

# THE ADVOCATE

Dan Allen Center for Social Justice

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## Dan Allen Center Supports John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Center May 2016 Symposium.



Top: Heidi Birch, Southern Poverty Law Center. Below: Joeclyn Payne, symposium organizer, and Anita Hill, BrandeisUniversity

Dan Allen Center volunteers were proud to support the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Center’s outstanding social justice symposium in Tulsa, May 25-27.

“Social justice is on trial today, as never before in recent memory,” said Ed Rossman, president of the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice.

The theme of the symposium was justice and reconciliation, with a focus on legal, juvenile and social justice. “So it was especially meaningful, at this moment in time, to be part of this 7th annual symposium on reconciliation. We were inspired by the speakers, the participants, and the urgency of today’s fight for social justice.”

Keynote speakers included Anita

Hill, professor, Brandeis University; Heidi Beirich, Intelligence Project Director, Southern Poverty Law Center; and Marq Lewis, co-leader, We the People Oklahoma. ( more on page 2)

## Panel Searches for Social Justice

“The fight for social justice is a life-long, life-and-death struggle, says Rev. Ron Robinson. He was part of a May 27 social justice forum during the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Justice and Reconciliation Symposium of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation. The social justice forum was sponsored by the Dan Allen Center.

“Social justice requires us to get in a right relationship – reconciliation – with the poor, the vulnerable, the least of us, and those who are different from us,” Robinson said. He directs A Third Place Foundation, a community renewal nonprofit in far North Tulsa.

“The task starts with educating ourselves and getting to know those who are oppressed, so we can build empathy and compassion,” said Dr. Lisa Byers, a professor at the University of Oklahoma.

“Social justice means the ability to show up as authentic selves, without experiencing discrimination or violence”, said Vic Wiener, LBGQTQ coordinator for Youth Services of Tulsa.



Social Justice Panel: Dr. Lisa Byers, Vic Weiner, Ed Rossman, Dr. Art Williams, Rev. Rob Robinson

“Thirty million people are poor in America”, said Dr. Art Williams, clinical psychotherapist with Langston University. “They include 28 percent African-Americans, 21 percent Hispanics, and 8.3 percent Caucasians. Our job is to help make the unconscious, conscious, and to help people understand,” he said. “When Donald Trump gets this far, we have a real problem in our society.”

The forum included break-out sessions on poverty and economic justice, racism, and women and gender justice. One problem is that “we don’t vote,” said break-out participant Maria Barnes. “We have to vote for change.” “City government needs to refocus resources on the city’s poorest areas,” said Barbara Van Hanken, another break-out participant.

Forum convener and moderator was Ed Rossman, board president of the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice.

## Anita Hill: ‘Teach the story to every child’

We need to teach “the story of Tulsa’s Greenwood and what happened” to every child, said attorney and professor Anita Hill in a May 27 keynote address to the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Symposium.

It’s a story of struggle, exclusion, and coming together, said Hill, law professor at Brandeis University. She is known for her 1991 testimony challenging the appointment of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Hill urged the nation to come together “to bring this country closer to its dream of an inclusive society.” Her far-ranging speech encouraged all to examine old policies for their structural effects that cause discrimination and prevent justice and community reconciliation. Hill encouraged states to examine the way we fund public schools because “tax structures lock in years of racial discrimination in schools all across the nation.”



Kathy Rossman, Dan Allen  
Volunteer, with Anita Hill

Further she emphasized the importance of opposing voter suppression laws that are gutting the 1965 Voting Rights Act, despite no record of voter fraud. “The path to justice now may not be the courts but rather through getting eligible voters registered and to the polls,” she said.

“Tell the truth” about discrimination and harassment found in the workplace.

Hill urged the symposium attendees to seek justice and bring forth the voices of the poor, the marginalized, and the silenced. “We are making progress,” she said. “We are coming together.”

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***“Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”***

— Martin Luther King Jr., Strength to Love

# Destitution in Oklahoma

By David Blatt

Each year, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof embarks on a reporting trip to cover global poverty in far-flung places like Congo or Myanmar. This year, he decided to add a stop in Tulsa, to look at the impact on struggling families of the nation's 20-year experiment with revamping welfare.

His findings, featured in a June article, were disheartening. "The embarrassing truth," he writes, "is that welfare reform has resulted in a layer of destitution that echoes poverty in countries like Bangladesh."

In 1996, Congress passed and President Clinton signed legislation to "end welfare as we know it." Under the replacement Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), it became harder for single mothers to qualify for initial and ongoing cash support. Recipients were subject to work requirements, harsh penalties for non-compliance, and strict time limits for receiving assistance.

The number of people on welfare immediately plummeted. Today in Oklahoma, fewer than 2,500 adults receive TANF cash assistance in an average month – less than the number of women in Oklahoma prisons. Just one in ten families with income below the poverty line receive cash assistance.

