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## 2020 Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Awards

For the past seven years, the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice has recognized those in our community making a difference.

This year the Dan Allen Center is bestowing five awards spotlighting our award recipients' work to advance social justice in the greater Tulsa community.

2020 will be remembered in history as one of most tumultuous years for our nation and our city. The Dan Allen Center Board of Directors is especially proud of the work of our award recipients.

They have all endeavored to cut across current political, economic, and social turmoil to make positive change. Their work represents timeless commitment to giving voice to the voiceless. They clearly demonstrated the commitment of empowering the marginalized and generally showing all of us how to "give a damn".

The **Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Local Champion Award** recognizes an individual or group that fosters a community culture and values social justice.

The 2020 Local Champion Award goes to **Domestic Violence Intervention Services, Inc. (DVIS)**. The organization started in 1976, when an abuse victim helped organize a task force to

provide telephone crisis counseling for victims of abuse. Within a few years, the organization evolved from a crisis call center to an organization offering a variety of services to victims of violence.

In the early years, women in danger were sheltered in safe homes. Eventually, DVIS built a dedicated shelter for battered women which opened in May 1981. The 50-bed shelter, opened by DVIS in July 1986, now houses almost 1,000 women and children each year. Over the years, DVIS expanded into a much larger organization. The organization also provides other measures of support to victims of sexual assault. They have become a leading advocate for the reduction of all aspects of violence. DVIS has become the leading local champion for women in the Tulsa area and serves as a national model on violence prevention and intervention.

The **Outstanding Social Justice Project Award** recognizes an outstanding product, project or program at the local, state, national or international level that advances the cause of social justice.

The 2020 Special Project Award goes to **The Oklahomans Decide Healthcare**. It is a coalition of voters, patients, hospitals, doctors, nurses, business executives, and non-profit organizations,

advocating expansion of the State of Oklahoma Medicaid program to create access to health care for nearly 200,000 Oklahomans. The organization led the drive to collect nearly 314 thousand signatures to force the Governor to place a state question initiative for Medicaid expansion, State Question 802, on the ballot. After a long campaign in support of State Question 802, voters approved it despite strong opposition from politicians and lobbying groups.

Through their diligent efforts to advocate its passage, healthcare will be accessible to those who need it, including many parents, seniors, and hardworking folks who earn less than \$17,000 a year. It will also bring more than one billion of Federal tax dollars home every year to create jobs, boost our economy, and keep our rural hospitals open. Oklahoma now joins 36 other states that have already passed Medicaid expansions, greatly improving the lives of families who previously had no safety net in the complex and expensive world of healthcare delivery.

Accessible health care was one of Dan Allen's core missions during the tenure of his work here. The passage of State Question 802 set access to health care as a permanent part of the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma.

## 2020 Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Awards *(continued)*



*“Prejudice is a burden  
that confuses the  
past, threatens the  
future and renders  
the present  
inaccessible”  
~ Maya Angelou*

The **Social Justice News Media Award** is presented annually to an individual or media group in recognition of reporting or programming that fosters social justice.

The **2020 News Media Award** is given to **The Black Wall Street Times, Nehemiah D. Frank, founder and editor.** The Times motto is, “access is the new civil right” and provides free articles on pressing community issues to its online readers.

The publication represents the new era of journalism. It brings the rich tradition of journalistic standards for truth and accuracy to social media. Under Mr. Frank’s editorial guidance, the publication addresses many a perspective not found in other media outlets in the Tulsa area.

The publication has created space for voices that have been historically silenced or ignored; unique perspectives on social justice that are too often neglected in the community. The publication provides a unique approach and intellectual diversity in our community during a time when Tulsa struggles to be a more fair and just place.

The **Dan Allen Award for Social Justice**, our highest honor, recognizes significant advancement of social justice.

The **2020 Social Justice Award** is given to **Vernon AME Church, Tulsa.** The Church began with a one-room house in 1905 and serves today as monument to resilience and

as the moral foundation of a community. The physical facility of the church was the epicenter of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, being burned by white mobs attacking and setting fire to the entire Tulsa African American Greenwood neighborhood. Though the physical building was put to almost complete ruins, the spirit of justice carried forward.

Immediately after the tragic 1921 events, the congregation and its leadership provided a symbol of resilience. The remaining structure was used for various community events giving some normalcy.

Throughout its history it has stood as a moral pillar which could not be destroyed by fire or continued practices of racism. In the early 1960s the church sponsored a group of children to participate in the famous March on Washington; only one of its decades long commitment to Civil Rights.

The leadership of the Church has set the tone for the struggle for social justice in the community. Beginning in the mid-20th century Rev. Benjamin Hill led the church and community through the civil rights movement. Rev. Hill promoted unity and worked tirelessly with black and white leaders to address the blatant racism at the time.

Currently, its pastor, Dr. Robert Turner follows the tradition of fighting for social justice. He leads movements in Tulsa for justice for the victims of the 1921 Race Massacre, getting burial sites excavated, and seeking reparations.

As with Dan Allen’s work, Vernon has recognized the need to feed the hungry and address the needs of those of all races, nationalities and economic status. Just one example is its effort during the economic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The church has provided over 48,000 meals since beginning the “God Provides Feeding Program” in March of this year.

The Church congregation and its leadership epitomizes “unconditional positive regard for all.”



Reverend Robert Turner (left) accepting the 2020 Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Award on behalf of Vernon AME Church, Tulsa. Also pictured is Ed Rossman, DACSJ Board Member.

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## 2020 Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Awards *(continued)*



*"Life's most  
persistent and urgent  
question is, 'What are  
you doing for  
others?'"*  
~ Martin Luther  
King Jr.

The **President's Award for Distinguished Service**. This award acknowledges exceptional dedication to the work of Fr. Dan Allen.

We are happy to present this special award to **Ms. Linda Nicholson**.

Ms. Nicholson was an original founder of the Dan Allen Center and has served as Board member since its inception. Though working a full time job and tending to a seriously ill family member, she found time to shape what the Dan Allen Center is today.

Linda's dedication to the DACSJ has deep roots dating back to 1965. Her parents met Fr. Dan Allen when he was Director of Religious Education for the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Because of Father Dan's belief in social justice and service to the poor, the Schultz family became lifelong activists and soon a founding family of Church of the Resurrection Catholic Church when Father Bill Skeehan became Pastor. The rest is history.

Linda is an Educator at Central Tech; an instructor in the Drop-out Recovery Program.

She has three wonderful daughters, Mary, Jennifer and Kristen. Her daughter, Jennifer, follows Linda's example serving on the Board of the Dan Allen Center as well.

**Congratulations to all of the 2020  
Dan Allen Center  
for  
Social Justice  
Awards Winners!!**

## Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Awards Previous Award Recipients

### Dan Allen Award for Social Justice

- 2014 Father Bill Skeehan
- 2015 Connie Cronley
- 2016 Carmelita Skeeter
- 2017 Sheryl Siddique
- 2018 Drew Diamond
- 2019 Rev Chris Moore

### Local Champion Award

- 2014 David Blatt, Oklahoma Policy Institute
- 2015 Welcome Table, Tulsa
- 2016 We the People Oklahoma
- 2017 New Sanctuary Tulsa
- 2018 Rosa Hernandez
- 2019 Dr Tiffany Crutcher

### Leadership Award

- 2014 Jan Figart, Community Service Council
- 2015 HILLE Foundation
- 2016 Phillips Theological Seminary
- 2017 100 Black Men/Women Tulsa
- 2018 Men of Power
- 2019 Tulsa Equality Center

### News Media Award

- 2014 Mr. Joe Worley, Tulsa World
- 2015 The Oklahoma Eagle
- 2016 Ginnie Graham, TulsaWorld
- 2017 KWGS Radio
- 2018 Tulsa Voice
- 2019 The Frontier

### Outstanding Social Justice Project Award

- 2014 Eastern OK Area Food Bank - Eileen Bradshaw, Director
- 2015 YWCA
- 2016 Camp Anytown
- 2017 Pocket Full of Hope
- 2018 Poetic Justice
- 2019 Manna Meals

### President's Award

- 2015 Keith Huckabay & Randy Kindy
- 2016 Ann Patton
- 2017 Carol Falletti
- 2018 Ann Sublett
- 2019 Dr. Robert W. Block



## Finding Hopefulness

Some days are harder than others. But, everyday, it's hard to realize that for the past seven months, and possibly for the foreseeable future, though unlikely for forever, we've been encouraged to *stay safer at home*, washing our hands multiple times daily (for more at least 20 seconds each time), maintaining social distances, and wearing masks to mitigate the Global Pandemic and slowdown spread of the potentially deadly Coronavirus and COVID-19 disease.

Most days it hardly seems possible that cooler weather has arrived again. So much has happened. Spring and summer were eventful, despite so many activities and programs being rescheduled into 2021. Our nation, and much of the known world, brought itself to an almost complete standstill in March 2020 after the Global Pandemic was declared. Still, so much has happened.

A bit later in March, Breonna Taylor was killed in Kentucky, when local police used a “no-knock warrant” to enter her home. People all over the world left the sanctity of their quarantines and homes to protest her death and say Ms. Taylor’s name. The Pandemic and the potentially deadly virus continued. Then, George Floyd was killed in Minnesota, while being taken into custody by the local police when an officer held his knee to Mr. Floyd’s neck for eight minutes, forty-six seconds. The public response to Mr. Floyd’s murder and the systemic racism that plausibly explained it, was even more extensive protest, despite the potential for personal peril. Then C.T. Vivian and Congressman John Lewis died in late July. More protests and focus on the value of the lives of Black people. Black Lives Matter, a message that began years ago, and has come to Tulsa recently, says to police, “don’t kill more Black people.” According to the Washington Post newspaper, since 2015, the list of those already killed may be more than 5,000.

As if all these deaths weren’t enough, Mother Nature was not happy this summer – hurricanes and tropical storms have destroyed areas in the southern U.S., even as the western U.S. has burned as never before. Friends are dying from the things that kill them: in April, my former boss Larry left us, in July my friend Melissa left and more recently, the Notorious RBG left. Almost simultaneously, 200,000 people have been killed by Coronavirus in the U.S., a milestone that was not expected before the General Election in November.

There has been substantial over-representation of people of color in the death toll of COVID-19. Many people of color in the U.S. have pre-existing conditions and limited healthcare, making them particularly vulnerable to the disease. Awareness of this disparity has seemed to some to be representative of the idea that “some people may be experiencing a different Pandemic from that experienced by others.” In September 2020, the CBS Morning News reported a research finding that people who hold certain views actually see a different world from that seen by people who hold other views. With that in mind, so many things seem clarified.

Still, so much has happened this year. The General Election, as planned for more than four years, has provided an amazing backdrop for all of this: The protests, the various unexpected surges of disease, the springtime closing of schools amid disease in favor of online learning, the autumn re-opening of schools still amid disease and in the context of exorbitantly challenging online learning.

Despite all this, or better yet and more appropriately, through all this, the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice, located in Tulsa, OK, continued its commitment to recognize major social justice efforts in our community and spotlight the individuals and organizations that moved the needle in the right direction for those who appreciated their efforts when they mattered most.

For now, let's assume all the Pandemic stuff remains: People dying, western lands smoldering, storms raging in Louisiana, many deeply mourning RBG and all the others, and nearly three centuries of the U.S. experiment with democracy. We must continue to successfully meet the challenges. We must continue to strive toward the equality and meaningfulness that we believe will mark a better time in a better world.

As someone who has often felt alone and defenseless in the face of the politicization of nearly everything during the past seven months; I find myself thinking a lot about my maternal grandmother in the early 1900s, who was raising five children alone in a South Texas ranching community. With confidence, I believe hers to have been a voice silenced by time and circumstance – no leader in your community even considered that she had a thought about the world in which her children would one day thrive. She did, and her wise counsel is still with us – even three generations later. Successfully contending with the Pandemic may be tough, and it will surely impact the General Election, along with new emphasis on the importance of voting. But the need, and presence of entities such as the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice, will continue to keep us striving toward our best future. Just as my grandmother thought about a better world for her children, so too must we keep our eyes on a better time and place in our future.

This year, Systemic Racism has become the latest universal watchword; once upon a time, it was a term mainly used by Black people, to describe a seemingly endless web of challenges to equal treatment under U.S. laws. Now for some people, it's a non-starter; some even say they don't understand what it could possibly mean. For others, it explains everything that's wrong in U.S. society. Systemic racism, should we choose to combat it, is more deeply ingrained than we possibly wanted to realize. There's difficult, world changing, heavy-blasting, tiresome, tedious work ahead – if that's where we're headed. It's one thing to say (or think) "justice must prevail" or even "injustice must be rooted out." It's totally a different task to begin dismantling current practices so new, fair, equitable systems can replace old, unfair, inequitable ones. People of color (everyone who's not white as defined by the rules in effect at the time) have fought under handicapped conditions for so long. Fair competition (consider sports) may mean Black triumph. Fair play (consider schooling that involves timely texts and expectations that everyone can learn) may mean Black triumph. Fair standards in business may mean Black triumph. There has been unfairness in nearly everything for so long, that many people have developed work-arounds that will continue to serve them well through whatever change may come. For far too many years, exceptions gained access to the tools of triumph and the too often conservative gatekeepers thought they were doing their jobs. Now, as the demands for access spread beyond the exceptions, it becomes clearer that the gatekeepers may have been actually sleeping at the wheel of a bus careening downhill, heedless of brakes.

*If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle. — Sun Tzu, [The Art of War](#)*

Despite all this, or better yet and more appropriately, through all this, the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice, continued its work to recognize major social justice efforts in our community; and chose the individuals and organizations to be hailed and thanked for moving the needle in the right direction for those who appreciated it when it mattered most...Dan Allen Center for Social Justice awards recipients.

Dr. Jocelyn Lee Payne  
Board of Directors  
Dan Allen Center for Social Justice

## “Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.” Isaiah 65:24

Perhaps you are in a season where heartbreak overwhelms. I hope not, but no one would judge if you are. As a pastor and a Christian, reading the prophets in those seasons helps me name my rage at injustice and trust that God’s reign is not and will not be defined by heartbreak. In a recent return to Isaiah 65, this verse stuck out to me. The prophet declares that before we call, God is answering with a readiness to listen and be present. God’s first posture is one of listening. What a holy thing to listen. What a holy thing to be heard.

I was invited to share about ACTION (Allied Communities of Tulsa Inspiring our Neighbors). So, you might be wondering why this is starting with scripture. Well, my engagement with ACTION and broad-based community organizing has developed roots because of my faith. I turn to Isaiah 65 often because in it, there is a startlingly detailed description of what God’s reign on earth will look like. You may have heard the popular line describing the wolf and lamb eating together but have you read the part where people will build homes and live in them? Did you see the verse saying people will plant vineyards and eat their fruit? Did you tear up at the news that no children shall be born into calamity? Underneath the beautiful imagery is a vision of society that is equitable with wealth and work. And, I believe we can get closer to it by organizing.

Like God in Isaiah 65 and Jesus with the children at his feet, we can do holy work when we listen and hear. This listening and hearing is the first skill of community organizing. And, it is a practice, much like prayer, that deepens and expands over time. ACTION develops leadership in ordinary people to do the first work of listening. That first work flowers into collaborating with others to make real, positive change in our community, state and country. We research the issues affecting the lives of one another, advocate for policy that will make life better and unapologetically do political, but *not* partisan, work.

Clearly, my passion around broad-based community organizing is faith-based. But, people come to the work of social justice from different points. In the connections built through listening, learning and acting on our shared values, the member institutions of ACTION are able to affect policy and create a better Tulsa. Recently, ACTION leaders called on the state and county to protect families from eviction due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. By meeting with county officials and advocating with partnering organizations, \$20 million in rental assistance was allocated by Tulsa County Commissioners with CARES ACT funds. Not only that, but ACTION coordinated getting the word out and set up forums for people who need assistance applying.

This is just one verse in the kind of Isaiah 65 work that ACTION does. The Dan Allen Center shares in this accomplishment as a member institution. Your leaders are active participants in the ongoing act of listening, learning and implementing policy that makes life better for Tulsans. Thank you.



Rev. Kelli Driscoll Crews  
Chair of ACTION’s Student Loan Debt Committee  
Minister Emerita of Bethany Christian Church - Tulsa

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## Mission Statement

To promote social justice through education, outreach, advocacy and demonstration of social justice and *caritas*.

To achieve its mission, the Center works to create awareness of social justice through the publishing of relevant materials, and will provide education, service activity opportunities, and training on social justice. The Center also conducts outreach and educational events and demonstration projects in schools, churches and other venues, groups and organizations. The Center acknowledges achievement in social justice by providing awards to people and groups contributing to a better world with greater justice and equity for all.



Father William Keally Skeeahan (1925—2014)

As complex as social problems can be, the Rev. Bill Skeeahan was convinced that the ultimate answer is simple.

What's needed, the priest once wrote in the *Tulsa World*, is more compassion — “compassion seeping into our individual and community consciousness.”