



ROBERT R. BROWN



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## THE REVIVALISTS

Black Wall Street isn't just history—it's now. Meet the entrepreneurs who make today's Greenwood a cultural touchstone for Tulsa.

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In March 2020, Ricco Wright's Black Wall Street Gallery hosted the exhibit *Blacklahoma* by Shannon Nicole. Many of the watercolors in the exhibit first appeared in the January/February 2019 issue of *Oklahoma Today*.

## All the Wright Moves

RICCO WRIGHT HAS CREATED AN ALL-PURPOSE SPACE FOR CELEBRATING GREENWOOD.

As an educator, philosopher, activist, writer, and poet, Ricco Wright is the Andy Warhol of Black Wall Street. From hosting soirées of two hundred and fifty people or more in his home to launching the Black Wall Street Gallery in 2018, Wright creates an atmosphere that nurtures the spirit of community and conversation.

"Imagine yourself going to a really dope place, and they just so happen to have art on the wall—that's how I'm envisioning Black Wall Street Gallery," he says.

Growing up in Tulsa, Wright felt confined. He'd had enough of conforming to other people's opinions about his life. He left for New York in 2004 to attend Columbia University on a Bill Gates academic scholarship and, immersed in a city with many different cultures and backgrounds, he felt a desire to build a legacy for his own community. He returned to Oklahoma in 2014 and taught mathematics at Langston University for two years before relocating to Tulsa in 2017.

"I could have done all of this in New York, but I am not from New York," Wright says. "I am from Oklahoma—specifically Tulsa. And I wanted to give back for that purpose. I want to build a legacy for my own people; and I refer to Oklahomans as 'my own people.'"

Like those who established Greenwood in 1906, Wright exemplifies the spirit of entrepreneurship. Incorporating literature, music, poetry, film, and art, Black Wall Street Gallery is as eclectic as its creator. He provides more than just a place to look at art—this is an atmosphere where filmmakers, writers, musicians, comedians, artists, and poets gather in one creative space. Wright's exhibitions provide healing for the community—such as Shannon Nicole's *Blacklahoma*, which highlights prominent black Oklahoma pioneers of the twentieth century, and the Local Legends Comedy Show that injects truth into humor. This May, Black Wall Street Gallery will host an opening reception for a new exhibit by Eddy K Allen, who also will give an artist talk at the gallery May 19. On May 12, Oklahoma writer Rilla Askew will speak about her book *Fire in Beulah*.

Whether his gallery provides conciliatory conversation or healing laughter, Wright is at the forefront of helping mend the wounds of a community through dialogue and art while building new launching pads for the area's thriving entrepreneurial spirit.

### BLACK WALL STREET GALLERY

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