirley Ann Ballard Nero

“Preserving Posterity”

Clearview, Oklahoma

Mrs. Shirley Ann Ballard Nero was born on December 15, 1949, to Roy Robert and MaryAnn Ballard. She was reared in one of the thirteen historically all-Black towns, Clearview, Oklahoma where she attended elementary and junior high schools in Clearview until the 8th grade. The high school closed in 1964; she graduated from the neighboring Weleetka High School in 1968. She attended East Central State University and Northeastern State University earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Home Economics while minoring in sociology and psychology in 1976. Shirley earned her certification in social studies and a Master of Arts degree in History in 1994 from Oklahoma State University.

In 1976, Mrs. Nero began her teaching career at Sapulpa Junior High where she taught geography, civics, Oklahoma- and World History, along with GED classes. As an adjunct professor at Tulsa Community College, she taught American History. To remain abreast of the changes in education, Mrs. Nero sought out and enrolled in professional development opportunities like Tulsa Metro leadership training courses. She also traveled and attended workshops, trainings, and conferences sponsored by the Oklahoma Education Association, National Education Association, Oklahoma Alliance of Geography Educators Teacher (OKAGE) Consultant Training, Finding A Way Cadre (National Science Foundation and Geographic Society), and was state team leader for National Education Association Western Region Minority Association.

Throughout her twenty-eight-year teaching career, Mrs. Nero’s expertise of History was recognized and acknowledged. Honors include Sapulpa Junior High Teacher of the Year, Sapulpa School District Teacher of the Year, Harold C. and Joan Stuart Indian Territory Teacher of the Year, Sapulpa School Board Distinguish Service Award, Sapulpa Herald Citizen of the Week, and Sapulpa School District Humanitarian Award. Other recognitions include State Social Studies Teacher of the Year, Oklahoma Heritage Teacher of the Year for Indian Territory, Career Day Speaker-Weleetka High School 1995, and Commencement Speaker-Weleetka High School 1998. In 2016, she was named of the Women of the Year Pinnacle Award - YWCA winners of Tulsa, Oklahoma. In addition, she was conference speaker and conducted numerous staff development workshops across the state and nation and published related material with her husband. Mrs. Nero’s final four years in education were at Porum High School where she taught social studies, honors classes, and was senior class sponsor; she retired in 2004.

Former Governor Brad Henry appointed Mrs. Nero to serve on Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) Board of Directors where she served until 2020. As a board member, Mrs. Nero chaired the OHS Black Heritage Committee, served one term as the OHS Board of Directors treasurer and Vice-Chair for a short term, and served on several committees. Recently, she was appointed OHS Board Emeritus as well as to the OHS Board of Directors. Mrs. Nero also serves on the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Committee where she is chairperson. She is also chairperson of the newly formed Friends of the Oklahoma Historical Society Multi-Cultural Advisory Board.

Post retirement, Mrs. Nero continues to maintain a high-paced and productive lifestyle often revolving around her love for history; specifically, Black history. She is a member of various organizations that include OKAGE, Oklahoma Council of Social Studies, Oklahoma Retired Education Association, National Retired Education Association, Kappa Kappa Iota, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She continues to volunteer with Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education, conduct Black Town Tours, Clearview’s secretary/clerk/treasurer, and provides tours of Clearview. She is vice-president of the Okfuskee Home Extension group and is president of the Clearview Brown Suggas group.

Additionally, she writes newsletters for her family and the community’s weekly newspaper articles and is an advocate for the community of Clearview.

Shirley Ballard Nero and husband, Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr. reside on their DNS Ranch, in her hometown of Clearview. They have two children, Donnie Jr. (D.J.) and Tanya, and four beautiful grandchildren: Makai, Jordan, Jada, and Berlin. She is an active member of the Clearview Church of Christ.

Mrs. Shirley Ballard Nero’s former colleague wrote: “When she moved from Sapulpa, her legacy was felt throughout our district and state. Students and teachers will value her carefully compiled collection of Oklahoma History resources for years to come. She continues to fight to recognize her heritage and shine a light on accomplishments of Oklahomans who might otherwise not receive the significance they deserve. She has a serious, imposing presence, but her laughter can light up a room and make everyone in it feel special.”

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mr. Clayton Eric Nolen

"Motivator and "Mentor"

Enid, Oklahoma

Mr. Clayton Eric Nolen was born to Clason and Wilma Brewer Nolen on June 30, 1947, in Portland, Oregon. His family moved to Enid, Oklahoma, where he attended Carver Elementary, Booker T. Washington, Longfellow Junior High, and graduated from Enid High School in 1965. He was a severe stutterer from second grade through high school but that did not stop him from working hard and maintaining good grades in school. Singing and music became his way of expressing himself and the stuttering influenced his career choice in college. With a love and respect for music, he originally pursued a degree in music at Langston University, later transferring to Central State University (University of Central Oklahoma), where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Speech Pathology and Education as well as a Master of Education degree in School Administration and Special Education.

Mr. Nolen identified a need by the youth in his community, specifically Black youth who did not know how to swim. As a working college student, he managed the Owen's swimming pool in the black community, teaching swimming to children as well as adults. He was also Aquatic Director for the YMCA in Edmond.

Described as an initiative-taking educator and mentor, Mr. Nolen spent the first seven years of his forty-two-year career with the Enid Public Schools as a traveling speech pathologist servicing seven elementary schools and providing therapy at the Carver Educational Center. He and a co-worker began a senior recognition banquet for graduating African American students, in recognition of their accomplishments.

As an adult education teacher, he spent the next six years teaching math and science. After becoming the Director of Adult Education, the next thirty-five years of Nolen's career included relocating that program to the Carver Educational Center and expanding it to include daytime and evening classes with instruction in English, Science, Math, History, English as a second language, and daily living skills for adults with disabilities. He assigned teachers to visit home-bound students who were confined to their homes. Additionally, he was Chief GED examiner, Supervisor of the Juvenile Detention School, schools at Sequoyah Boy's Group Home, and Integris Behavioral Health. In addition, he created the African American Male Mentoring program for young African American males in Enid Public Schools.

Mr. Nolen was genuinely concerned about his community and saw a need for leadership. He was elected Ward 3 Enid City Commissioner for four years, served as chairman of the Enid Community Block Grant committee for three years, and he was chairman of the Enid Police Civil Service Board for two of his five-year term. Nolen was a member of Enid AM AMBUCS civic club, established the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission for the city of Enid, and he is currently serving on the Truth and Sentencing Advisory Council for four counties.

His professional affiliations include Enid Higher Education Trustee Board, Minority Recruitment Council for the Oklahoma State Department of Education, State Juvenile Task Force, Oklahoma Teacher Certification Test Bias Review Committee, African American Male State Task Force, Enid Education Association, Oklahoma Education Association, National Education Association, Black Higher Education Association, OEA Black Caucus. Oklahoma Adult Basic Education Association member, served as president of the Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association, and Enid Retired Teachers Association.

Mr. Nolen was the recipient of the key to the city of Enid; honored by having a bridge dedicated in his name; awarded the 2021-2022 Enid Pillar of the Plains by the Citizens of Enid and Enid News and Eagle; awarded the Enid Walk of Fame by the Enid Mayor and board of Commissioners during the Cherokee Strip Days celebration commemorating Enid's early pioneer spirit; honored for his Gospel program by the Community Churches hosted by Progressive Baptist Church, Celebrate Literacy Award, Sistah-2-Sistah African American Leaders of Enid Award, The Citizen of the year award presented by the Enid High School Black History Club, and recognized by the Cherokee Strip Heritage Center for contributing historical information about Blacks in Enid.

Mr. Nolen and wife, Varna have been married for forty-two years. They are parents to two sons, Quincy and Bryce and daughter-in-law, Mariel; and grandparents to Leah and Bryce II. Mr. Nolen is an active member of Grayson Missionary Baptist Church, currently on the board of Trustees.

Mr. Clayton Eric Nolen is a devoted educator who successfully taught, mentored, supported, and championed countless students in his Enid community and continues to do so post retirement. Former students still seek him out to share with him the impact he had in their lives and career choices.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Wessyllyne Alford Simpson

*Posthumously
"Dedicated to Excellence"
Langston, Oklahoma*

Dr. Wessyllyne Alford Simpson, the youngest of sixteen children, was born November 1, 1930, to Wesley Dow Alford and Emily Dunlap Alford in Little Hill Community, Oklahoma. Her schooling began at Little Hill Elementary School in Okfuskee County, Oklahoma. Dr. Simpson excelled in all subjects, especially science and mathematics. In 1948, she graduated as Valedictorian of Clearview High School, and then joined her brother and sister, Romeo, and Violet, at Langston University. There she majored in Chemistry and minored in Mathematics and graduated Summa Cum Laude from Langston University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry in 1952.

