

HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY REGULAR VIDEO MESSAGE. I'M JANET BARRESI, OKLAHOMA STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

AS WE CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER ALL OF THE PEOPLE FROM OUR PAST THAT PLAYED SIGNIFICANT ROLES IN BRINGING ABOUT THE END TO RACIAL SEGREGATION AND ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF EQUALITY FOR ALL PEOPLE IN OUR STATE.

THINK ABOUT CLARA LUPER WHO BROUGHT HER STUDENTS TO SIT-INS AT LOCAL LUNCH COUNTERS UNTIL FINALLY THE OWNERS AGREED TO SERVE BLACKS RIGHT ALONG SIDE THEIR WHITE PEERS. REMEMBER ADA LOIS SIPUEL FISHER, THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN TO BREAK THE COLOR BARRIER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA'S COLLEGE OF LAW. THE LIST OF CIVIL RIGHTS HEROES IN OKLAHOMA IS LONG.

FOR NOW, I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON A FEW IN OUR MIDST TODAY WHO CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR EQUALITY FOR ALL PEOPLE, AND DO SO WITH INTEGRITY AND GRACE.

CONSIDER FEDERAL JUDGE VICKI MILES-LAGRANGE, THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN ELECTED TO THE OKLAHOMA SENATE AND THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN UNITED STATES ATTORNEY IN OKLAHOMA. JUDGE MILES-LAGRANGE IS A FIERCE DEFENDER OF CIVIL RIGHTS, HAVING EXPERIENCED SEGREGATION FIRST-HAND IN SCHOOL. ACCORDING TO THE FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION, MILES-LAGRANGE IN 1970 WAS CHOSEN AS GOVERNOR OF GIRLS STATE ONLY TO BE DENIED A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C. TO REPRESENT THE STATE BECAUSE OF HER RACE. AS A SENATOR, SHE FOUGHT NOT ONLY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS BUT ALSO FOR WOMEN, FAMILIES AND CHILDREN - CHAMPIONING MATERNAL AND INFANT CARE AND SPONSORING LEGISLATION MAKING STALKING A CRIME. AS U.S. ATTORNEY FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT, SHE OVERSAW THE PROSECUTION OF ONE OF THE LARGEST PUBLIC CORRUPTION CASES IN THE STATE. JUDGE MILES-LAGRANGE IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF COURAGE UNDER FIRE.

ANOTHER HERO IN OUR MIDST IS ANITA G. ARNOLD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BLACK LIBERATED ARTS CENTER, A NONPROFIT THAT BRINGS FESTIVALS, ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMS, LECTURES, POETRY READINGS, THEATER PRODUCTIONS AND MORE TO OKLAHOMA CITY. Ms. ARNOLD HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF MUSIC IN OKLAHOMA CITY. IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK, CHARLES BURTON WRITES THAT NO ONE IN OKLAHOMA CITY IS AS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF BLACK ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL ISSUES AS IS ANITA ARNOLD.

ARNOLD MOST RECENTLY USED HER TALENTS TO SERVE AS A COMMUNITY ADVISOR AT OKLAHOMA CITY'S DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE SENIORS ARE WORKING HARD TO CATCH UP ON CREDITS AND END-OF-INSTRUCTION TESTS IN TIME TO GRADUATE. I AM SO THANKFUL FOR THE WORK THAT MS. ARNOLD HAS DONE TO ENRICH AND SERVE OUR COMMUNITY.

I ALSO WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MENTION STATE REPRESENTATIVE ANASTASIA PITTMAN, WHO IS WORKING WITH THE OKLAHOMA HISTORY CENTER, THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND OTHER PARTNERS TO DEVELOP AN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY COLORING BOOK. OKLAHOMA AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS CREATED ALL THE IMAGES IN THE BOOK, AND EACH IMAGE CONTAINS A SHORT PARAGRAPH EXPLAINING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSON PORTRAYED. PARENTS OR TEACHERS CAN USE THIS RESOURCE TO TEACH BLACK HISTORY TO CHILDREN. REPRESENTATIVE PITTMAN SAID SHE IS NOW WORKING ON A SIMILAR INTERACTIVE BOOK THAT CAN BE USED BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

AS REPRESENTATIVE PITTMAN POINTS OUT, WE ARE AT A UNIQUE TIME IN OUR STATE'S HISTORY. WE HAVE AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CHIEF FEDERAL JUDGE, VICKI MILES-LAGRANGE, AND AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT, TOM COLBERT. OF ALSO GREAT IMPORTANCE, WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE REP. T.W. SHANNON AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO BE THE SPEAKER OF THE OKLAHOMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER EXAMPLES OF LEADERS SUCH AS THESE TO SERVE AS SHINING EXAMPLES TO ALL CHILDREN IN THE STATE THAT THEY CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE.

THANKS FOR WATCHING, AND WE'LL VISIT AGAIN SOON.