



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**JULY 13, 2021**

**OXFORD AMERICAN, FAYETTEVILLE ROOTS ANNOUNCE *NO TEARS SUITE* PERFORMANCES & EVENTS TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITIES OF FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS & TULSA, OKLAHOMA**  
*Four-Day Event in September Honors the Sacrifice & Ongoing Work of All Those Who Strive To Build a More Just & Equal Society*

**(FAYETTEVILLE, AR)** – Oxford American, in collaboration with Fayetteville Roots, University of Arkansas Center for Multicultural & Diversity Education, Vernon AME Church, and The Woody Guthrie Center are proud to announce a four-day community experience culminating around two live performances of the *No Tears Suite* in Fayetteville, AR and Tulsa, OK on September 23 - 26, 2021. All events are free to attend—registration information and event times will be announced in early September.

The events begin in Fayetteville, AR on Thursday, September 23, with an evening community workshop and panel discussion at the Fayetteville Public Library moderated by staff from the University of Arkansas Center for Multicultural & Diversity Education. On Friday, September 24, musicians from the *No Tears Suite* ensemble will host a morning music master class at the Fayetteville Public Library for University of Arkansas and area high school music and jazz students. That evening, the *No Tears Suite* will be performed at the Fayetteville Public Library.

On Saturday, September 25, on the 64th anniversary of Little Rock Central High School's desegregation, the event will relocate to Tulsa, OK for a community potluck at Vernon AME Church in the Greenwood Community of Tulsa. Hosted by the Rev. Dr. Robert Turner, the potluck will be an outdoor affair on the lawn of Vernon AME followed by a performance of *No Tears Suite* in the historic sanctuary. On Sunday, September 26, a panel discussion and workshop, "Teaching Truth to Power," will be held at the Woody Guthrie Center.

Presented originally in 2017 by Oxford American, the *No Tears Suite*, written by Little Rock jazz pianist Christopher Parker and vocalist Kelley Hurt, is a monumental ode to the Little Rock Nine and was performed at Central High School National Historic Site in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Little Rock Central High School's integration. In this reprisal, Parker and Hurt will be joined by five exceptional jazz artists, including GRAMMY-winning jazz drummer Brian Blade, in addition to Bobby LaVell (tenor saxophone), Roland Guerin (bass), Marc Franklin (trumpet and flugelhorn) and Chad Fowler (baritone and alto saxophone). The Suite honors the sacrifices and ongoing work of all those who strive to build a more just and equal society.

"I'm humbled that the *No Tears Suite* and residency programs will be presented in Fayetteville and Tulsa in 2021, especially in collaboration with such meaningful partners. While we never imagined that five years after conception we would still be presenting this project, *No Tears'* enduring appeal speaks to a deeper importance in the music's message—one that transcends mere entertainment. The Suite's power lies in its ability to synthesize the past with

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the present. The programs bring communities together in a non-threatening way—in this case, using history and music—to facilitate the sometimes difficult personal reflection and conversations about civil rights that can inspire us all to keep working towards equality," said Ryan Harris of the *Oxford American*.

"The *No Tears Suite* immediately drew me in because of its power to tell the Little Rock Nine story through song. It was immediately clear to me that Chris Parker and Kelley Hurt and the team at Oxford American had created an important musical narrative of the Little Rock Nine and their heroic efforts to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in 1957. The original piece of music is not only vital to the Little Rock community but will impact Northwest Arkansas and beyond," said Bryan Hembree, Co-Founder of Fayetteville Roots & Director of Arts & Culture for the UA Center for Multicultural & Diversity Education.

"In the Multicultural Center and Student Affairs we are thrilled to engage in this collaboration that commemorates the Little Rock Nine and celebrates the bravery and dignity of those young leaders who pursued justice in education. This is a dynamic programming and events series that creates wonderful opportunities for our students and community to honor the rich voice of jazz music in civil rights activism, past and present," said Leslie Yingling, Associate Dean of Students and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Multicultural Initiatives, Division of Student Affairs.

"I am honored to have Vernon AME host this concert in September and to collaborate with so many community partners and organizations. Music is a healing balm and has been an important pillar of our church from our earliest congregations to today. The tone and timbre of *No Tears Suite* will resonate in our sanctuary and in our community," said Reverend Dr. Robert Turner of Vernon AME.

"Woody knew the power that comes from building a positive, supportive community. We are proud to join with our friends from Arkansas and Greenwood to unify our communities and honor the young freedom fighters who fearlessly integrated Central High School," said Deana McCloud, Woody Guthrie Center Executive Director.

A comprehensive event schedule and ticketing details will be released in early September and can be found at [fayettevilleroots.org](http://fayettevilleroots.org). In addition to the collaborative presenting organizations, this free event series is made possible through the in-kind, community support of North Arkansas Jazz Society, Greenwood Cultural Center, and Fayetteville Public Library. *No Tears Suite's* creation and ongoing artistic presentation is supported by these generous funding organizations: **Stella Boyle Smith Trust, Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative, National Park Service, and Central High School National Historic Site.**

**About The Oxford American** Founded in 1992, the Oxford American (OA) is a nonprofit arts organization whose mission is to explore the complexity and vitality of the American South through exceptional writing, music, and visual art. Visit [OxfordAmerican.org](http://OxfordAmerican.org) for more information.

**About Fayetteville Roots** Fayetteville Roots is a 501(c)3 organization with a mission to connect community through music and food. We produce the Fayetteville Roots Festival, operate the Roots HQ (a historic venue on the Fayetteville Square), foster support opportunities for musicians and the music community, and lead year-round music and food community and educational programming in Northwest Arkansas and beyond.

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**About The Woody Guthrie Center®** The Woody Guthrie Center, opened in 2013, features state of the art exhibits, an extensive outreach and education program, and a concert series to bring his legacy to Tulsans and those who make the pilgrimage to what is a destination for Woody Guthrie fans worldwide. The center is more than a museum; instead, it is a center of investigation for inspiration. By providing examples of Guthrie's ability to use his creativity as a way of expressing the world around him, we hope to encourage others to find their voices and, through their educational programs, explore the power that lies within the creative process. For more information, please visit [www.woodyguthriecenter.org](http://www.woodyguthriecenter.org).

**About Vernon AME Church** Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1905. It is the only standing black-owned structure on Historic Greenwood Ave from the Black Wall Street era and one of the only edifices that remain from the worst race massacres in American history. To this day, Historic Vernon A.M.E Church remains a visual reminder of the Massacre and the reconstruction process.

**About the University of Arkansas Center for Multicultural & Diversity Education** The Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education at the University of Arkansas is a student-centered, multicultural, intersectional space that affirms difference and explores shared humanity through cultural celebrations, intercultural public events, arts-based community outreach, educational forums, and partnerships that promote diversity education and social justice.

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