Dr. Simpson's initial desire to teach was inspired by her sister, Sylvia, a teacher, when she was five years old, but her professional career began after college, lasting more than 40 years. It was on the campus of Langston University, specifically in the Chemistry Department, that she met and fell in love with fellow faculty member, Mr. James Allan Simpson in the Fall of 1957, and they were married in the spring of 1958. Being a kindred spirit in their mutual love for HBCUs, they decided that they would devote their careers to serving at one.

Dr. Simpson pursue her graduate degrees at nearby Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. The university was still segregated the first semester of her master's program. However, she was allowed to attend classes, but didn't have a choice for where she could live on campus. Despite this, she went on to receive her Master of Science Degree in Behavioral Science and Doctor of Education Degree in Behavioral Science.

Even though she spent most of her career at Langston University, she began as a science teacher (1952-53) at Favor High School, Guthrie, Oklahoma. During her tenure at Langston University, she served in numerous capacities from (1953-1967) Chemistry Instructor, Assistant and Associate, Professor, Dean of Women, (1967-1969) Chairman, Department of Education at Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio, (1969-1987) Director, SEA/Cooperative Research, School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, Professor, Director of School of Education & Behavioral Sciences. Even after retirement in 1987, she returned to Langston as a consultant to assist with the accreditation process and taught for the newly established Graduate Program in the School of Education.

Dr. Simpson was a well-respected and highly dedicated educator, role model, and mentor throughout her career. Her colleagues, students and friends described her as brilliant, thorough, dedicated, compassionate and SHARP! She was a gifted scientist, mathematician, teacher, and administrator, who didn't let students think that where they came from should ever negatively influence how far they could go, that's why Dr. Simpson spent so much time talking about being "a little country girl from Little Hill Community." She was Langston University's Teacher of the Year in 1978 and honored with an education citation from the Oklahoma State Legislature and membership on the Southern Regional Education Board. Some of her professional affiliations and organizations include the Society of Professors of Education, National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa and was a Charter Member of Epsilon Chapter, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education, and a member of the Oklahoma State Regents Committee on Research and Graduate Education.

Dr. Wessyllyne Alford Simpson and her beloved husband, James Allan Simpson, were married for 62 years. They were the proud parents of Michael, James Wesley, and Lynne - all graduates of Langston University. They have three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She was an active member of New Hope Baptist Church, Langston, Oklahoma, for over 40 years, and a Life Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., serving on and leading numerous local, regional, and national committees, and as Midwestern Regional Director.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Ms. Juanita Williams *Posthumously* *"Strong Advocate of Excellence"* *Tulsa, Oklahoma*

Ms. Juanita Williams was the first of seven children born to Joe and Thelma Williams on March 3, 1957, in Warm Spring, Georgia. Her siblings are Evan, Joe, Jr. (deceased), Harold, Kenneth, Dr. Shiphrah Williams-Evans, and Dr. Cynthia Williams-Winthrop. Seeking a better life, her parents moved the family to Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Ms. Williams attended Bunche and Dunbar Elementary. One of Juanita's elementary school teachers noticed that she had trouble seeing the chalk board assignments even after she was moved to the front of the room. She soon received a pair of glasses which lead her to a world of reading and inquiry. Better grades and excelling in educational endeavors became her hobby. She went on to Anderson Middle School and graduated with honors from Tulsa Central High School in 1968. Williams graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in English from (HBCU) Oakwood University, Huntsville, Alabama, 1972 and a Master of Arts Degree in Junior College Education from the University of Tulsa.

The late Mrs. Coretta Scott King tapped Williams as a college student from a letter she wrote about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Years later, she was hired as a ghost writer for her speeches and a Program Associate for the King Center. She collaborated directly with national leaders including the late John Lewis, Hilary Clinton, and Andrew Young. She also worked with Dr. King's sister and his children with their summer youth program and wrote numerous grants on behalf of the Kings.

In 1975, Ms. Williams began her teaching career in Tulsa Public Schools at Byrd Middle School. She distinguished herself as a strong advocate of excellence in education in every position assigned to her for over twenty-five years. Noted for having a phenomenal passion for teaching and learning, students under her leadership and tutelage excelled to the extent that there were no failures. Williams spent countless hours preparing and designing lesson plans specifically for each student to ensure academic success. She was a proponent of the individualized instruction, philosophies, and proclamations that "All Children Can Learn" and "No Child Left Behind".

In 1984, while assigned to Byrd Middle School, Tulsa World Newspaper selected Williams as Teacher of the Year. In 1996, KIRH (Tulsa TV Station) presented her with the "A Salute to Excellence Award." Following her stint as an outstanding teacher of English and history, Williams moved into the administration field as served as principal at Cherokee Elementary School, Lindsey Alternative School, and later as Coordinator of Social Studies at the Tulsa Central office.

In addition to her assigned career positions, Ms. Williams's thirty-four years of service covered various education, civic and community capacities. She held memberships in the National Alliance of Black School Educators, Tulsa Alliance of Black School Educators where she served as president, a gubernatorial appointee to the Oklahoma Human Rights Commissions under Governors Frank Keating and Brad Henry, serving as vice-chair and chair. Williams also served as chair of the Oklahoma Textbook Committee.

Ms. Juanita Williams is noted by her colleagues for being humble, yet exemplifying greatness coupled with her desire to always do over and above what was expected of her to ensure student success. Her commitment and "Dedication to Excellence" and academic success were the hallmarks of her career.

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)

Memberships

OKLAHOMA AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS HALL OF FAME, INC

Life Membership Options

Life Membership in the OAAE Hall of Fame consists of three options in becoming a life member of our hall of fame. Please read the options below and return to the address below. Thank you for your support for a great cause in recognizing our great educators throughout this state.

OPTION 1: \$250.00 for two (2) years

\$50.00 of five (5) payments for two years

\$25.00 of twenty (20) payments for two (2) years

Two years limited payments (any means)

If payment plan is not completed in two (2) years, money is forfeited

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AGREEMENT:

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City _____

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\$35.00 Individual Membership

\$35.00 Associate Membership

\$10.00 Student Associate Membership

\$500.00 Individual Life Regular Membership

\$500.00 Individual Life Associate Member

\$250.00 Corporate Annual Membership

Article 1.0 – Members and Membership

1.1 Regular voting members in good standing shall be anyone who is a current employee or retiree of the Oklahoma public or private educational system.

1.2 Associate Non-voting members shall be anyone who is a supporter of the Oklahoma public or private educational system.

Oklahoma African American
Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.
MEMBERSHIP
110126 N 3830 Rd
Clearview, Oklahoma 74880

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 L. Nero Sr. donated the initial amount to the fund. The OHS will continue to fundraise to increase the endowment to include an annual Juneteenth event at the Oklahoma History Center.

Shirley Nero, a native of the all-black town of Clearview, Oklahoma taught at Sapulpa and then Porum Public Schools for thirty years. Nero received, on four occasions Teacher of the Year honors. In 1994, the Sapulpa School Board presented Shirley with the Distinguished Service Award. She serves on several boards including the Oklahoma Preservation Committee, the Friends of Oklahoma History Multicultural Board, 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 annually for research, programming, exhibits, and/or events related to the Historically Thirteen Original All-Black Towns in Oklahoma. Oklahoma history and especially the state's unique story of these black towns is one of Shirley's passions. No other state had as many all-black communities/towns 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.

We humbly ask that you please consider the OHS with your generosity. A gift of your generous support is that many superior programs will be offered, one-of-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 to collect, preserve, and share 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. Moreover, you will be recognized as a member of the Oklahoma History Legacy Circle, which was created to recognize donors, living and deceased, who make or 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 is also 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 .

Sincerely,

Larry O'Dell
Director of Special Projects Development

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

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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 or Donnie Nero, dr.donnielee@aol.com.

OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc.

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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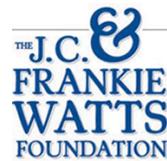
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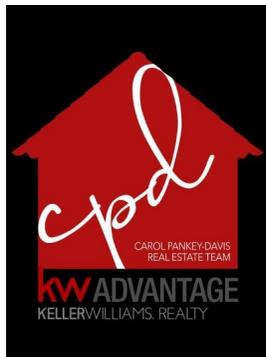
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Clearview, Oklahoma 74880





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