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GREENWOOD
CULTURAL
CENTER

The
Vanguard

By SUSAN DRAGOO

WHO SHOULD HAVE A PLACE ON A DEFINITIVE LIST OF THE BEST OF THE BEST, THE MOST DISTINGUISHED AMONG ACHIEVERS, THE MOST IMPACTFUL INDIVIDUALS IN A STATE RICH IN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM AFRICAN AMERICANS? WE ASSEMBLED A SEVEN-MEMBER PANEL OF EXPERTS, AND THE RESULT OF THEIR COLLECTIVE WISDOM IS THE FOLLOWING LIST OF THE FORTY-FIVE MOST INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN AMERICANS IN OKLAHOMA.



HANNAH DIGGS ATKINS
[1923-2010]

Hannah Diggs Atkins was Oklahoma's first female African American legislator. Elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 1968, she served until 1980. During her time in

office, the North Carolina transplant, who represented the 97th House District in Oklahoma City, was an advocate for Oklahoma's most vulnerable citizens. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed her a U.S. delegate to the United Nations. "She was an outstanding, dynamic trailblazer of the first magnitude," says panelist Hannibal B. Johnson.



ZELIA N. BREAUX
[1880-1956]

Zelia N. Breaux had a far-reaching impact on American music and culture. As a music teacher at Frederick A. Douglass High School and supervisor of music for Oklahoma City's black

schools, she mentored a group of future stars that included Charlie Christian, Ralph Ellison, and Jimmy Rushing. Her music venue in Deep Deuce, the Aldridge Theatre, hosted prestigious traveling musicians, and her Douglass High School marching band was among the best in the country. Breaux was educator Inman E. Page's daughter.



CHARLES HENRY "CHARLIE" CHRISTIAN
[1916-1942]

Charlie Christian's life was short in years but long on impact. He took up the guitar at age twelve, playing music while a student at Douglass High School under the mentorship

of Zelia Breaux and perfecting his craft busking and playing in Deep Deuce dance halls. His stylistic innovations on the electric guitar changed it from a rhythm instrument to an important solo presence in ensembles. Christian died of tuberculosis at twenty-five. In a 1982 interview, Benny Goodman, who played with Christian in the Benny Goodman Sextet, said, "He was unique! A brilliant musician. Inventive.... He was way ahead of his time and a joy to listen to."



NANCY RANDOLPH DAVIS
[b. 1926]

Nancy Randolph Davis has proven her own assertion that persistence and focus lead to success. In 1949, the Sapulpa native became the first African American

student to enroll at Oklahoma State University (then Oklahoma A&M). She earned her master's degree there and taught home economics in the Oklahoma City area for forty-three years. In December 2008, the Oklahoma Human Rights Commission honored the Oklahoma City resident with an award for her dedication as a pioneer in education and human rights.



JAMES HERMAN BANNING
[1899-1933]

James Herman Banning, a Canton native, was the first black pilot to fly coast to coast across the United States. Shortly after his historic journey with copilot and fellow Oklahoman Thomas

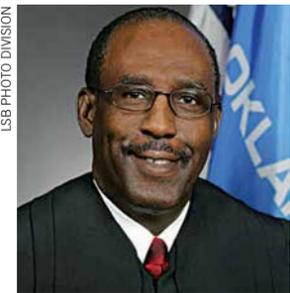
C. Allen, he tried to rent a plane to fly in a San Diego air show but was refused because of his race. Instead, he was a passenger on a flight with a less-experienced pilot. When their biplane stalled in a steep climb and crashed, Banning died at age thirty-four. "We appreciate Mr. Banning's courage and resolve," says panelist Loretta Y. Jackson.



W.A.J. BULLOCK
[c. 1877-1946]

W.A.J. Bullock was a Chickasha surgeon and family physician for more than forty years. While serving as regional director of the NAACP's southwestern Oklahoma branch, he joined

Roscoe Dunjee in accompanying Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher to OU President George L. Cross' office in 1946 as she attempted to enroll in OU's College of Law. Bullock was an important part of Fisher's remarkable story, and in her 1996 autobiography, she describes him as the "chief spokesman, role model, and protector of Chickasha's entire African American community."



TOM COLBERT
[b. 1949]

Born in Oklahoma City, Tom Colbert earned his juris doctorate from the University of Oklahoma in 1982. In 2000, he became the first African American appointed to the Oklahoma

Court of Civil Appeals, where he later served as chief judge. In 2004, Governor Brad Henry appointed Colbert to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, making him its first African American justice. In November 2012, Colbert's fellow justices elected him chief justice, a term that expired at the end of 2014. "Justice Colbert's groundbreaking ascendancy to Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court broke what once seemed an impenetrable barrier," says Hannibal B. Johnson.



ROSCOE DUNJEE
[1883-1965]

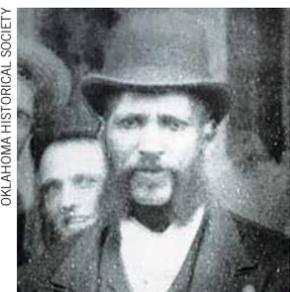
Roscoe Dunjee published Oklahoma City's first black newspaper, the *Black Dispatch*, from 1915 to 1954. Whether in oratory or in scathing editorials denouncing injustice,

he was uncompromising in his stand for equality. Dunjee led the Oklahoma branch of the NAACP for more than a decade and was a key figure in several landmark court cases affecting segregation in Oklahoma. Dunjee was, says Hannibal B. Johnson, "a giant among giants—a trailblazer in journalism and civil rights."



THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS
[1866-1890s]

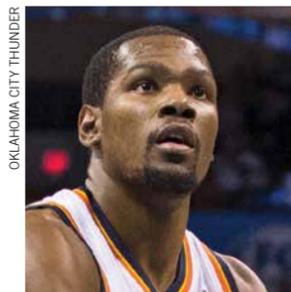
These African American cavalry and infantrymen, who served in the U.S. Army after the Civil War, were pioneers in post-slavery America and the first professional black soldiers in the army. Playing a vital role in Indian Territory, they built infrastructure, protected tribal members on reservations, enforced territorial laws, and prevented land rushers from staking early claims. "African Americans have long been willing to defend their country and make the ultimate sacrifice, but the country has not always been willing to defend their full rights as citizens," says panelist Bob Blackburn. "The lessons to be learned from the Buffalo Soldiers range from courage and commitment to perseverance and the fight for freedom."



GREEN I. CURRIN
[c. 1842-1918]

Green I. Currin was the first African American to serve in the Oklahoma Territorial Legislature. Born in Tennessee, he moved west following emancipation, working as a

lawman in Kansas. During the Land Run of 1889, Currin staked a claim in Kingfisher County and became one of five county delegates elected to the House of Representatives. To address violent racial attacks against African Americans, Currin introduced the territory's first civil rights legislation, which was ultimately unsuccessful.



KEVIN DURANT
[b. 1988]

The reigning Most Valuable Player of the National Basketball Association and its four-time scoring leader, Kevin Durant is a household name. He is the star of the Oklahoma City

Thunder, but the Maryland native's character invites another level of worldwide admiration. Durant donated \$1 million to aid Moore tornado victims in 2013 and engaged other major donors to help. Another NBA great, LeBron James, said of Durant, "Besides being an unbelievable talent, he's a great guy who understands what it means to be a role model. Oklahoma City is lucky to have KD."

THE RALPH & FANNY ELLISON CHARITABLE TRUST



RALPH WALDO ELLISON

[1913-1994]

Ralph Ellison came of age in Oklahoma City's Deep Deuce neighborhood and was a rare artist who could capture the spirit of time and place with poetic beauty. "Through his essays and fiction,

Ralph Ellison used words like no one else to explore the world around him, whether it was the soul-crushing oppression of racism or the creative complexity of jazz," says Bob Blackburn. In 1952, Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*, one of America's defining novels of racial identity. The next year, the novel won the National Book Award, making Ellison the first African American to receive the prestigious literary honor.



ADA LOIS SIPUEL FISHER

[1924-1995]

At the NAACP's urging, the twenty-one-year-old Chickasha native and Langston University graduate sought admission to OU's law school in 1946. Three years later, after an extended

court battle in which Thurgood Marshall successfully argued her case in front of the United States Supreme Court, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher was admitted to the OU College of Law. She was required to use separate facilities until 1950, when *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* struck a blow to the separate-but-equal doctrine and the state legislature changed its laws so that black students were allowed to share facilities at Oklahoma universities. She graduated in 1952. Hannibal B. Johnson describes her as "a true legend in Oklahoma who, at no small risk, made the lives of generations of African Americans better."

TULSA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

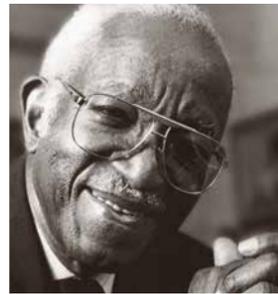


B.C. "BUCK" FRANKLIN

[1879-1960]

One of the first black attorneys in Tulsa and Oklahoma, Buck Franklin served his community from a tent in the aftermath of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot. The son of a Chickasaw freedman, Franklin won a critical court decision that struck down a city ordinance designed to prevent blacks from rebuilding their homes in Tulsa. "Franklin was a living legend at a time when the term *politically correct* had

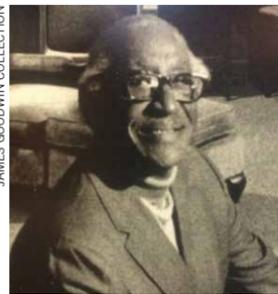
no meaning in the vocabulary of Oklahoma lawmakers," says panelist Alicia Latimer. "At the time of the 1921 race disaster, it was Mr. Franklin's keen mind and dogged fortitude that helped Tulsa victims in their struggle for justice." Buck Franklin was historian John Hope Franklin's father.



JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

[1915-2009]

In his 1947 work *From Slavery to Freedom*, Rentiesville native John Hope Franklin showed how African Americans, previously disregarded by historians, were active participants in America's past. Bob Blackburn says, "A descendant of Chickasaw slaves and a survivor of the Tulsa Race Riot, Franklin had a unique perspective that, combined with his powers of analysis and expression, made him one of America's most important historians." Panelist Julius Pegues believes all Americans should read *From Slavery to Freedom*. "His research was brilliant, and he changed the landscape as it relates to how the world viewed African Americans," he says.



EDWIN LAWRENCE "E.L." GOODWIN SR.

[1902-1978]

For four decades beginning in 1936, E.L. Goodwin Sr. published the *Oklahoma Eagle* newspaper, an important voice for African Americans in the Tulsa area. An entrepreneur, successful attorney, and tireless worker, the Mississippi native emphasized education and common sense and spent his life fighting against injustice, frequently using a controversial editorial voice in the pages of the *Eagle* to do so. "He was one of the most astute businessmen that I have known during my lifetime and was always trying to improve the conditions of his people," says Julius Pegues.



AMOS T. HALL

[1896-1971]

Amos T. Hall of Tulsa became one of the state's most important civil rights lawyers, leading the fight for equal salaries for African American teachers on behalf of the Oklahoma

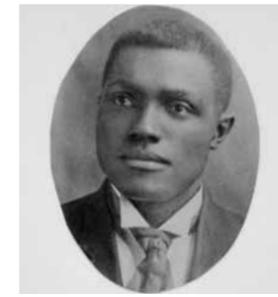
Association of Negro Teachers in 1948 and representing Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher with Thurgood Marshall in the landmark *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*. "He was an amazing, gifted lawyer and civil rights advocate," says Hannibal B. Johnson of the man who later became the first African American judge elected in the state. "His influence during his lifetime extended well beyond the borders of the state of Oklahoma."



