

Association of Negro Teachers Presidents



(Photo: Currie Ballard Collection—Oklahoma Historical Society)

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



*The Fourteenth Annual
Ceremony and Banquet*

*Grand Casino Resort
777 Grand Casino Boulevard
Shawnee, Oklahoma*

Friday September 26, 2025 7:00 p.m.



2025 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"

For the fourteenth year, we are celebrating the invaluable contributions of another remarkable group of esteemed inductees into the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. This year's class collectively represents approximately three hundred and forty-eight years of dedicated service to their profession—a testament not only to their longevity but to the enduring impact they have had on education in our state. Their unwavering commitment and pursuit of excellence have set standards of leadership and integrity, ensuring each has left a legacy second to none.

Education has always been, and will continue to be, the cornerstone that opens doors of opportunity for the many while at the same time inspiring individuals to strive to reach their highest potential. The inductees we honor tonight have served in a multitude of capacities across Oklahoma's educational landscape—classrooms, administrative offices, extracurricular programs, mentorship roles, and beyond. Their influence resonates far beyond their immediate circles, as evidenced by the countless students whose lives have been enriched, the communities uplifted by their guidance, and the colleagues empowered by their example.

The educational system in Oklahoma flourishes, in no small measure, because of the character, resilience, and vision of those being recognized this evening. The sacrifices and steadfast determination of our inductees have laid the groundwork for new generations of educators, enabling them to benefit from the conveniences, accommodations, and compensations available today. Their legacies are visible in the progress of our schools and the promise of our students. I encourage each of you to take a moment to express your gratitude, to greet these honorees and say, with sincerity, "Thank you"—for their passion, their perseverance, and their profound belief in the power of education.

We are also privileged to share in the legacy preserved and celebrated at the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc. Museum. Situated in historic Clearview, Oklahoma, this museum stands as a beacon for history enthusiasts, a must-see destination for visitors, and a source of pride for our entire community. Clearview itself, one of the original Thirteen All-Black towns of Oklahoma, sits centrally between Tulsa and Oklahoma City in Okfuskee County, easily accessible from Interstate 40. The museum not only chronicles the achievements of African American educators but also serves as an enduring reminder of the struggles and triumphs that have shaped our educational landscape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.".

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.

President: Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



2025 OAAE Hall of Fame, Inc. Program

Entertainment

Walter Taylor III/Taylor Made Jazz
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Welcome

Ms. Sharon Hill-Wooten
Board Vice-President, Idabel

Invocation

Dr. Raushan Ashanti-Alexander
Board of Directors: Chickasha

Dinner

Grand Casino Catering
Shawnee

OAAE HOF: Our Mission

Video Presentation: Ms. Claudette Goss
Board of Directors: Oklahoma City

Master of Ceremony

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.
OAAE Board President: Clearview

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

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.
Dr. John Hardgrave - OAAE BOD
William "Bill" Ford - Shawnee Milling Co.
Principal Founder E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr

2025 Induction Ceremony

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.
Board President: Clearview

2025 Induction Ceremony Closing Remarks

Mrs. Bobbie Allen Booker
Board of Directors, Broken Arrow

Ceremonial Photos

Cedric's Photography & Creative Images
Mustang, Oklahoma

2025 Inductees

Ms. Tobytha Battle
Luther, Oklahoma

Dr. Anthony Lynn Marshall
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Mrs. Georgiann Seals Belton
Boynton, Oklahoma

Dr. Jolly Henderson Meadows
Idabel, Oklahoma

Dr. John K. Coleman
Boley, Oklahoma

Dr. Markus Shintaro Smith
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Mrs. Carolyn Gay Harris
Chicago, Illinois

Dr. Sandra D. Thompson
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Mrs. Andrea M. Luster
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

Dr. Melvin B. Tolson (Posthumously)
Langston, Oklahoma

2025 E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Athletic Scholarship Awardees

Mr. Eric Harding
Owasso, Oklahoma

Miss. Mercedes Lopez
Idabel, Oklahoma

Mr. Zakavian Threadgill
Haworth, Oklahoma

Board of Directors

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Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.

Vice President

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Ms. Diane Anderson, Ms. Rita Cooksey, Mr. Bruce Fisher, Mr. Tom Fisher, Mrs. Marilyn Jackson, Mrs. Shirley Nero,

Oklahoma Historical Society Liaison: *Dr. Michael Pearce : Oklahoma State Historian*



Life-Time Members **Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.**

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Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.-Clearview, OK
Mr. Albert Johnson Sr. - Lawton, OK (deceased)
Mrs. Eunice Edison - Lawton, OK
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Mr. Don Shaw, Esq. - Idabel, OK
Dr. Jack Paschall—Ada, OK
Mr. Orlando E. Hazley - Tulsa, OK
Mrs. Kay Hargrave - Ada, OK
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Mrs. Tanya Nero Blades - Glenpool, OK
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Dr. Deena Fisher - Woodward, OK
Dr. Anquanita Kaigler-Love - Lawton, OK
Dr. Harold C. Aldridge Jr. - Tahlequah, OK
Ms. Lou Eddie Goodlow Burris - Broken Bow, OK
Mr. Eugene DePriest Jones III - Oklahoma City, OK
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Mr. & Mrs. William & Nancy Ford - Shawnee, OK
Mrs. Delois McGee - Checotah, OK
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Ms. Rita Cooksey - Oklahoma City, OK
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Mr. Sherman Lewis - Edmond, OK
Mrs. Adell Thomesene Withers Cudjoe - Oklahoma City, OK
Dr. Raushan Ashanti-Alexander - Chickasha, OK
Mr. Carl King - Watonga, OK
Dr. Caroly Kornegay - Guthrie, OK
Mr. Tom Fisher - Woodward, OK
Mr. Clayton Nolen - Enid, OK*

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Life-Time Member Today
www.oaaehof.org*

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



2011 Inaugural Induction

*Mr. Curtis Brackeen - Muskogee
Mrs. Willie Mae Etheridge - Warrior
Dr. Henry Kirkland Jr. - Atoka
Mr. Willie B. Parker - Spencer
Mr. William Robert Patterson - Lawton*

*Dr. Meshack M. Sagini - Langston
Mr. Eddie Walter Warrior - Muskogee
Mrs. Jimmie Beatrice White Williams - Idabel
Dr. La Verne Ford Wimberly - Tulsa
Mr. Tom Anthony Withers Jr. - Clearview*

2012 Second Annual Induction

*Mr. Harold C. Aldridge Sr. - Taft
Dr. Chalon E. Anderson - Oklahoma City
Dr. Loretta Brown Collier - Tulsa
Mrs. Gladys Marie Forshee - Sapulpa
Mr. Sylvester "Prof" Franklin - Haskell*

*Mr. Willie Frank Hurte - Oklahoma City
Dr. Mendell L. Simmons - Norman
Mr. Albert Johnson Sr. - Lawton
Mr. Herbert Clarence King - Lawton
Dr. Frederick D. Moon - Oklahoma City*

2013 Third Annual Induction

*Mrs. Eva Gallimore Boyd - Chickasha
Mrs. Lou Eddie Goodlow Burris - Broken Bow
Dr. Ada Sipuel Fisher - Oklahoma City
Mr. Charles L. Henry - Lawton
Mrs. Lettie Ruth Hunter - Oklahoma City*

*Dr. Freeta Jones-Porter - Oklahoma City
Dr. Betty G. Mason - Oklahoma City
Dr. Willard G. Parker - Muskogee
Ms. Thelma Reece Parks - Oklahoma City
Dr. Wanda Pollard-Johnson - Oklahoma City*

2014 Fourth Annual Induction

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

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

2015 Fifth Annual Induction

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

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

2016 Sixth Annual Induction

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

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

2017 Seventh Annual Induction

*Mrs. Olive Ruth James - Wewoka
Mr. Calvin Rob Johns Sr. - Seminole
Mrs. Helen Louise Franks Miner - El Reno
Dr. Cecelia Nails-Palmer - Tulsa
Dr. Henry Ponder - Wewoka*

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

2018 Eighth Annual Induction

*Mrs. Amelia Louise Swain Alford - Tulsa
Dr. Ann Marie Allen - Oklahoma City
Mrs. Marilyn Frances Duncan - Wilburton
Mrs. Emma L. Jones Freeman - Oklahoma City
Mr. James L. Furch - Tulsa*

*Mrs. Joyce Ann Henderson - Oklahoma City
Mr. Benjamin Harrison Hill - Tulsa
Mrs. Judith Ann Carter Horton - Guthrie
Dr. Delois Ann McGee - Checotah
Mr. James A. Senter - Oklahoma City*

2019 Ninth Annual Induction

*Mrs. Montecella Lucinda Driver Tulsa
Mr. Joe B. Gordon - Wagoner
Mr. John Edward Haney - Guthrie
Mrs. Gertrude Marie Lewis - Broken Bow
Mr. Lee Virgil Patterson Sr. - Tulsa*

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

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

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, Inc.



2020 Annual Induction - COVID YEAR

2021 Tenth 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)

2022 Eleventh Annual Induction

Mr. Samuel Harper
Eufaula, Oklahoma
Mr. Malcolm Hilburn
Chickasha, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Ms. Dolores Del Rio Jones
Seminole, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Dr. Mautra Staley Jones
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mr. Opal Willard Lee
Idabel, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mr. Robert I. Mayes Sr.
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.
Clearview, Oklahoma
Mrs. Shirley Ann Ballard Nero
Clearview, Oklahoma
Mr. Clayton Eric Nolen
Enid, Oklahoma
Dr. Wessylne Alford Simpson
Langston, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Juanita Williams
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)

2023 Twelfth Annual Induction

Mrs. Bobbie Allen Booker
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma
Mr. Jason Douglas Brown
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mrs. Vernetta J. Dunford-DeMartra
Midwest City, Oklahoma
Mr. Lawrence E. "Train" Lane
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Mrs. Karen Knauls Pittman
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Dr. James Allan Simpson
Langston, Oklahoma

Mr. William Sulcer
Tulsa, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Dr. Melvin Todd
Langston, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Mrs. Collene M. Venters
Boley, Oklahoma
Mr. Jimmie L. White Sr.
Langston, Oklahoma (Posthumously)
Dr. Art S. Williams Jr.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

2024 Thirteenth Annual Induction

Ms. Mildred Hemphill-Burkhalter
Rentiesville, Oklahoma
Mrs. Melba Lois Caddy Jackson
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Dr. Ruth Ray Jackson
Langston, Oklahoma
Mrs. Danne L. Johnson, JD
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Dr. Jason Johnson
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Mr. Carle Lavon King Sr.
Watonga, Oklahoma
Mr. Harold G. Jones, M. Ed.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mr. Tracy McDaniel Sr.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Dr. Terry E. Spigner
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Mrs. Lucille Hooks Turner
Colbert, Oklahoma

Looking Forward to Seeing You in 2026



OAAE HOF Induction Ceremony September 25th

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

E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Scholarship

2025 Recipients

E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.

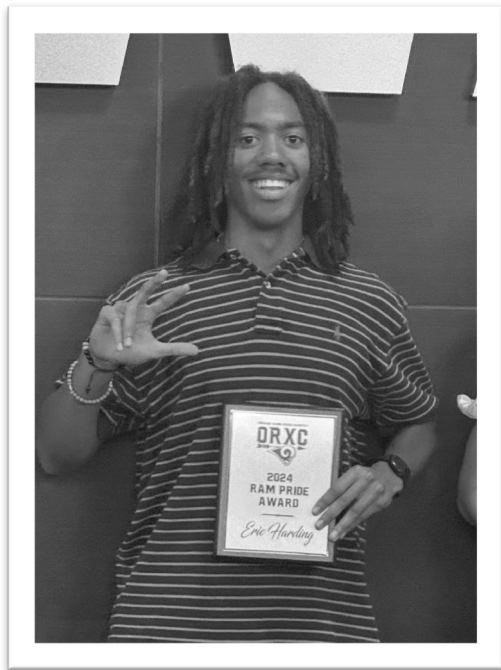


Mr. William "Bill" Ford, along with associates from Shawnee, Oklahoma, generously contributed funds to establish the E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Scholarship. Mr. Watson had served as both teacher and coach at Dunbar, Shawnee's segregated Black school. Upon the school's closure, only his coaching role was transferred to Shawnee High School. Bill Ford, a former player on Coach Watson's football team, described him as genuine, caring, and an exceptional leader. Watson's profound influence inspired Ford to initiate a scholarship in his honor.

Following E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr.'s induction into the 2017 OAAE Hall of Fame, Mr. Ford formally established the scholarship to demonstrate gratitude and continue Coach Watson's legacy of positively impacting young athletes' lives. This scholarship is awarded to outstanding athletes in Oklahoma.

Eligibility for this scholarship extends to male and female athletes graduating from an Oklahoma public school who plan to attend a college or university accredited in Oklahoma. Preference is given to African American students.

Award amounts are contingent upon available funds and may vary annually. Recipients are recognized each year at the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Ceremony, held on the last Friday of September.



Eric Harding

Owasso High School - Owasso, Oklahoma

Owasso High School graduate, Eric Harding, has been selected as a recipient of the 2025 E.M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Athletic Scholarship. He is the son of Kayla Harding of Owasso.

From an early age, Eric has always demonstrated a remarkable balance between academic achievement and extra-curricular involvement. His ability to excel in demanding Advanced Placement courses while dedicating extensive hours to sports and student organizations set him apart from his peers. Teachers frequently remarked on Eric's inquisitive nature and his willingness to help classmates grasp challenging material, highlighting his natural talent for leadership and mentorship.

These experiences have not only shaped Eric's character but also fueled his passion for education. He dreams of becoming a teacher who changes lives by encouraging curiosity and resilience in future generations. Eric's story is a testament to the power of dedication, compassion, and a vision for a

better tomorrow.

Eric participated in cross country and track and field while maintaining a 3.79 GPA in high school. He also led the Owasso High School (OHS) African American Heritage Club as President in 11th and 12th grades. Additionally, he was a member of the OHS Mock Trial Team (2021-22), OHS Speech and Debate (2021-22), and OHS Athletic Leadership Council (2023-25).

His honors include the Principal's Honor Roll and Academic All-conference (cross country) for the Frontier Valley Conference. He has been awarded a \$1000 scholarship from Oklahoma University and an achievement week scholarship from Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Eric has volunteered in his community at First Baptist Church of North Tulsa with grocery drives. The project began in a time of necessity during the Pandemic in 2020 and served hundreds of families each week.

Owasso HS cross country coach, Blake Collins, said, "Eric is a young man with high morals, strong character, and a tremendous aptitude for hard work."

Eric plans to attend the University of Oklahoma in Norman where he will pursue a degree in education. He said, "This scholarship will be extremely helpful in my college studies, easing the financial burden of higher education and allow me to focus on my degree."

E. M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Scholarship 2025 Recipients



Mercades Lopez

Idabel High School - Idabel, Oklahoma

Mercades Ke'Shae Lopez from Idabel High School has been awarded the 2025 E.M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Athletic Scholarship. She is the daughter of Karess Ayres and the late Sammy Lopez of Idabel.

