

Glasshouse Restaurant, 1957-present



Attucks School today (Courtesy Eastern Trails Museum)



Attucks School choir performance promoting the purchase of War Bonds during World War II (Courtesy Eastern Trails Museum)



Eastern Trails Museum

Destination Vinita: Adding Diversity One Town at a Time

In 2014, the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) at the Oklahoma State University Library teamed up with the Eastern Trails Museum in Vinita, Oklahoma, to record the memories of Attucks School alumni. Attucks School served the African American community of Vinita as a combined elementary, junior, and high school 1916-1958. It was the only secondary school in Craig County available to African Americans until desegregation. The Eastern Trails Museum has a strong collection focused on the town's early years and now through this partnership with OOHRP, has oral histories with Attucks School alumni to help fill gaps within the historic record providing rich context to Vinita's African American history.



Diane Willis Hubbard



Arlene Kirkendoll

"We had a coal oil lamp for a long time, so we had to get our lessons when we got home from school, early. Just had that one oil lamp and a whole houseful of us."
Arlene Kirkendoll
(Attended grades 1-8)



Lois West

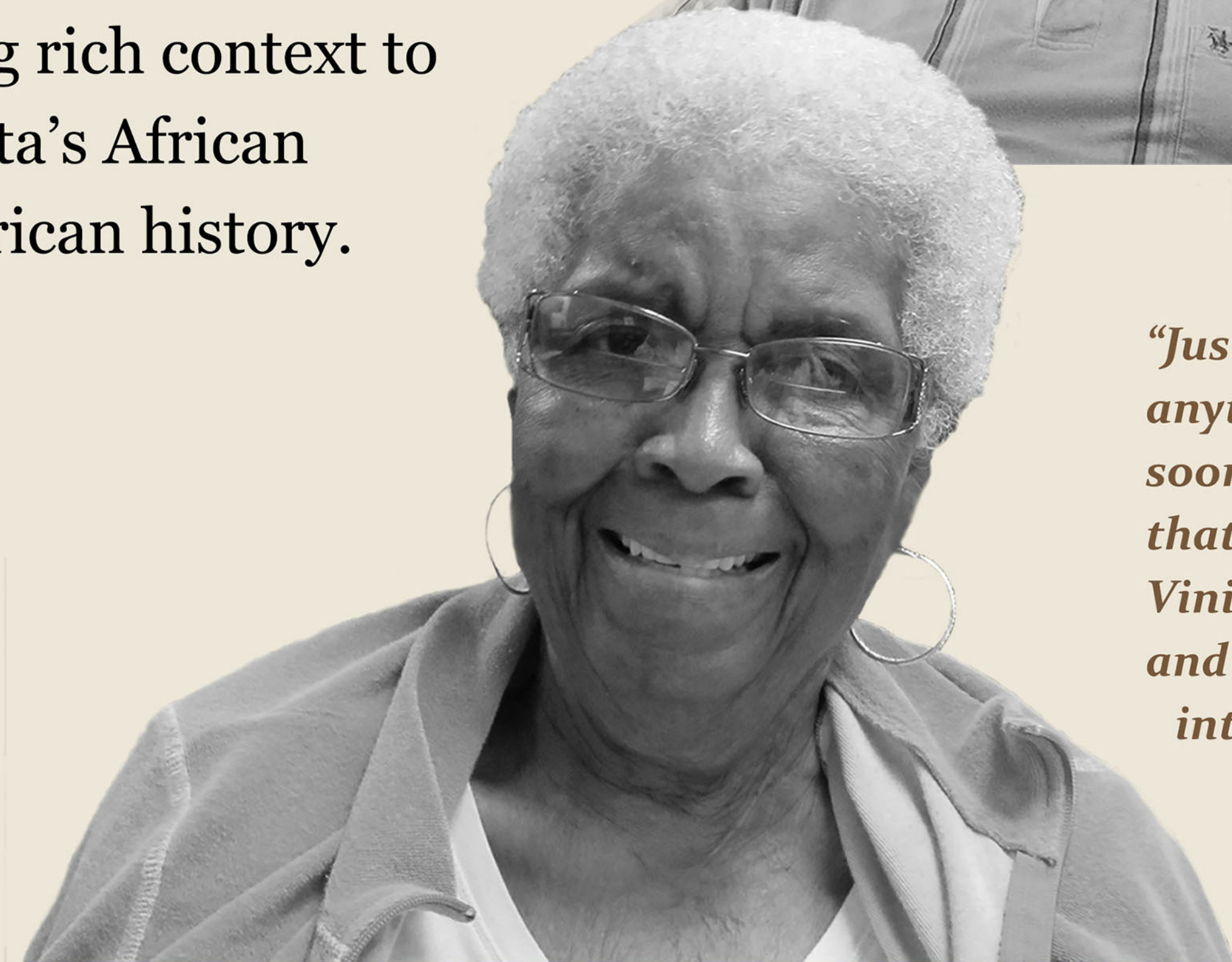
"Miss Hollis. She was the homemaking teacher, and I really liked her... Something she always said, 'When you go out, always go looking your best. Don't care if you just step out on your porch, you should always go looking your best.' She was a good teacher."
Lois Hunt West (Class of 1952)



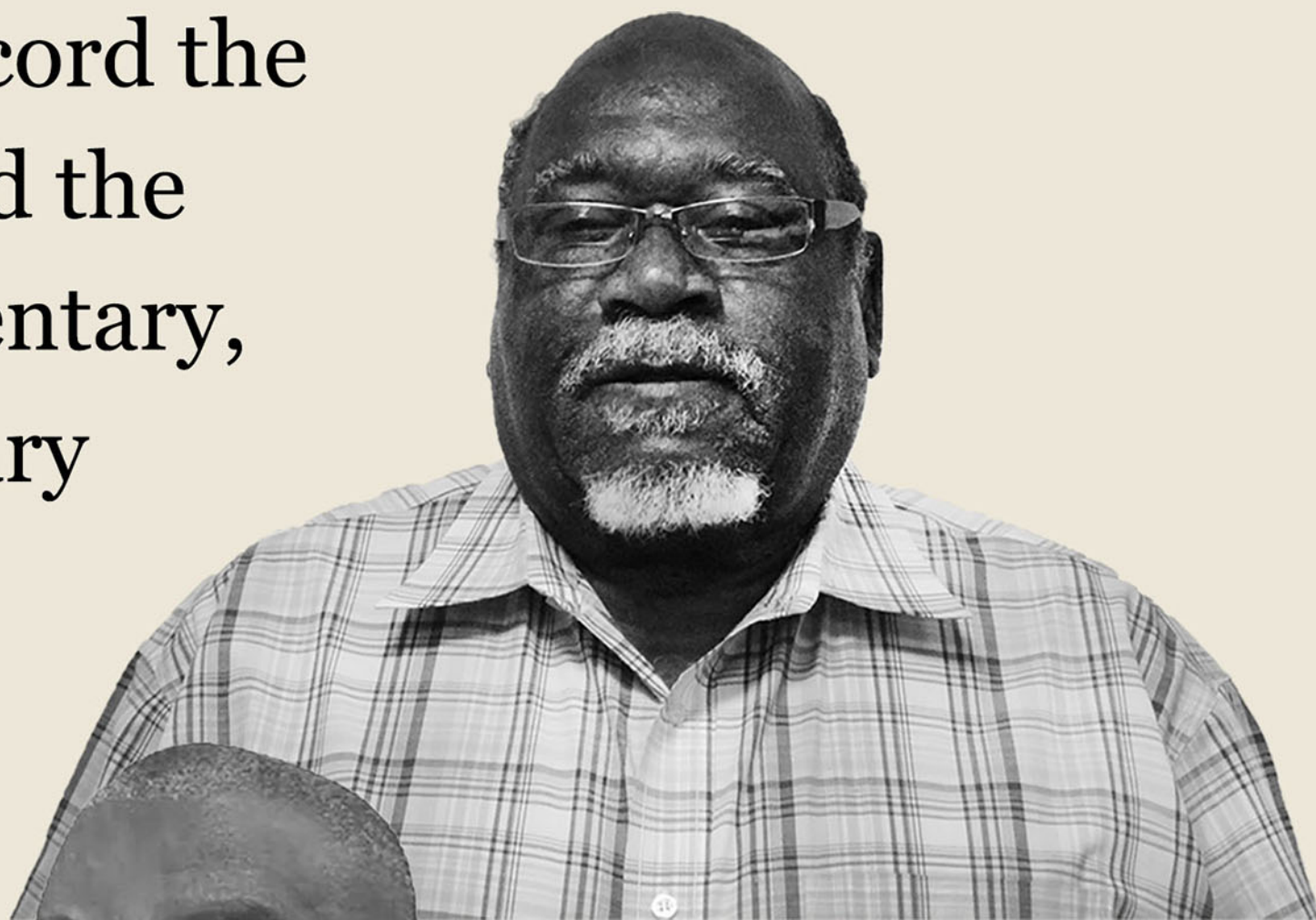
Okla Hicks



Mary Crawford



Frances Ramsey



Charles Kirkendoll



Robert Ramsey, Jr.

"Just to think that the integration, well it wasn't anything we could do about it. It was to come sooner or later. Well I had sisters, younger sisters, that was in the integration that went to the Vinita High School. I said, 'Oh I hope I hurry up and get out before—all I hear about they going to integrate the schools,' and I was just hoping that it wouldn't be the next year when school started or something. I don't know, I just had that in the back of my mind. I don't think I could have adjusted well."
Okla Hicks (Class of 1953)

By the Numbers

- 8 narrators interviewed, ages 63-84
- 7 hours of interview audio/video
- 190 pages of transcripts

Major Topics

- Discipline
- Teachers
- Classes
- Activities
- Homework
- Lunch
- After-school jobs
- Growing up in Vinita
- Integration
- Local businesses
- Reunions

Vinita

- Established in 1871
- County seat
- Population 5,743
- Strong African American community since 1910s

Lessons Learned

- The value of partnering with community institution
- Don't underestimate the time needed to process interviews
- One gathering day may not be enough
- Be aware of history of the community as much as possible

Replicating in Your Community

1. Define your focus
2. Begin cultivating partnerships with cultural repositories or community groups to:
 - identify potential narrators
 - create question guide
 - determine interview details (where, when, interviewers, etc.)
3. Become familiar with oral history methodology
 - Many online resources
 - In Oklahoma, consult with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program: www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory
 - Nationally, Oral History Association: www.oralhistory.org

Area Landmarks

- Eastern Oklahoma Hospital for the Insane, 1913-1947
- Eastern State Hospital, 1947-present
- Northeast Oklahoma Correctional Center, 1994-present
- Will Rogers Archway (formerly the Glasshouse Restaurant)

Attucks School

- National Register of Historic Places, 2009
- Named in honor of Crispus Attucks
- Served the African American community of Vinita through 1958
- Constructed 1916-1917
- Addition built in 1925, doubled size
- Gym built in 1939 through WPA
- Integration started 1956, completed in 1958
- Renamed Southeast Elementary School
- Currently closed

Tanya Finchum
Juliana Nykolaiszyn
www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory



UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Oklahoma Oral History
Research Program