RUBY HIBLER HALL

[1912-2003]

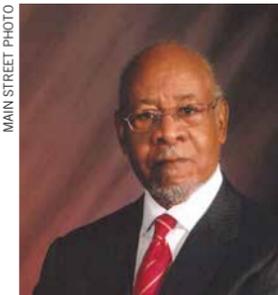
"In breaking down the walls of segregation, Rubye Hibler Hall inspired me," says Bob Blackburn. "Through her sense of community and service, she emphasized the importance of inclusiveness." In 1974, Hall, a lifelong educator, was the first African American appointee to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and she and her husband Ira were among the original board members of the Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City. Of Hall, who was inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame in 1986 and the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame in 1998, Blackburn says, "The world needs more people with her courage and determination."



ALBERT C. HAMLIN

[1881-1912]

Born to former slaves in Kansas, Albert C. Hamlin and his family moved to Logan County in 1890. In 1908, Hamlin became the first African American elected to the Oklahoma legislature. He ran for re-election in 1910, but the growing strength of the Democratic Party and its Jim Crow laws helped defeat him, making him the only African American to serve in the legislature until 1964. While in office, Hamlin sponsored legislation for the appropriation of \$35,000 for a black school in Taft for orphaned, deaf, and blind children and put forward successful legislation that made rail facilities equal for white and black passengers.



GEORGE HENDERSON

[b. 1932]

When civil rights scholar and lecturer George Henderson was a community organizer in Detroit, Malcolm X attempted to recruit him, but Henderson felt more kinship to Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent methods of effecting change. Henderson and his wife

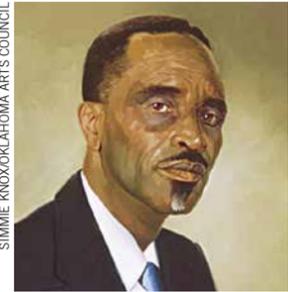


MARQUES HAYNES

[b. 1926]

Marques Haynes could dribble a basketball. The Sand Springs native, whose signature hoops style left opponents scratching their heads, was known worldwide for his ball-handling skills. In a career that spanned more than forty years, Haynes was an international star as a member of the Harlem Globetrotters. After his collegiate playing days at Langston University ended in 1946, he amassed twelve thousand games covering four million miles and traversing nearly a hundred countries.

Barbara were the first African American couple to purchase a home in Norman. Born the son of Alabama sharecroppers, Henderson founded OU's Department of Human Relations in 1969 and was the first African American dean of a degree-granting college at the university. "An amazing scholar, professor, and humanitarian, Dr. Henderson is beloved by his former students," says Hannibal B. Johnson. "He opened up the University of Oklahoma in issues of race, and he integrated the city of Norman."



SIMMIE KNOX/OKLAHOMA ARTS COUNCIL

BENJAMIN HARRISON HILL
[1903-1971]

Service to God and humanity motivated Benjamin Harrison Hill to pursue careers as a minister, teacher, and public servant. Born in Nova Scotia, he led churches in Oklahoma,

was an editor and columnist for the *Oklahoma Eagle*, was a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, and served on many Tulsa boards and committees. "He was a charismatic leader," says Julius Pegues. "He could convince you there wasn't anything in the world you could not do if you kept your eyes on your goal. He once told a group of us not to be afraid, no matter what the obstacles are or what the odds are against us, and to 'Just lift Him up, and God will lift you up.'"

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY



ERNEST L. HOLLOWAY
[1930-2011]

Ernest L. Holloway began his career at Langston University as an assistant registrar and eventually was named the fourteenth president of the historically black university in 1979. A Boley native, Holloway

graduated from Langston with a degree in agriculture in 1952. A stabilizing force who oversaw tremendous growth at the university during his tenure, which endured until his 2005 retirement, Holloway was its longest-serving president. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame in 1999.

OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



JAMES COODY JOHNSON
[1864-1927]

For his grasp of the language, laws, and customs of the Creek and Seminole and his work in tribal politics, he was dubbed "the Black Panther." Born north of Wewoka, James Coody Johnson—the grandson of a slave of

Creek Nation Chief William McIntosh—was an entrepreneur and attorney. To resist the Jim Crow agenda being advanced at Oklahoma's constitutional convention, Johnson was part of a group that traveled to Washington, D.C., in 1907 in an unsuccessful effort to plead the case against segregation to President Theodore Roosevelt.

WAGONER HISTORICAL SOCIETY/ALZ MCMAHAN



I.W. LANE
[1865-1953]

Refused by the county registrar in his attempt to register to vote in 1934, Alabama native I.W. Lane, a resident of Red Bird in Wagoner County, filed suit in federal court with the help of the NAACP. The 1939 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Lane v. Wilson*, struck down Oklahoma's 1916 voting law that restricted registration to those who had voted in 1914. "This case helped pave the way for equal voting rights," says Loretta Y. Jackson. "But today, after ninety-eight years, Oklahoma African Americans, as well as African Americans from other parts of the country, are still battling restrictions to the right to vote."

played a starring role as a prosecutor of sex offenders," says Alicia Latimer. In 1986, after her career as a sex crimes prosecutor ended, this accomplished Oklahoma City attorney became one of the first African American women elected to the Oklahoma State Senate. In 1994, Miles-LaGrange was appointed a federal judge for the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, making her the first African American federal judge in the six-state district.

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY



EDWARD P. McCABE
[1850-1920]

Edward P. McCabe came to Oklahoma in 1890. An attorney and land speculator, he helped establish the town of Langston and was instrumental in founding the Colored Agricultural and Normal University, now

Langston University. From New York by way of Kansas, McCabe actively recruited blacks to Oklahoma Territory. "Mr. McCabe, the father of the all-black town movement, played a pivotal role in the black presence in Oklahoma," says Hannibal B. Johnson.

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY



GEORGE W. McLAURIN
[1894-1968]

George W. McLaurin had been a teacher at Langston University when he applied to a doctoral program at the University of Oklahoma in 1948. OU was ordered to admit McLaurin but segregated him from white students. In 1950, in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Fred Vinson issued

an opinion on behalf of the court that this treatment violated the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. This decision ruled that universities must provide the same educational experience for African American students as for other races. In conjunction with Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher's suit, McLaurin's case helped open higher education to African Americans.

OKLAHOMA MUSIC HALL OF FAME



VICKI MILES-LaGRANGE
[b. 1953]

"If there had been a reality show called *Law and Order: SVU Oklahoma* from 1983 to 1986, then-Oklahoma County assistant district attorney Vicki Miles-LaGrange could have

played a starring role as a prosecutor of sex offenders," says Alicia Latimer. In 1986, after her career as a sex crimes prosecutor ended, this accomplished Oklahoma City attorney became one of the first African American women elected to the Oklahoma State Senate. In 1994, Miles-LaGrange was appointed a federal judge for the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, making her the first African American federal judge in the six-state district.

OKLAHOMA MUSIC HALL OF FAME



LEONA MITCHELL
[b. 1949]

Leona Mitchell's girlhood dreams of far-reaching vocal stardom came true. The Enid native has become world renowned for her soprano voice and two-decade tenure as a leading spinto soprano at

the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Mitchell has performed around the world and for four U.S. presidents and is well-known for her performances in operas by Puccini and Verdi. She sang the role of Bess in London Records' Grammy-winning 1976 recording of the George Gershwin classic, *Porgy and Bess*.