Mercades maintained a 3.79 GPA in high school while actively participating in varsity basketball, varsity track, and varsity softball. In 2024, she led the Lady Warriors to victory in the OSSAA Class 3A Championship game, winning the gold ball. She served as the basketball team captain for three years and the softball captain for four years. In track, she was a member of the 2x mile relay state championship team.

Mercades received several honors, including McCurtain County freshman basketball player of the year (2021), OSSAA 3A State Championship Runner-up team (2022), OSSAA 3A State Championship Team (2024),

IHS Warriors football queen (2024), IHS Warriors basketball queen (2024-25), and IHS Lady Warriors all-time leading scorer with 2000 career points. In her senior year, she made three all-state teams – slow pitch, fastpitch, and basketball.

Mercades was an active member of the Leo Club, Key Club, and National Honor Society. She also participated in the youth group at Life Purpose Church in Idabel, where she performed community service.

In her letter of recommendation, Idabel HS Coach Kayla Denton praised Mercades for excelling in her performance and uplifting those around her. Coach Denton highlighted Mercades's strong communication skills, which foster a positive team environment.

Mercades will continue her education at Murray State College in Tishomingo, where she will major in English education and play softball. She expressed her gratitude for the scholarship, stating that it would allow her to dedicate herself fully to both academics and sports. She looks forward to growing as both an athlete and a person in college.



Zakavian Threadgill

Haworth High School - Haworth, Oklahoma

Zakavian Threadgill, a high school student, has been selected as a recipient of the 2025 E.M. "Nat" Watson Jr. Athletic Scholarship. He is the son of Natausha Walker and Tony Threadgill, both from Haworth.

Zakavian excelled in varsity track and varsity basketball for the Lions and was a four-year member of the Haworth Academic Bowl team. He maintained a 4.05 GPA and was a 2025 class Co-Valedictorian.

Zakavian excelled in varsity track and varsity basketball for the Lions and was a four-year member of the Haworth Academic Bowl team. He maintained a 4.05 GPA and was a 2025 class Co-Valedictorian. Teachers and coaches alike praised his ability to balance academics, athletics, and community involvement—often remarking on his genuine kindness and humility. As a concurrent student at Eastern Oklahoma State College, he earned 12 college credits and completed two years at Kiamichi Technology Center.

He held leadership roles as president (2023-24) and sentinel (2024-25) of Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA), and served as student council vice president (2022-23) and sophomore class vice president (2022-23). Zakavian actively participated in community service projects, including McCurtain County Christmas Council, Hill's Nursing Home, Adopt an Angel, Elderly Kindness Bags, OBI Blood Drive, and Miracle Minute.

Haworth High School Principal, Rachel Smith, described Zakavian as "a natural leader in the classroom, participating in thoughtful discussions, challenging himself, and helping peers when needed... Zakavian demonstrates maturity, resilience, and strong character."

Zakavian will attend Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, where he will major in Sports Medicine. He expressed gratitude for the financial support from the scholarship, stating, "The financial support from this scholarship will benefit me seeing as it will ease the worries on my mother of me pursuing my degree."

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Ms. Tobytha Battle

"The Challenger"

Luther, Oklahoma

Ms. Tobytha Battle, born, July 31, 1954, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was the eighth of ten children born to Roy and Lurlin Sensley Battle. Tobytha is also one of two sets of twin girls born to her parents. She was raised in Luther, Oklahoma by her mother and grandmother, Wille Bell Sensley; two powerful women instilled in her Christian values and the importance of a quality education.

Ms. Battle's early education began at Booker T. Washington, an all-Black school. When the school closed, she transferred to Luther Public Schools. While there, she participated in basketball, softball, track, band, pep club, 4-H club, cheerleading, yearbook, student council, National Honor Society, and won the honor of being Luther's First Black Football Queen.

Oklahoma Baptist University's Upward Bound Program in Shawnee, Oklahoma, prepared Ms. Battle for high school graduation and college enrollment through its academic and social skills development, tutoring, and a summer resident program on the OBU campus. She graduated with Honors from Luther High School in 1973.

Ms. Battle enrolled at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education (1977), and a Master of Education (1986), Central State University, Edmond, specializing in Special Education. She accepted her first and only teaching assignment as a special education teacher at Capitol Hill High School (CHHS) in Oklahoma City Public Schools in 1978 where she taught for thirty-nine years with fifteen years as department chair. Ms. Battle taught Learning Disabilities and Educable Mentally Handicapped or Mental Retardation courses, known today as Intellectual Disability.

Ms. Battle's instructional methods allowed her to skillfully reach students deemed unreachable, foster a safe and nurturing environment that empowered her students to set and exceed ambitious goals. Ms. Battle improved student comprehension by implementing differentiated instruction strategies tailored to their individual learning needs. She also increased parent engagement through regular communication, building strong relationships and fostering a supportive learning environment at home which fostered a positive classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. In addition, she mentored new teachers and collaborated with colleagues to develop interdisciplinary lesson plans and promoted collaboration among peers that encouraged teamwork, compromise, and shared responsibility for academic success.

Ms. Battle was a Special Olympics coach, Co-Founder of the CHHS Black Student Association, featured in the Daily Oklahoman as the first Black Head Girls Basketball Coach, and sponsored the Junior-Senior Prom for 20 years. Ms. Battle was selected as CHHS Teacher of the Year and was a finalist for Oklahoma City Public Schools (OKCPS) District Teacher of the Year. Even after retiring in 2016, Ms. Battle continued her ties to education when her church adopted a local elementary school where she tutors and mentors students.

Ms. Battle is a dedicated member of the Church of the Living God Ministries where she has worked in many capacities. Notable community service includes donations to the City Rescue Mission, Infant Crisis Center, and Regional Food Bank, member of the NAACP-Luther Branch, Board of Directors, Secretary of the Tillman-Watson Cemetery (Luther, Oklahoma), Worthy Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star Progressive Chapter #15 (Luther, Oklahoma), and Life Member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc..

Ms. Battle's teaching philosophy is encapsulated in a quote from Malcom X, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." Her greatest accomplishment is having a personal relationship with God, family, church, friends and being the proud Mother to her son, Javiro Watley and two granddaughters, Maleah and Mariah Watley who are the love of her life.

Ms. Tobytha Battle – A colleague said, "she took the initiative to make a commitment that included students, parents, and school community members, a testament to her belief that true education is a collaborative effort. Over the years, such a level of dedication is not commonplace; it is a calling!"

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mrs. Georgiann Seals Belton

"Choices Determine Success"

Boynton, Oklahoma

Georgiann Seals Belton, born on November 6, 1955, was the fourth of six children born to Georgia (Kellum) and Emanuel Hardin Seals in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her mother was a housewife, and her father was a mechanic at a large car dealership in Tulsa. The Seals children enjoyed reading books. Janette, an older sister taught Georgiann how to read before she was three years old. She would make frequent visits to the local library.

Seals attended Ralph J. Bunche Elementary School. Since she could read, she was promoted to 2nd Grade. While attending Marion Anderson Junior High School, her aunt taught her how to cook and sew doll clothes by hand because she loved to sew. Mrs. Olivia Robertson, a traveling missionary at her church took Seals under wing. Robertson spent Saturday's teaching Ms. Seals, how to shop for fabrics. When Ms. Seals walked into the tailoring classroom at Booker T. Washington High School, she knew immediately what she wanted to do. Ben McKinney, her teacher, told her "Learn a trade and you'll always have money!" She trained as a vocational student in custom suit making and alterations. She completed her education at Booker T. Washington in 1973, specializing in tailoring.

Before she entered Northeastern Oklahoma A&M, Miami, her mother bought her a portable sewing machine which allowed her to practice her trade in college. Her first week on campus, she met Jerry Belton. Two years later, in 1975, they wed. Mrs. Georgiann Seals Belton received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Home Economics and Business (1977) from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah; Master of Education Degree in Secondary Education (1983), Central State University, Edmond, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification (2001).

In 1979, Mrs. Georgiann Seals Belton began her thirty-nine-year teaching career at the Oklahoma Children's Center in Taft, Oklahoma, teaching Home Economics to deprived and neglected children in state custody. Taft High School invited these students to attend their Prom. The students told Mrs. Belton they could not go to the Prom because they did not have the proper attire. Viewing this as a teachable moment, she took them shopping for patterns and fabric, showed them how to cut, and taught them how to sew their own prom attire.

In 1983 she accepted her second teaching assignment as a Vocational Home Economics teacher at Boynton High School as well as the coordinator/operator for the Summer Foods Service Program (SFSP) for K-12 Boynton School.

Mrs. Belton became the Culinary Arts instructor and Campus/District Food Service Coordinator at the Indian Capital Technology Center (ICTC) in Muskogee, in 1988. For thirty years, she managed all aspects of food, banquet, and related services on the four ICTC campuses in Muskogee, Sallisaw, Stillwell, and Tahlequah.

Mrs. Belton's love of teaching was obvious in her classroom and by the number of professional presentations at "Region 10" Workshops, Oklahoma Restaurant Association and ProStart Conferences and from the awards she and her students received. Mrs. Belton's honors include Foodservice Mentor, Governor's Mansion, National Job Shadow Day, "Teacher of the Year" (2001,2002), Oklahoma ProStart Teacher Award of Excellence (2001) ProStart Teacher of the Year (2015), and Culinary Hall of Fame (2015). Her students have consistently won numerous Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) competitions annually at the district, state and national levels, reflecting both her skills as an educator and her deep investment in student success.

Mrs. Belton is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She and husband Jerry celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August 2025. They have two sons, Jerry and Jermaine, and nine grandchildren who are the love of their lives.

Mrs. Georgiann Seals Belton's philosophy – "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," Nelson Mandela. Her motto, "CHOICES... life is all about choices – they will determine your success in life."

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. John K. Coleman

"Ignited Curiosity"

Boley, Oklahoma

Dr. John K. Coleman was born on January 21, 1944, in Walnut Grove, Mississippi, to Malcolm Leon Coleman, Sr. and Millie Sue Kirksey Coleman, and grew up in Boley, Oklahoma. The second of five sons - Malcolm, Jr., Steven, Frederick, and Robert. Coleman's early life in Boley included working in Black-owned businesses and spending time with his elders. Those experiences, the expectations set within his home, and the academic rigor he encountered laid a strong foundation for his intellectual development and graduation from Boley High School.

Pursuing higher education was a logical step. In 1961, he enrolled at Langston University where he was elected freshman class president and became a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He was active in student advocacy efforts, including participating in marches to the Oklahoma State Capitol to protest potential threats to Langston University's continued operation. He graduated with honors in 1965, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and Mathematics.

Dr. Coleman went on to pursue graduate studies in Theoretical Physical Chemistry at the University of Oklahoma. He earned his Ph.D. in 1976 and completed postdoctoral studies at the same institution in 1978. During his time at OU, he met his future wife, Joyce Sims, who was also a graduate student in chemistry. The two married and began a life together that would span decades of shared academic and personal achievement.

After graduate school, Dr. Coleman was briefly a researcher at Halliburton Company. His academic career began in the early 1980s, with faculty appointments at Bergen County Community College in Paramus, New Jersey; the City University of New York, and Hudson County Community College. These roles allowed him to teach and mentor students from diverse backgrounds and gave him valuable insight into the ways students engage with scientific learning. In 1993, he received a call from Langston University President, the late Dr. Ernest Holloway, to return to Oklahoma and serve as Chair of the Department of Chemistry and Physical Sciences.

Upon returning to Langston University, Coleman immediately executed his call to action. Over the next three decades, Dr. Coleman built programs and secured resources that opened new pathways for underrepresented students in STEM. For fourteen years, he served as Principal Investigator and Director of the Langston University Summer Math and Science Academy, a program that prepares high school students for academic success in science and mathematics. He led the design and implementation of the Langston Integrated Network College (LINC) for STEM programs, an initiative supported by more than \$6 million in National Science Foundation funding.

The goal of the LINC program was to produce more minority students in STEM fields. This program dramatically expanded access to research opportunities, internships, and scholarships. The program achieved a 92% graduation rate, with 60% of participants earning graduate or doctoral degrees from institutions such as Vanderbilt, Stanford, Cal Tech, Johns Hopkins, Baylor, and the University of Texas and more. He led a team that created a program aimed at enhancing learning, Competency Performance Recording for Learning (CPR-L). CPR-L is aimed at "resuscitating" the students' learning of the analytical process of problem solving and disrupting their "Plug 'n Play" approach that circumvented the need to understand and apply science and mathematical laws to solve problems. Dr. Coleman led the creation of Stem Digital Village, an online resource that warehouses and makes accessible relevant information and study tools for STEM scholars. He secured and directed a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant program that resulted in a substantive increase in STEM K-12 teachers who now teach throughout Oklahoma and beyond. For more than thirty-five years, his work has been presented at conferences and published in more than twenty international scholarly publications and research journals.

Over the past three decades, Dr. Coleman not only served as Chair of the Department of Chemistry, but his impact also extends beyond academic metrics. For generations of Langston University students, he has been a mentor, advocate and example – a leader who never stopped believing in the transformative power of education. Many of his former students are now faculty members at Langston University in Chemistry or Biology Departments, shaping new generations in the same spirit he so faithfully modeled.

In 2023, he was appointed Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Langston University. After more than three decades of service at the institution, Dr. Coleman plans to retire at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Dr. Coleman and his wife, Joyce currently reside in Guthrie, Oklahoma while also maintaining a residence in St. Louis, Missouri. Their shared journey reflects a commitment to education, community, and family that has remained constant throughout Dr. Coleman's life.

Dr. John K. Coleman's Philosophy- "Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel." Socrates. I believe in igniting curiosity and nurturing a lifelong love of learning. When you help fill the void, you create a lifelong learner who learns to connect the dots.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mrs. Carolyn Gay Harris

"Fostered School Positivity"

Chicago, Illinois

Mrs. Carolyn Gay Harris stands as a pillar of education and community service was born on September 19, 1952, in the Chicago, Illinois, Carolyn to Andrew M. Gay and Marcellette Gay. Her formative years were shaped not only by the values instilled by her parents, but also by the guidance of her stepfather, Joseph Sanders, whose entrepreneurial spirit as a distributor for Goody Hair products and whose determination further influenced Carolyn's own work ethic. Her mother, Marcellette, was a dedicated stay-at-home parent who devoted herself to volunteering as a Scout leader, band parent, and an active participant in the football booster club, setting a precedent for Carolyn's lifelong commitment to service and leadership.

Carolyn attended Guggenheim Elementary School, Bond Middle School, and Yale Upper Grade Center, before graduating from Parker High School at the impressively young age of 16. Even during her school years, Carolyn's talents and passions were evident. She discovered a love for baton twirling, which led to her selection as the featured majorette for her high school band—a role that allowed her to develop both athletic grace and showmanship. This skill would later accompany her to Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, where she continued as a majorette and featured twirler for the esteemed Langston Lions Band. Her time at Langston was marked by academic achievement, as she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree, laying a solid foundation for her future career in education. Pursuing further academic excellence, she completed a Master of Education degree at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond in 1974.

Mrs. Harris began her professional journey at Spencer High School in Spencer, Oklahoma, where she taught for five years. Her commitment to shaping young minds extended to middle school classrooms for six years, and thereafter to administrative roles as both elementary and middle school principal for another six years. Her dedication and expertise culminated in her leadership as an elementary school principal for a remarkable sixteen years. These decades of service reflect a career that spanned a total of 33 years, during which she touched the lives of countless students, faculty members, and families.

Throughout her career, Mrs. Harris was known for her transformative teaching methodologies and intelligent leadership style. She believed in the importance of setting high standards and clear expectations for students, and she developed innovative strategies that enabled students to not only meet but surpass those goals. Modeling and guiding were two foundational practices she employed to encourage positive behavior and foster academic excellence both inside and outside the classroom. Mrs. Harris was convinced that a positive, nurturing school climate was essential for learning and personal growth, and she tirelessly worked to cultivate such an environment whether as a teacher or as an administrator. Her encouragement for students to think creatively and "outside the box" to solve problems became a hallmark of her educational philosophy.

Her commitment to service extended far beyond the walls of the classroom. Mrs. Harris has volunteered in numerous capacities within her community, demonstrating the same energy and compassion she brought to her career in education. Since 2020, she has served as a precinct official, helping to facilitate fair and accessible voting practices. She tutors students at Martin Luther King Elementary School in Oklahoma City, continuing her dedication to empowering youth through education. Her role as Family Readiness volunteer for the United States Army from 2006 to 2009, and her service at the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City Military Welcome Center, illustrate her gratitude and support for military families. As a life member of the Integris Hospital Auxiliary Board, she contributes to the well-being and support of hospital patients and staff. Harris is also deeply involved in her church, Greater Mount Olive Church in Oklahoma City, serving faithfully in various ministries and leadership roles.

Recognition for Mrs. Harris's outstanding contributions has been both local and widespread. She was named Administrator of the Year by the South OKC Chamber of Commerce in 1995, honored by Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and received the Oklahoma City Army Recruiting Battalion Family Readiness Volunteer of the Year award for 2009-2010. Her professional affiliations include membership in the Langston University National Alumni Association (Life Member), the Red Hat Society, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., organizations that reflect her commitment to lifelong learning and sisterhood.

Carolyn Harris is the devoted wife of Mr. Ronnie and are the parents of Cheree Mercellette Browne and Ronnie Harris, Jr. Her family has been a source of strength and inspiration, and her legacy continues through their lives.

In every role she has embraced—educator, administrator, volunteer, mentor, wife, and mother—*Mrs. Carolyn Gay Harris* has exemplified professionalism, generosity, and steadfast dedication. Her legacy is not only reflected in her students' achievements and her school's success, but also in the vibrancy of her community and the strength of her family. Through her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment, Mrs. Harris has helped countless individuals realize their potential and has contributed immeasurably to the field of education and to the betterment of society.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Mrs. Andrea M. Luster

"Empowers Student's Success"

Okmulgee, Oklahoma

Mrs. Andrea Michelle Luster was born on June 22, 1955, in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, the eldest of five children in the family of Willard and Mable Gallimore. Raised in a household that cherished learning, discipline, and compassion, Mrs. Luster's early years were filled with curiosity and a drive to uplift those around her. Her formative experiences in Okmulgee's all-Black schools—Banneker Elementary and Dunbar Junior High—instilled a deep sense of pride in

her heritage and a belief in the transformative power of education.

In sixth grade, Mrs. Luster faced a pivotal moment: she could choose to remain in the familiar environment of segregated schools or embrace integration. She opted to stay in her community, valuing the connections and support she found there. However, in 1969, statewide desegregation was enforced, and Mrs. Luster transitioned to Okmulgee High School, where she excelled academically and socially. Among her achievements was winning a national essay competition sponsored by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., with her thought-provoking entry, "Women's Liberation...Renaissance or Rip-Off." This honor led to a two-week tour of nine historically significant African American cities across the United States, broadening her horizons and deepening her commitment to justice and equality.

After graduating high school in 1973, Mrs. Luster pursued higher education at Central State University (now the University of Central Oklahoma) in Edmond. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education in 1977 and later enriched her expertise with two master's degrees, one in reading and another in guidance and counseling. Her academic journey was marked by perseverance and a desire to reach the highest standards in her field.

Mrs. Luster's professional career began in Anadarko Public Schools as a Reading teacher in 1977. Her empathy and insight quickly set her apart, and in 1979, she moved to Lincoln Elementary School in Chickasha, Oklahoma. There, she inspired countless students and fostered a love of learning. In 1982, Mrs. Luster joined the Edmond Youth Council, where she developed and implemented adaptive curricula for students facing academic and emotional challenges in psychiatric units at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City and Edmond Hospital. She worked with young people experiencing trauma, substance abuse, or mental health struggles, tailoring lessons to meet their unique needs—a testament to her versatility and dedication.

In 1990, Mrs. Luster undertook a new role at Boulevard Academy within Edmond Public Schools, serving as an Alternative Education teacher. In this capacity, she provided support to students with Individualized Education Plans by delivering specific accommodations and guidance designed to address challenges and promote academic achievement. Her approach was holistic, recognizing each student's potential and nurturing their growth with patience and understanding.

Beyond the classroom, Mrs. Luster contributed to the Indian Education Program, a Title VI initiative in Edmond Public Schools. She tutored students from kindergarten to eighth grade in after-school programs, designed curricula for summer enrichment, reviewed scholarship applications, and assisted in staff recruitment. Her work supported Native American students in accessing both educational and cultural opportunities, reflecting her belief in inclusivity and empowerment.

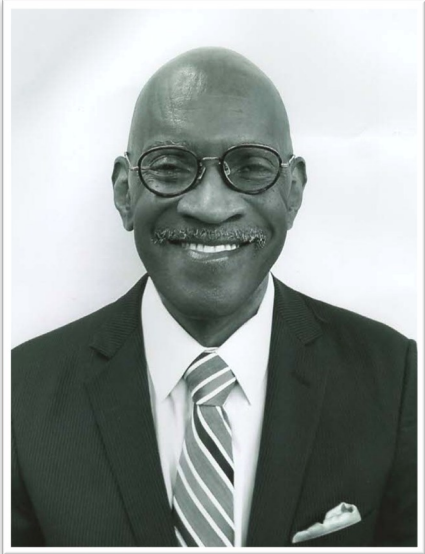
After 46 years of unwavering service, Mrs. Luster retired in 2023, leaving a legacy that continues to influence generations. Her community involvement remains extensive: she coordinated the Ivy Reading Academy at Dewey Elementary in Oklahoma City—a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.—to ensure students achieved grade-level reading proficiency by third grade. As chairperson of the food and clothing ministry at Avery Chapel AME Church, Mrs. Luster provided vital assistance to families in need. She also serves as class leader, chairperson of the Stewardess Board, and a dedicated member of the LeVaughn Missionary Unit.

A proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. for forty-eight years, Mrs. Luster has held numerous leadership roles and currently serves as Chapter Hodegos, mentoring and inspiring new generations of leaders. Her professional affiliations have included the National Education Association, the Oklahoma Education Association, and the Edmond Association of Classroom Teachers—organizations that reflect her deep connection to the broader educational community.

Mrs. Luster was married to the late Frank Melvin Luster III and is a devoted mother to Torie Luster Pennington, who is married to Camal Pennington, and grandmother to Olivia and Ella. Her family, friends, and colleagues regard her as a steadfast advocate for equity and opportunity, and her work exemplifies the spirit of perseverance and compassion.

Throughout her career, *Mrs. Andrea Michelle Luster* has been in the trenches, teaching marginalized and at-risk learners, tirelessly championing their success. Her extraordinary ability to connect with struggling students and guide them to achievement has left an indelible mark on the field of education and inspired countless others to follow in her footsteps. Her legacy is one of dedication, compassion, and visionary leadership, celebrated by all who have had the privilege to know her.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Anthony Lynn Marshall

"Inspired For A Lifetime"

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Dr. Anthony Lynn Marshall was born in 1958 to Herbert and Dorothy Marshall in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His father worked as a janitor, and his mother was a homemaker. From an early age, Anthony was known for his boundless energy, insatiable curiosity, and love of learning. His parents affectionately described him as a "busy body," constantly exploring, asking questions, and engaging with the world around him.

Dr. Marshall attended Ralph Bunche Elementary School, Marion Anderson Middle School, and the historic Booker T. Washington (BTW) High School. Deeply influenced by his parents' creativity, he developed early passions in both visual and performing arts and excelled in clothing design and music. He was inspired by the sounds of the BTW band rehearsing near his home, which motivated him to join the school's band and eventually serve as drum major for the famed BTW "T-Connection" marching band as a junior. He graduated in 1975.

Motivated by the injustices he witnessed in his community, Marshall resolved early in life to become a lawyer and advocate for those who could not defend themselves. He enrolled in Howard University in Washington, D.C., holding leadership positions in student government, including vice-president, and served as a Howard University Ambassador, mentoring and orienting incoming students. He was a four-year member of the Showtime Marching Band, serving as drum major for two years. He earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business in 1979 and his Juris Doctorate degree in 1986.

After serving 20 years in the Office of the General Counsel for the District of Columbia, Marshall retired and returned home to Tulsa to fulfill a lifelong dream to teach at his alma mater, Booker T. Washington High School. He joined the BTW faculty in 2003, teaching Advanced Placement United States History and International Baccalaureate (IB) History of Africa and African American Studies. He wrote the curriculum for this course and led its district-wide implementation. His classroom quickly became a place of academic challenge, cultural pride, and community uplift. Additionally, Dr. Marshall made lasting contributions beyond the classroom by serving as faculty advisor for Student Council and African American Society.

Dr. Marshall organized annual college tours for students to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), opening doors of opportunity and expanding their vision of possibilities. He personally recruited over 30 students from Tulsa to attend Howard University, ensuring they had the support and encouragement to succeed. He was the "voice of halftime" at BTW football games. Perhaps his proudest accomplishment is founding Men of Power, a transformative mentorship program for high school boys, particularly African American youth. The program, rooted in academic excellence, spiritual growth, and community service, challenged stereotypes and built a foundation for confidence, discipline, and leadership. Through this platform, Dr. Marshall changed lives by helping young men discover their purpose and potential.

During his tenure at BTW, he was voted as BTW Teacher of the Year and was a finalist for Tulsa Public Schools Teacher of the Year. Dr. Marshall served on the Teacher Advisory Council for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and participated in the 2017-2018 National WWII Museum Teacher Institute. His work has been published by the Gilder Lehrman Institute's DBQ Project, and he served on the Advisory Board of the Male Educators of Color Collaborative (MEOCC). Dr. Marshall completed the application for the Booker T. Washington High School Distinguished Hall of Fame Foundation to become a nonprofit tax-exempt entity under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is responsible for identifying the students who met the criteria for scholarships. In 2024, he was inducted into the Booker T. Washington High School Distinguished Hall of Fame.

In addition to his numerous awards and achievements, Dr. Marshall has participated in national education conferences, advocating for curriculum reform and equitable resources for underserved communities. He regularly volunteers for local organizations dedicated to youth empowerment and historical preservation, helping to restore community landmarks and organize cultural events. Throughout his career, Dr. Marshall has received letters of commendation from city officials and educational leaders, recognizing his unwavering commitment to excellence and service.

Dr. Marshall is retired and resides in Washington, D.C. yet remains a vocal and devoted supporter of Booker T. Washington High School and Howard University. He continues to mentor youth, travel, and sing in his church choir, living out his core belief that "to teach is to inspire for a lifetime."

Dr. Anthony L. Marshall – Reflecting on his journey, he often shares: Never in my more than twenty years as an attorney has my life been as fulfilling as the years I have spent as a teacher. A colleague says, "His life story is a testament to the power of purpose, service, and the enduring impact of those who dedicate their lives to uplifting others."

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Jolly Henderson Meadows

"Exemplary Role Model"

Idabel, Oklahoma

Dr. Jolly Henderson Meadows was born December 21, 1952, to Albert Henderson, Jr. and Cora Cotton Henderson in Harris, Oklahoma. She and her siblings – Betty, Charlotte, Carl, and Robert – were raised in the small rural community. She attended the All-Black Booker T. Washington School until 1968 when school integration was implemented. She graduated in 1971 from Gray High School in Idabel, Oklahoma. She matriculated to Oklahoma's only HBCU where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education in 1974, followed by a Master of Education degree in Reading from Northeastern State University in 1979. She obtained a Master of Education degree in Leadership from Northeastern in 1986 and Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma in 1997.

Dr. Meadows began her illustrious 51-year career in education at Liberty Elementary in Sapulpa, Oklahoma where she taught math to first, second, and third grade students. She joined Tulsa Public Schools in 1975 when she accepted a teaching position at Riley Elementary School. She was appointed assistant principal at Patrick Henry Elementary School in 1986. After two years, she was appointed Principal; a position she held for 23 years. She and her leadership team and staff took an academically struggling school to one that demonstrated significant academic growth over time. While working at Patrick Henry ES, she received recognition as Outstanding Principal by both Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) and the Tulsa Alliance of Black School Educators.

In 2006, TPS took notice of the impressive academic growth and considered whether her methodology and strategies would garner the same results at other low-performing schools. She was assigned to the principalship at Monroe Middle School in 2006. She was transferred to Gilcrest Middle School in 2007 where she developed and implemented a plan to improve the students' achievement scores. This was accomplished by the subsequent test cycle when the school met its target.

As an administrator, Dr. Meadows was known for utilizing innovative and reliable programs with proven outcomes to achieve academic gains. She employed a collaborative approach to empower teachers to become leaders, to disaggregate test data, and to research supplemental instructional materials. She retired from Tulsa Public Schools in 2009. She was employed as an adjunct professor of urban education in the undergraduate and graduate programs at Langston University, Tulsa.

Dr. Meadows accepted a full-time position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Tulsa. It was her opportunity to continue to utilize her expertise as an elementary teacher, reading specialist, and building administrator to prepare a new generation of teachers for the classroom. She was guided by the question, *"What do principals need teachers to know and be able to do when they enter the classroom?"* She serves as an advocate for students applying to the teacher education program and help navigate their path to admission.

During her career, Dr. Meadows was awarded Exemplary Principal for leadership and school improvement in Tulsa Public Schools, Administrator of the Year by the Tulsa Area Alliance of Black School Educators, Most Valuable Professor for supporting college students in the TU Department of Athletics, and Influential Professor for support to students in education.

Dr. Meadows volunteers as a reading buddy at Monroe Middle School in Tulsa, is vice president of the Langston University National Alumni Association-Tulsa chapter (2021-present), and member of the Tulsa County Area Superintendents Association (2009-present). Her volunteerism extends to her hometown of Idabel where she serves as the Education Coordinator at The Gallery: Art-Culture-Expansion (2018-present), Booker T. Washington Slater Riverside Scholarship Foundation Board Member, and Chairperson for the Booker T. Washington Slater Riverside-Legacy Golf Tournament (2022-present).

Additionally, she is a member of the North Tulsa Community Education Task Force, Association for Supervision of Curriculum and Development (ASCD), International Literacy Association, Oklahoma Reading Association, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Dr. Meadows was married to Terry Meadows (deceased) who overwhelmingly supported her throughout her career.

