

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Shelley Rowan
Director of Marketing
Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum
405.523.3208
sbr@oklahomaheritage.com

Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, Dr. George Henderson “battle” in Gaylord-Pickens Museum’s Versus Series

OKLAHOMA CITY- Two civil rights pioneers, one historic and one modern, will discuss the impact they have made on Oklahoma’s civil rights movement in the Gaylord-Pickens Museum’s Versus Series. The series features an interactive “battle” about the life of a historic Oklahoman versus his or her contemporary. On Tuesday, Feb. 7 from 6 to 7:30 p.m., Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher (portrayed by Chief U.S. District Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange) and Dr. George Henderson will examine their roles, at different periods and in different arenas, one as the student and one as the teacher, in the fight for civil rights.

Fisher was a key figure in the civil rights movement in Oklahoma. She applied for admission into the University of Oklahoma law school in order to challenge the state’s segregation laws and to become a lawyer. Denied admission because of her race, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma*, a precursor to *Brown v. Board of Education*, that the state of Oklahoma must provide instruction for blacks equal to that of whites. Fisher became the first African-American female to be admitted into an all-white law school in the South when she was admitted to the University of Oklahoma.

Fisher’s story will be shared by Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange, Chief U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Oklahoma. Appointed by President Bill Clinton, Miles-LaGrange became the first African-American on the federal bench in the Tenth Circuit. She is also the first African-American female elected to the Oklahoma Senate.

Considered a pioneer among African-American college and university educators in Oklahoma, Dr. George Henderson joined the University of Oklahoma faculty in 1967. In 1969 he was appointed Sylvan N. Goldman Professor of Human Relations, becoming the first African-American in the state to hold an endowed professorship. Henderson was the first at the University of Oklahoma to create a degree-earning department; and the first African-American dean of a degree-earning college on the Norman campus. Henderson was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 2003.

When asked recently about what in his lifetime makes him the most proud, he replied “I would like to think I was able to rise above poverty, illiteracy, racism and bigotry, to teach how to bridge a diverse population in Oklahoma. I always wanted to make a positive change.”

Claudia Williamson, Miss Black Oklahoma USA, will referee the “battle.” Williamson is a senior at the University of Central Oklahoma and was crowned Miss Black Oklahoma USA in 2011. She will graduate with a degree in Marriage and Family Life Education and plans to expand her career in motivational speaking.

On the evening of the “battle,” the Museum will be open an extra hour. Local artists featured in Afro–Americana: Contemporary Black Artists in Oklahoma, the Museum’s temporary exhibit, will be available for an informal meet and greet from 5 to 6 p.m.

The event is free for Association and Museum members and \$5 for non-members. Please RSVP to Gini Campbell at 405.523.3202 or gmc@oklahomaheritage.com.

The Gaylord-Pickens Museum is a high-tech, interactive attraction that tells Oklahoma’s story through its people. The Museum and its parent organization, the Oklahoma Heritage Association, strive to preserve Oklahoma’s unique history and inspire pride in the state. For more information about the Museum, visit www.oklahomaheritage.com or call 405.235.4458.

###