It's the plight of those other 90 percent of poverty-level families that drew Kristof's attention. There are now over 250,000 Oklahomans with income below half the poverty level, \$200 a week for a family of three. Many, like Bobbie Ingraham, a 47-year-old recovering addict Kristof interviewed who is raising her young granddaughter, receive food stamp support but have zero cash income. Zero. Nationally, three million children live in households earning less than \$2 per person per day, according to a new book on extreme poverty in America.

Kristof declares welfare "reform" a failure but is not calling for a return to the pre-TANF welfare program. Instead, he calls for major investments in what has been shown to support children and families, such as parenting coaching, high-quality early childhood programs, financial literacy training, drug treatment, and job training. Unfortunately, every initiative he recommends has fallen victims to recent budget cuts in Oklahoma. The state Department of Education, for example, just eliminated \$1.1 million in funding for parenting education.

We may dispute whether extreme poverty in Oklahoma can be compared to that in Third World nations. But the problem is real, and requires far more attention than it receives from policymakers and the public.

*\*Dr. Blatt is a Dan Allen Center for Social Justice Board Member and serves as the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Policy Institute, [okpolicy.org](http://okpolicy.org). Much of this article reprinted from the **The Journal Record**.*

## Save the Date-Nov 3, 2016!

### Plan to attend our 3rd annual awards dinner at 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 3.

The Dan Allen Center is proud to support the distinguished work of Tulsa individuals and organizations who are advancing the cause of social justice – in the spirit of the late Dan Allen, the crusading priest who fought for the poor in the 1960s and 1970s. The dinner will include a recognition to individuals and organizations making a difference in the Tulsa community. Award winners will be announced soon. Watch our website, [DanAllenCenter.org](http://DanAllenCenter.org), for more details on purchasing tickets and location.

## Dan Allen Center's Two New Board Members

The DACSJ is lucky to have David Blatt and Drew French join the Board of Directors. Welcome!

Dr. Blatt serves as Executive Director of the Oklahoma Policy Institute and was the recipient of the Dan Allan Social Justice Leadership Award in 2014. He also participated in the Center's community discussion about the re-segregation of Tulsa's public schools. About his first reading of Dan's War on Poverty, Dr. Blatt says, "...lightbulbs kept going off and suddenly many things about this city made sense to me. For years, I've been witnessing and benefitting from the legacy of Dan Allen without knowing it. With each successive chapter of Ann's book, I came to understand more about how this one man's crusade for social justice has had such a profound, lasting and far-reaching impact on Tulsa, long after the metaphorical barricades that he first raised decades ago came down."

Mr. France serves as Director of Fund Development at Community Action Project where he works to expand and improve early learning programs for children in low-income families as a means to break the cycle of poverty. Mr. France states, "I first learned about the DACSJ at the 2014 awards ceremony and have since been surprised by how many people I've met that are connected to Dan Allen and his legacy. I'm enjoying the opportunity to make new acquaintances through board membership and to learn about all the important work happening across Tulsa in various efforts to advance social justice issues."

Other board members are: Tony Clyde, Carol Falletti, Keith Huckabay, Joceclyn Payne, Linda Nicholson and Ed Rossman. The Dan Allen Center is an all volunteer organization, including the board. Feel free to contact us if you are interested in serving the Center as a volunteer.

# What We're About!



DACSJ Volunteers (From left) Ed Rossman, Keith Huckabay, Carol Falletti, John Hope Franklin Center 2016 Symposium Panelist Rev. Rob Robinson, Don Falletti, Tony Clyde, Kathy Rossman and Ann Patton.

In the late 1960s, Dan Allen, a former Catholic priest, created Neighbor for Neighbor, an organization to help the poor and downtrodden of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Dan's tenacity helped to lead a crusade that banded together many people of good will – rich and poor, as well as many different races and religious persuasions. All these neighbors helped each other and created dramatic improvements in schools, nutrition, housing, legal services, medical care, and community understanding of poverty and injustice. Dan's service as the conscience of the community proved that working together, we can all bridge the divides that separate us. Dan's work continues to inspire those fostering social justice today.

The Dan Allen Center for Social Justice promotes social justice through education, outreach, advocacy and demonstration of social justice. To achieve its mission, the Center creates awareness of social justice through the publishing of relevant materials, and providing 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 helping to create a better world with greater justice and equity for all. Check out this and past issues of *The Advocate* about the Center's activities at: [www. DanAllenCenter.org](http://www.DanAllenCenter.org).

The Center is an all-volunteer organization and its activities are funded by generous donations of people concerned about social justice in the Tulsa area. **Your donations are always welcome** and more information on doing so can be found on the Center's website.

***“From the beginning, the idea was not to simply run a charity but to integrate charity and justice into one.”***

*Dan Allen on Neighbor for Neighbor*