LANGSTON UNIVERSITY



FREDERICK DOUGLASS MOON
[1896-1975]

Frederick Douglass Moon was known as Oklahoma City's dean of African American education, serving as the first black president of the Oklahoma City Public Schools Board of Educa-



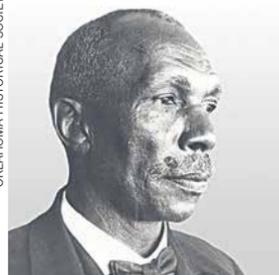
OPUBLICO

CLARA LUPER
[1923-2011]

In August 1958, Clara Luper led members of the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council into the segregated Katz Drug Store downtown and ordered Cokes at the counter. Denied service, they refused to leave until closing and returned to take their places at the counters every Saturday for several weeks. These acts of civil disobedience influenced the chain to integrate its counters in stores across four states. Through the early 1960s, the Youth Council held sit-ins that eventually led to the desegregation of almost every eating establishment in Oklahoma City. In her adherence to nonviolent activism, Luper often participated in marches and demonstrations—and frequently was jailed as a result. "Clara Luper took hold of Martin Luther King's philosophies very early and is why Oklahoma City integrated as early as it did," says panelist Larry O'Dell.

tion in 1974 during the federally mandated desegregation of Oklahoma City schools. Born in Fallis, Oklahoma Territory, Moon began his teaching career in Crescent in 1921. He served as principal of Oklahoma City's Douglass High School from 1940 to 1961.

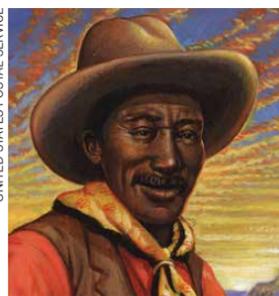
OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



INMAN E. PAGE
[1853-1935]

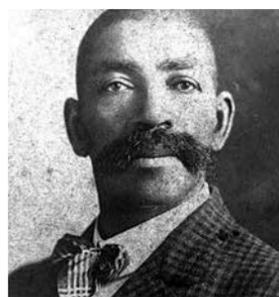
Born in Virginia to slave parents, Inman E. Page was the first African American to graduate from Brown University. Page, whom Roscoe Dunjee called "the Grand Old Man of Education," had a seventeen-year tenure as the first president of the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (later Langston University), during which time enrollment grew from forty to more than six hundred. After leaving Langston, Page served for twelve years as supervising principal of Oklahoma City's black schools. At Douglass High School, Page was an influence on Ralph Ellison, who later wrote about him.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



BILL PICKETT
[1870-1932]

As a ranch hand, Bill Pickett was the first to "bulldog" a steer—grasping its horns, twisting its neck, and biting its nose or upper lip to make it fall on its side. His technique evolved into steer wrestling, one of rodeo's most popular events. Before he began appearing in movies in the early 1920s, Pickett was a sought-after rodeo performer, joining the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West show near Ponca City in 1905.



BASS REEVES
[1838-1910]

Bass Reeves said he knew Indian Territory "like a cook knows her kitchen." Alongside his dedication and skill with a gun, that knowledge placed Reeves on the front lines of those who fought for order in Indian Territory, and he became known as a foe to the lawless who roamed its lands. Judge Isaac Parker named him a deputy U.S. marshal in 1875, making him one of the earliest African Americans west of the Mis-

OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



JAKE SIMMONS JR.
[1901-1981]

Jake Simmons Jr. of Muskogee, born a Creek freedman in Sawokla (now Haskell) in Indian Territory, spent his career earning the trust of multiple business and cultural communities and using his considerable negotiating skills not only to broker multimillion-dollar deals but to fight discriminatory laws. He was among the first African Americans to earn a high-level position in the petroleum industry and was unwavering in his quest to improve economic prospects for blacks. "Mankind was made for struggle," he once wrote. "Such was the plight of our race, and who in the world will challenge our eighty years of progress in America, which is unprecedented in the entire category of human endeavor? Mankind grows strong and noble under strain."

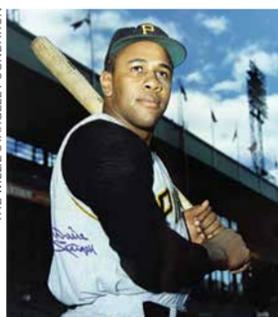
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO



A.J. SMITHERMAN
[1885-1961]

An outspoken civil rights and community leader, A.J. Smitherman encouraged members of the black community to protect themselves from lynching and racial oppression by being self-reliant and arming themselves if necessary. Publisher of an African American newspaper, the *Tulsa Star*, Smitherman lost his press, business, and home in the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. He was among those charged with inciting the riot and fled the state. He was not extradited, the case never went to trial, and the charges against him were dismissed in 2007.

THE WILLIE STARGELL FOUNDATION



WILLIE STARGELL
[1940-2001]

Willie Stargell, who played his entire career for the Pittsburgh Pirates, had great numbers: 475 home runs, seven stints as a Major League Baseball

Mississippi to receive such a commission. "Reeves was a true legend who was the face of the law in Indian Territory for years," says Hannibal B. Johnson.

CARLA BETH NEALE



Dr. Harold C. Aldridge Jr.

Professor Emeritus of Psychology
A third-degree black belt and Tahlequah resident, Aldridge currently is compiling research on the segregation and desegregation of Oklahoma public schools.

D.J. GRIFFIN



Hannibal B. Johnson

Attorney, Author, and Professor
Johnson, of Tulsa, served on the Oklahoma advisory council to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and has written eight books on the black experience in Oklahoma.



Alicia Latimer

African American Research Center Coordinator, Tulsa City-County Library
Latimer has received many community service awards, including the Pinnacle Award from the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women and the Greenwood Image Builder Award.

The Panel

BEAU BLACKBURN



Bob Blackburn

Executive Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society
Along with his work on numerous projects on African American history, Blackburn served as chairman of the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

WE HAVE THESE MEN AND

WOMEN TO THANK FOR

OUR LIST OF THE 45 MOST

INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN

AMERICANS IN

OKLAHOMA HISTORY.



Loretta Y. Jackson

Historian
Jackson was a member of Jimmy Carter's Committee on Black Community Concerns and the recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. Keepers of the Dream Award. She lives in Chickasha.



Larry O'Dell

Director of Special Projects/Development for the Oklahoma Historical Society
In addition to his work as a researcher for the Tulsa Race Riot Commission, O'Dell curated an exhibit on Oklahoma's all-black towns.



Julius Pegues

Chairman of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation
Pegues has served as a member of the Goals for Tulsa Task Force on Education, treasurer of the Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League, and president of the Tulsa chapter of the NAACP.



TWINE FAMILY COLLECTION

WILLIAM H. TWINE

[c. 1862-1933]

Some called him “the Black Tiger.” The Kentucky-born William H. Twine, through his law practice and newspapers, including the *Muskogee Cimeter*, defended the rights of the community’s African Americans and fought discrimination before statehood. “Roscoe Dunjee looked up to him and did a major obituary in his paper when Twine died,” says Larry O’Dell. “Twine led a group of delegates to talk to U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to try and block statehood because the new constitution rejected civil rights. To me, he is the cornerstone of civil rights in Oklahoma.” In this photograph of the delegation, Twine is in the back row, second from right.

All-Star, a pair of World Series championships, and a World Series MVP. But Stargell was more than a big bat. Dubbed “Pops” by his teammates, the Earlsboro native was renowned for his leadership as well as his slugging ability. A fellow Pirate once said, “If he asked us to jump off the Fort Pitt Bridge, we’d ask him what kind of dive he wanted.”



OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JAMES E. “JIMMY” STEWART SR.

[1912-1997]

“Jimmy Says,” Jimmy Stewart’s weekly column, ran in the *Black Dispatch* newspaper for more than four decades. Stewart led the Oklahoma City and

state branches of the NAACP and served more than twenty years on the organization’s national board. As a result of his work with the NAACP and *Black Dispatch* publisher Roscoe Dunjee, Stewart made an enduring mark on the civil rights movement in Oklahoma and nationally. Beginning as a janitor at Oklahoma Natural Gas in 1937, he became a vice president of the company in 1976.



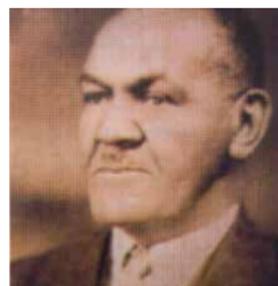
OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JUANITA L. KIDD STOUT

[1919-1998]

Juanita L. Kidd Stout, a Wewoka native, learned to read at age two, graduated from high school at sixteen, and eventually earned two law degrees. In 1988, she became the first African American woman to sit on Pennsylvania’s State

Supreme Court. During her four-decade legal career, she was a firm, authoritative courtroom presence who was notorious for her disdain for crime and ignorance and insistence that her young charges get an education. “The words ‘small town girl does fine’ apply to the life of Judge Kidd Stout,” says Alicia Latimer.



JOHN THE BAPTIST “J.B.” STRADFORD

[c. 1866-1935]

The son of a former slave in Kentucky, J.B. Stradford moved to Tulsa in 1899 and became one of the city’s wealthiest African Americans, owning a rooming house,



THE WAYMAN TISDALE FOUNDATION

WAYMAN TISDALE

[1964-2009]

While playing college basketball for the Oklahoma Sooners, Wayman Tisdale was among the NCAA’s most dominant players, one of only ten men in NCAA history to earn All-America first-team honors in his first three years. He played for the 1984 gold medal-winning U.S. Olympic basketball team and spent a dozen seasons in the NBA. Around the time he left the NBA, the Tulsa native became an accomplished jazz musician. In 1988, First Lady Nancy Reagan honored him for his work against youth drug and alcohol abuse.

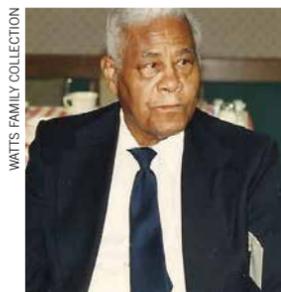


OPUBCO

MELVIN B. TOLSON SR.

[1900-1966]

Melvin B. Tolson Sr. wrote that poetry is the art of complicating. His verse, both formal and vernacular, presented the black experience in all its complexities. Tolson, after serving as the debate coach at Wiley University in Marshall, Texas—a tenure memorialized in the motion picture *The Great Debaters*—taught at Langston University from 1947 until his death and served three terms as the town’s mayor. He is one of the most important and distinguished of America’s poets and was appointed poet laureate of Liberia in 1947.

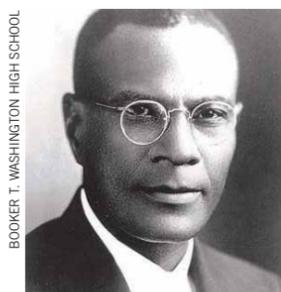


WATTS FAMILY COLLECTION

WADE A. WATTS

[1919-1998]

Preacher and activist Wade A. Watts’ encounters with Ku Klux Klan leader Johnny Lee Clary in the 1980s resulted in Clary’s eventual renunciation of the KKK and a close friendship between the two. A native of Kiamichi and resident of McAlester, Watts participated with Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1965 march for freedom in Selma, Alabama, and was president of the Oklahoma chapter of the NAACP for sixteen years. “He believed the best way to overcome an enemy is to make a friend out of him,” said Clary. “He told me, ‘If you want to learn to play beautiful music, you have to mix those black and white keys together on the piano.’”



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

ELLIS WALKER “E.W.” WOODS

[1885-1948]

“You’re as good as 90 percent of the people and better than the other 10 percent,” was the consistent message of this encourager. Principal of Tulsa’s Booker T. Washington High School for thirty-five years, E.W. Woods worked his way through college in his native Mississippi. Seeing an advertisement for black teachers in Oklahoma and with no other mode of travel, he walked five hundred miles to Sapulpa in 1911, took a job teaching in Creek County, and a year later was named principal of the school that became Booker T. Washington, Tulsa’s black high school.