Dr. Jolly Henderson Meadows is an exemplary educator and role model who has demonstrated her commitment to teaching teachers how to teach. She continues to remain abreast of research-based best practices in education for herself and the future teachers she serves. The percentage of her students who pass their certification exams attest to her ability to teach future teachers.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Markus Shintaro Smith

"Transforming Lives"

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Dr. Markus Shintaro Smith's story began at Yokota U.S. Air Force Base in Tokyo, Japan, where he was born on July 14, 1971, to Herman and Sachiyo Smith. In 1974, the Smiths – along with Markus's younger sister Takiyah – moved to Seminole, Oklahoma, where financial hardship forced them to live with his great-grandparents, Allen and Myrtle Manning. Two years later, the family relocated to Carverdale neighborhood in northeast Oklahoma City – an area known for poverty and crime. Despite the odds, his parents instilled in him a deep belief that education could break cycles of hardship and open doors. He took that to heart and thrived at Willard Elementary, F.D. Moon Middle School, and Southeast High School, graduating in 1989.

Dr. Smith earned an associate in arts degree in Political Science from Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) in 2001. From there, he transferred to the University of Central of Oklahoma (UCO) in Edmond, where he quickly earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in 2002 and a Master of Arts degree in Political Science in 2004. Not yet finished – he went on to earn both a Master of Education degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Oklahoma in Norman in 2011. Later, he added a Certificate in Graduate Theological Studies from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa in 2013 and completed additional coursework and leadership and professional development courses through Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts by 2015.

Dr. Smith began his teaching career in 2003 as the Graduate Assistant in the political science department, teaching American Federal Government courses. He later served as a Lecturer and Adjunct Professor until 2019. Throughout his tenure, he chaired and facilitated panel discussions for the UCO College of Liberal Arts Student Symposium. In 2015, he also contributed to the development of UCO's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program by serving as a member of its advisory board. Over the years, he co-authored the "Public Policy" and "Higher Education Policy in Oklahoma" chapters in the *Oklahoma Government & Politics* book that is widely adopted across Oklahoma colleges and universities.

Dr. Smith began teaching at OCCC in 2004 as an Adjunct Professor of political science, becoming a full-time faculty member by 2006. He rose to Department Chair in 2009, overseeing program development, coordinating, and supervising departmental programs and evaluations, and assessment planning among other responsibilities. Notably, he introduced the department's first-ever capstone course – also a first among Oklahoma's 13 community colleges. He also launched initiatives that improved student success rates and served as chair among key committees across campus.

Dr. Smith joined Rose State College in 2014 as an Adjunct Professor of political science in Midwest City. In 2022, he returned as a keynote speaker for the "College Bound All Around" event – invited by Dr. Monique Bruner, Vice President of the Campus Resource Center, to share his inspiring story as detailed in his Amazon best-selling memoir, *Journey Through the Hoods: From Poverty to Ph.D. to Million-Dollar Real Estate Agent*.

A lifelong philanthropist, Dr. Smith has spent over 30 years donating school supplies, food, clothing, hygiene kits, scholarships, and more. In 2023, President Joe Biden recognized his service with the *President's Lifetime Achievement Award*. That same year, he joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., drawn to its strong legacy of excellence and community service.

Dr. Smith has been honored with numerous prestigious awards including the *President's Award for Excellence in Teaching* and being inducted into the *OCCC Alumni Hall of Fame*, the *Outstanding Educator Award* from the University of Oklahoma's Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education, and the *Teaching Award* from the American Association of University Professors, among other notable recognitions.

Dr. Smith is a proud husband to Melissa Burks Smith, dad to Jasmine and Dylan, grandfather ("Doc") to Greyson and Layla, uncle to Anthony, and dog-dad to Pedro. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, working out, and reading good books.

Dr. Markus Shintaro Smith is proof that your past does not have to determine your future. From growing up in one of Oklahoma City's toughest neighborhoods to becoming an OAAE Hall of Fame inductee, he overcame the odds and thrived. His legacy is to be remembered as an educator who sparked purpose, transformed lives, and showed that every student can succeed with the right guidance and belief in themselves.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Sandra D. Thompson

"A Change Agent"

Ponca City, Oklahoma

Dr. Sandra D. Thompson was born on March 1, 1953, to Elnora Dial Dewberry in Ponca City, Oklahoma. Growing up in a vibrant and supportive community, she was immersed in music and education from an early age. Her mother, a dedicated advocate for learning, often filled their home with the soulful sounds of spirituals and gospel hymns, nurturing Sandra's natural inclination toward music.

As a child, Sandra found herself drawn to the piano at her church, where she spent countless hours practicing scales and learning melodies by ear. Her early experiences performing in church services and local community events ignited a passion for the arts and laid the foundation for her future pursuits.

Encouraged by her teachers and family, Sandra excelled academically and artistically. She was known not only for her talent but also for her compassion and willingness to help her peers. Whether tutoring classmates in math or volunteering at community functions, Sandra's dedication to service became a defining feature of her character.

Her journey through music was accompanied by challenges and triumphs. Despite facing obstacles common to African American students in mid-century Oklahoma, she persevered, buoyed by a steadfast belief in the transformative power of education and the arts. These formative years instilled in her a resilience and sense of purpose that would guide her through an illustrious career spanning nearly five decades. Her mother passed shortly after her birth; she was adopted by her mother's cousins, James M. and Mary Thompson.

Dr. Thompson attended public schools in Ponca City - Crispus Attucks Elementary, East Junior High School, and Ponca City High School. While in high school, she participated in the Oklahoma Junior Miss Pageant; she was selected as a talent winner and 3rd Runner-up. Upon graduating from high school in 1971, she enrolled at Oklahoma City University. She also joined opera star Leona Mitchell in concert. At the event, she played piano as Leona Mitchell performed. She graduated in 1975 with a Bachelor of Music Education degree. In 1977, she received a Master of Music degree from Central State University (University of Central Oklahoma) in Edmond, Oklahoma.

In 1978, Dr. Thompson accepted her first teaching assignment at Ft. Towson, a small district in southeastern Oklahoma where she taught vocal music. Her next teaching job in 1977 was in Enid Public Schools. From there, she accepted a position as a music teacher in Edmond Public Schools (Boulevard Academy, Sequoyah Middle School, and Cimarron Middle School) followed by stints in Millwood (1981-85) and Putnam City (1985-89) districts.

Dr. Thompson accepted a position in the Department of Music as an instructor of Music at Central State University in 1989. In 2008, she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Oklahoma. Her tenure at the University of Central Oklahoma afforded her the opportunity to impact students' lives by fostering relations with them, challenging them to exceed expectations, and empowering them with life knowledge.

Dr. Thompson played a vital role in improving educational and leadership opportunities for students at the University of Central Oklahoma by ensuring they were engaged and involved in decision-making. She was a steadfast and ardent advocate for quality learning experiences and a proponent for community outreach programs to promote educational equality.

A member of the Evangelistic Baptist Church, she serves as the pianist. She joined the Ambassadors' Concert Choir in 1983 and became their Artistic Director in 2010. The choir has been recognized for their versatile repertoire; singing music from musical theatre to opera and gospel. They traveled to Mexico where they performed with Sinfonia de Minería under the direction of the late Maestro Luis Herra de la Fuente.

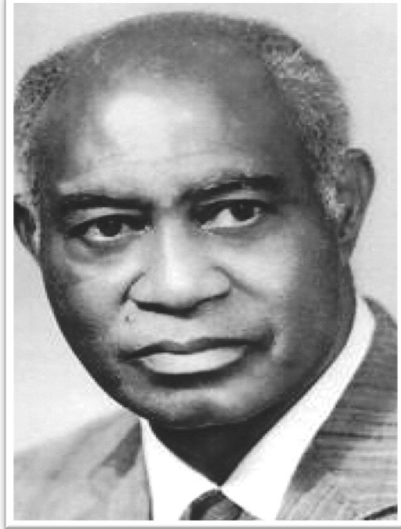
Dr. Thompson was the recipient of the Vanderford Teaching Award in 2013. In May 2024, the Ladies Music Club of Oklahoma City named her the Musician of the Year. In 2024, the University of Central Oklahoma chose her to serve as Visiting Professor at the Guizhou Normal University in Guizhou, China.

Dr. Thompson was/is a member of the Oklahoma Music Educators Convention, American Choral Directors Association, Oklahoma City Baton and Keyboard Club, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

After having amassed 45 years in education, Dr. Thompson retired in 2023. She taught Music Education, Music History, and Director of the legendary Langston University Chorale in Fall, 2024. She continues to teach at the University of Central Oklahoma as an Adjunct Professor.

Dr. Sandra D. Thompson demonstrated an unwavering commitment to academic excellence and student success. Her character, integrity, and ability to connect with students and colleagues enabled her to be a change agent in their lives, which speaks volumes about her.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Inductee



Dr. Melvin Beaunorus Tolson

"Challenged & Inspired"

Langston, Oklahoma

Dr. Melvin Beaunorus Tolson was born on February 6, 1898, in Moberly, Missouri, to Reverend Alonzo Tolson and Lera Ann Hurt Tolson. Tolson's childhood was spent in small towns throughout Iowa and Missouri where his father served as a Methodist minister. Reverend Tolson studied throughout his life to add to the limited education he had first received, even taking Latin and Hebrew correspondence courses. Both parents emphasized education for their children. The family finally settled in Kansas City, Missouri, where he attended and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1918.

His college journey began in 1918 at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. The next year, he transferred to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, the nation's first Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to grant degrees. Tolson was initiated into the Beta chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He married Ruth Southall in 1922, and they welcomed their first son (Melvin, Jr.) in the same month that he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1923.

Tolson taught English and speech at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas for nearly two decades. In addition to teaching English, Tolson established an award-winning debate team, the Wiley Forensic Society, which became a pioneer in interracial collegiate debates. Beginning in 1930, the team debated against law students from the University of Michigan in Chicago; then, in 1931, the team participated in the first known interracial collegiate debate in the South, against Oklahoma City University. At home, the Tolsons were blessed with two more sons (Arthur Lincoln and Wiley Wilson) and a daughter (Ruth Marie).

Tolson took a sabbatical from teaching in 1930 to study for a master's degree at Columbia University in New York City. His thesis project, *"The Harlem Group of Negro Writers,"* was based on his extensive interviews with members of the Harlem Renaissance which inspired him to write, *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits*, his first major work. His poetry was strongly influenced by his time in New York City, and he was awarded a master's degree in English and Comparative Literature in 1940. During his tenure at Wiley, Tolson also co-founded the Black Intercollegiate Southern Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts and directed the theater club. Additionally, he coached the junior varsity football team. In 1947, Tolson relocated to another HBCU, Langston University where he taught English, drama, and he was a dramatist and director of the Dust Bowl Theater. Students described Tolson as eccentric, driven, fearless, and radical. It was not unusual for him to stand on top of a desk and jump off to engage in shaming and challenging students during lectures. While at Langston University, Tolson was elected to multiple terms as Mayor of the Town of Langston City.

In addition to his stellar work as an educator, Tolson began branching out to writing and the arts. From 1937 to 1944, he penned an opinion column for the Washington Tribune. He became one of the most important and distinguished of America's poets, having written three major, book-length works of poetry for which he is most famous: *Rendezvous with America* (1944). In 1947 he was appointed Poet Laureate of the African nation of Liberia, for which he wrote his *Libretto for the Republic Liberia* (1953), and later garnered the poetry award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1965, and *Harlem Gallery: Book One, The Curator* (1965). Tolson also was a playwright: *Black No More* (1952) and *Black Boy* (1963).

His other honors include: two Honorary Doctorate of Letters Conferred, Lincoln University; his poetry was presented at the White House by request of President Lyndon Johnson (1965); Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center, Langston University (1970) the national repository for the National Association for the Study and Performance of African and African American Music; Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame (2004, posthumous induction). He was the subject of *The Great Debaters* (2007) a biographical film that chronicled his and the team's plight that culminated in a groundbreaking challenge against Harvard University's champions during a time of significant racial tension and segregation.

In 1965, Tolson was appointed to a two-year term as Avalon Poet at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. His career in education at the collegiate level spanned 43 years. He died in Dallas, Texas, on August 29, 1966 and is buried in Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Dr. Melvin B. Tolson was an esteemed professor who challenged, inspired, and provided a holistic education to his students. Poet, novelist and playwright Langston Hughes said of Tolson, "Students all over that part of the world speak of him, revere him, remember him and love him."

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 re-establishment 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. Consequently, 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." This 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.

The 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

OPTION 2: \$500.00 for one (1) year

\$50.00 for ten (10) months

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If payment plan is not completed in one year, money is forfeited

OPTION 3: \$500.00 one-time payment

Individuals must select option plan and sign off on said plan before signing life membership proposal.

AGREEMENT:

I _____, agree to option _____ to fulfill my obligation to become a life member of the OKLAHOMA AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS HALL OF FAME LIFE MEMBER.

NAME _____ DATE _____

TREASURER/PRESIDENT _____ DATE _____

Annual Membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number _____ Email _____

\$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 Focuses on All-Black Towns

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) is proud to provide support for research, programming, exhibits, and events related to the thirteen original All-Black towns of Oklahoma. These historic towns are vital parts of the history of our state and tell unique stories of the men and women who settled here. With your help, the OHS hopes to further its impact on preserving and sharing the legacy of these communities.

The Shirley Ann Ballard Nero endowment was established to directly support the ongoing preservation efforts of the thirteen original All-Black towns. Shirley Nero, a native of the All-Black town of Clearview, Oklahoma, taught at Sapulpa and then Porum Public Schools for thirty years. She received Teacher of the Year honors on four occasions. In 1994, the Sapulpa School Board presented Shirley with the Distinguished Service Award. She serves on several boards, including the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Committee, the Friends of the Oklahoma Historical Society Multicultural Office Board, and the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame. In 2016 she was the recipient of the Pinnacle Award, which honors outstanding women for their work as role models to women and children in the Tulsa community. She has been a passionate advocate for Oklahoma history and especially the state's unique story of the All-Black towns.

Your gift to the Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment creates a lasting impact. By donating to the endowment, your gift provides support in perpetuity and allows the OHS to continue its efforts to preserve, protect, and share the story of these historically significant towns. Donations to the endowment are tax-deductible and donors are listed in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* and recognized on the OHS donor board at the Oklahoma History Center.

Donations can be made out to the Shirley Ann Ballard Nero Endowment Fund and sent to:

Brittney Berling
Development Officer
Oklahoma Historical Society
800 Nazih Zuhdi Dr.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-522-0317

Sincerely,

Brittney Berling



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 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.

The Oklahoma Historical Society Black Heritage Committee

Shirley Ann Ballard Nero, Chairperson

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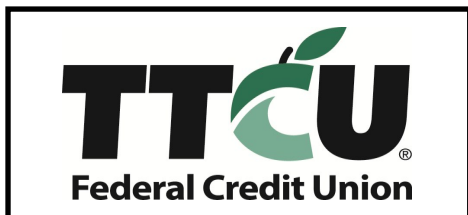
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Thank you for your support!

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President Dr. Donnie L. Nero Sr.
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