Justine Durant may be a trailblazer herself, but she also comes from a long line of them.

Currently serving as president of the Board of Trustees of Spring ISD, Durant was the first Black woman to serve on the board when she started in 2006. Nearly two decades later, she says her dedication to public education and hard work ethic is an inherited trait.

That is because her father, James T. Durant, was a man so beloved and recognized for his hard work and dedication to community that he was recognized by the Michigan House of Representatives upon his retirement in 1983. That House Resolution called him “one of those rare individuals who considers it an obligation to work towards the betterment of the community” and someone with “extreme sensitivity to the concerns of those around him.”

James Durant was a native of the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma, also known as the Black Wall Street for its abundance of black-owned businesses.

The neighborhood was home to more than 600 businesses, 21 churches, 21 restaurants, 30 grocery stores, a hospital, and its own school system when it became a part of history on May 31, 1921. When James Durant was just 6 years old, the Tulsa race massacre took place over two days. The event, which is widely considered the single deadliest racial violence incident in American history, killed up to 300 people.