

# OXFORD AMERICAN

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## ***No Tears Project* Concert Honors the Little Rock Nine During 66th Anniversary Commemoration Programs on September 25th**

August 24, 2023—LITTLE ROCK, AR—The Oxford American, National Park Service, and the City of Little Rock are excited to announce a **free concert** featuring the *No Tears Project* ensemble on **Monday, September 25, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at Ron Robinson Theater** (100 River Market Avenue) in Little Rock, Arkansas. The concert will be part of “Little Rock Nine Day” which commemorates and honors the 66th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine’s desegregation of Central High School. Members of the Little Rock Nine are scheduled to be in attendance for this special commemorative performance. **Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first served basis. Reserve tickets at [tinyurl.com/NoTearsLR](https://tinyurl.com/NoTearsLR).**

*No Tears Project* ensemble is a jazz-inflected collective of musicians, dancers, and spoken word artists formed in 2017 by Arkansas-based pianist and composer **Christopher Parker** and vocalist **Kelley Hurt** in partnership with Oxford American. Originally born from a musical composition written by Parker and Hurt to honor the Little Rock Nine during 60th anniversary commemoration events, *No Tears Project* has evolved into a touring group and outreach program that uses conversation and concerts to engage communities around the country in learning about civil rights.

The ensemble’s last appearance in Little Rock was in March 2019, during a concert in conjunction with members of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. At the event, GRAMMY-nominated bassist and composer Rufus Reid premiered expanded arrangements of Parker and Hurt’s *No Tears Suite*. Since that time, the group’s repertoire has expanded significantly. In 2023 alone, the group commissioned and premiered new civil rights-inspired music, dance, and poetry during multi-day residencies in both St. Louis and Memphis, including works by jazz luminary and Arkansas-born composer **Oliver Lake**, pianist **Donald Brown**, saxophonist **Robert “Bobby LaVell” Garner**, poet **Treasure Shields Redmond**, and dancer **Ashley Tate**.

Ensemble members for this special concert include Christopher Parker (piano); Kelley Hurt (voice), Treasure Shields Redmond (spoken word / poetry), **Darrian Douglas** (drums and percussion), **Rodney Jordan** (bass), Robert “Bobby LaVell” Garner (tenor saxophone), **Marc Franklin** (trumpet), **Chad Fowler** (alto saxophone), and Ashley Tate (dance), plus special guests **Matt Dickson** (tenor saxophone) and **Tyus Diaz** (woodwinds).

“It’s an honor to perform this music and present the *No Tears Project* ensemble in Little Rock again, especially on the occasion of the 66th anniversary commemoration events,” said vocalist and co-artistic director, Kelley Hurt. “We are thrilled to be ‘coming home’ to present the *No Tears Project* in Little Rock, where the program was formed and nurtured,” added pianist and co-artistic director Christopher Parker. “I hope we can continue to inspire the community to recognize our heroes through these words and music, and to remember that the work is never done,” said Ryan Harris, *No Tears Project* director and consultant to the Oxford American.

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“*No Tears Project* has been presenting universal harmony for the past six years—consistently merging at the intersection of faith, love, and evolution,” said Robin White, Superintendent of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. “The concert commemorating the 66th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine’s desegregation of Central High School represents narratives of trauma and humanity, while being filled with self-validation and hope. We are excited to partner with Oxford American again to bring *No Tears Project* back to our community.”

“We are honored to have *No Tears Project* ensemble perform as part of the 66th Anniversary commemoration events,” said Little Rock City Manager Bruce T. Moore. “It’s our hope that the performance will help highlight the impact and significance of the Little Rock Nine and their impact here and around the world.”

For approved press images of *No Tears Project*, [visit the link here](#).

## PRESENTED BY



## ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

The **Oxford American** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization and national magazine dedicated to exploring the complexity and vitality of the American South through excellent writing, music, and visual art. Billed as “A Magazine of the South,” it has won four National Magazine Awards and other high honors since it began publication in 1992. The *Oxford American* is published in partnership with the University of Central Arkansas.

In September 1957, Little Rock Central High School became a symbol for change and a catalyst for transformation in the civil rights movement as the first fundamental test to the United States’ resolve to enforce African American civil rights in the face of massive southern defiance following *Brown v. Board of Education*. Today, **Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site** interprets the heroic story of the Little Rock Nine, the struggle to maintain segregation, and the surging tide of the civil rights movement. Visit and learn how the sacrifice of nine African American teenagers more than a half century ago has provided opportunities and opened doors to those seeking equality—and education—around the world.

The **City of Little Rock** is Arkansas’s capital and the state’s largest city. The City is dedicated to improving our residents’ quality of life by providing exceptional service in an efficient and equitable manner.

The ***No Tears Project*** uses music and conversation to educate and engage communities with stories about civil rights. As an arts outreach program, the *No Tears Project* strives to create recognition as a precursor to reconciliation. Since 2017, Oxford American has presented multi-day *No Tears Project* residencies with like-minded partners in Little Rock and Fayetteville, Arkansas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Tulsa, Oklahoma; St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee.