

# OXFORD AMERICAN

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## No Tears Project St. Louis Brings Community Together with Artists and Activists

*The multi-day residency will feature the world premiere of new music, poetry, and dance created by St. Louis artists in honor of civil rights events and heroes, including Dred and Harriett Scott.*

February 3, 2023—CONWAY, AR— The Oxford American, Gateway Arch National Park, and Jazz St. Louis are excited to announce *No Tears Project St. Louis*, a series of civil rights and arts education residency events taking place in **St. Louis, Missouri, in April 2023**. The events are an expansion of the *No Tears Project* programs that Oxford American has produced in partnership with pianist/composer **Christopher Parker** and vocalist **Kelley Hurt** since 2017. Originally inspired by a musical composition written by Parker and Hurt to honor the Little Rock Nine, *No Tears Project* has evolved into a touring outreach program that uses conversation and music to educate and engage communities in learning about civil rights.

The St. Louis events—which are **all free to the public**—will include panel discussions, community concerts, and youth education programs that address St. Louis’s past and present in the broader American civil rights story. Featured guests during the events will include a variety of artists, activists and community leaders, including Little Rock Nine member **Elizabeth Eckford**, activist **Percy Green**, great-great grand-daughter of Dred and Harriett Scott, **Lynne Jackson**, President and CEO of Jazz St. Louis, **Victor Goines**, and many others.

The residency will culminate in **four free concerts** held on **Friday, April 28 and Saturday, April 29, 2023, at Jazz St. Louis’s Ferring Jazz Bistro** (3536 Washington Ave, St. Louis, MO). Featuring a seven-piece band led by Parker and Hurt, the *No Tears Project* ensemble will perform pieces from the group’s existing repertoire, as well as the world premiere of new works by St. Louis artists commissioned for this residency and inspired by the ethos of the *No Tears Project*. These special concerts include premieres by several collaborators: new music and poetry by jazz luminary **Oliver Lake**; a new poem and performance by **Treasure Shields Redmond**; a performance by choreographer/dancer **Ashley Tate**; and a new song and performance by singer **Brian Owens**.

The *No Tears Project St. Louis* residency is made possible by a consortium of generous funders led by **Jefferson National Parks Association**, with additional support from **Gateway Arch Park Foundation** and the **Stella Boyle Smith Trust**. Additional partners for the residency include the **Dred Scott Heritage Foundation** and **Sumner High School**.

View a detailed listing of dates, times, and event locations below. For more information, visit [OxfordAmerican.org](https://OxfordAmerican.org), [NPS.gov](https://NPS.gov), and [JazzSTL.org](https://JazzSTL.org).

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“We’re excited to be working with Oxford American, Jazz St. Louis, local partners and community leaders on *No Tears Project*,” said Taronia Armstrong, Deputy Superintendent of Gateway Arch National Park. “The events will foster relevant and constructive conversations through education workshops and live performances, while connecting and engaging diverse audiences and youth to the history of our park and the civil rights movement.”

“It’s an honor to work with these people and organizations to present an arts-based civil rights program like *No Tears Project* in St. Louis—a city so rich in cultural and musical heritage,” said Ryan Harris, *No Tears Project* Director and consultant to Oxford American. “Like all communities, St. Louis can become a better place through continued dialogue that honestly addresses its past, forging a deeper understanding of each other to move forward together, and create a better future. The fact that two of the city’s major cultural institutions, Gateway Arch National Park and Jazz St. Louis, are creating the space for these programs and this music reiterates their own commitment to the work and the importance of these conversations.”

“The *No Tears Suite* is a musical masterpiece expressing the history, struggles, and perseverance of the nine youths forever known as the Little Rock Nine,” said Victor Goines, President and CEO of Jazz St. Louis. “Jazz St. Louis is thrilled to partner with Oxford American and Gateway Arch National Park to present this [newly expanded and] meaningful work of art recognizing a critical moment for African-Americans and our country.”

## SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH THE ARTS

Sunday, April 2, 2023 @ 2:00 pm CDT

Gateway Arch National Park Theater

Free to the public

Seating is limited - [register here](#)

A panel discussion featuring artists from the forthcoming *No Tears Project St. Louis* concerts, including composer/pianist **Christopher Parker**, vocalist **Kelley Hurt**, saxophonist/clarinetist and President & CEO of Jazz St. Louis, **Victor Goines**; choreographer/dancer **Ashley Tate**, and singer/songwriter **Brian Owens**. Author and activist **Treasure Shields Redmond** will moderate the discussion. The conversation will explore both the contemporary and historic role of music and the arts as vehicles for addressing civil rights and inciting social change, while highlighting the additional *No Tears Project* programs set to take place April 26-29 in St. Louis.

## RECOGNITION BEFORE RECONCILIATION

Wednesday, April 26, 2023 @ 6:30 pm CDT

Gateway Arch National Park Theater

Free to the public

Seating is limited - [register here](#)

A panel discussion featuring civil rights heroes and activists including **Percy Green**, founding member of ACTION; Little Rock Nine member **Elizabeth Eckford**; **Lynne Jackson**, great-great granddaughter of Dred and Harriet Scott and president/founder of Dred Scott Heritage Foundation; and others. News anchor and journalist Carol Daniel, current President of the Association of Black Journalists will moderate the discussion. Superintendent **Robin White** of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, whose career with the National Park Service has focused on the preservation of American civil rights sites and stories, will provide opening remarks and context for the discussion.

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The conversation will reiterate St. Louis's role, alongside Little Rock's, as part of the legacy of the American civil rights story, highlighting the Gateway Arch National Park, Old Courthouse, and Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. The 60-minute program will be followed by a reception in the lobby with food and drinks, where books will be available for purchase.

## **EDUCATION CONCERT (FOR ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENTS)**

Thursday, April 27, 2023 @ 10:00 am CDT

Gateway Arch National Park Auditorium

An education concert for elementary and middle school students featuring *No Tears Project* ensemble members. The artists will play short selections of music interspersed with dialogue that highlights moments and people in St. Louis's civil rights history, especially the importance of the Old Courthouse and Gateway Arch. Artists will also discuss the Little Rock Nine with accompanying music inspired by their story.

## **MUSIC WORKSHOP**

Friday, April 28, 2023

Sumner High School

A music and dance workshop with *No Tears Project* ensemble members in-classroom at historic Sumner High School. The artists will provide inspiration and individual coaching with students to improve their skills. Sumner is the alma mater of composer **Oliver Lake**, whose new composition will be premiered during the community concerts on Friday and Saturday evening. This event is limited to students at Sumner High School and their invitees.

## **COMMUNITY CONCERTS**

Friday, April 28, 2023 @ 7:30 pm and 9:30 pm CDT

Saturday, April 29, 2023 @ 7:30 pm and 9:30 pm CDT

[Seating is limited and reservations are required via Jazz St. Louis's website](#)

A 75-minute concert from the *No Tears Project* ensemble led by **Christopher Parker** (piano) and **Kelley Hurt** (voice). The band will perform the world premiere of new work written by and in collaboration with St. Louis artists, as well as selections previously written by Parker and Hurt in honor of the Little Rock Nine. Premieres include a new 15-minute musical composition and poetry written by **Oliver Lake**, a member of St. Louis's famed 1960s era Black Artist Group (BAG) and a founding member of World Saxophone Quartet. In addition, poet **Treasure Shields Redmond** and singer/songwriter **Brian Owens** will perform and premiere new works inspired by the story of Dred and Harriet Scott. Dancer and choreographer **Ashley Tate** of Ashleyliane Dance Company will provide newly-created movement accompaniment during the performance. Oliver Lake will not perform as a member of the ensemble.

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The Oxford American is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization and national magazine dedicated to exploring the complexity and vitality of the American South through excellent writing, music, and visual art. Billed as “A Magazine of the South,” it has won four National Magazine Awards and other high honors since it began publication in 1992. The Oxford American is published in partnership with the University of Central Arkansas.

Gateway Arch National Park reflects St. Louis’ role in the Westward Expansion of the United States during the nineteenth century. The park is a memorial to Thomas Jefferson’s role in opening the West, to the pioneers who helped shape its history, and to Dred Scott who sued for his freedom in the Old Courthouse.

Jazz St. Louis is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to lead our community in advancing the uniquely American art of jazz through performance, education, and community engagement.

The No Tears Project uses music and conversation to educate and engage communities with stories about civil rights. As an arts outreach program, the *No Tears Project* strives to create recognition as a precursor to reconciliation. Since 2017, Oxford American has presented multi-day *No Tears Project* residencies with like-minded partners in Little Rock and Fayetteville, Arkansas; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 2023, *No Tears Project* residencies will occur in St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee.