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THE REAL DEAL PRESS

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EDITORIAL

A House Divided Cannot Stand

Eight years ago, the Kasich administration started life as a whites-only administration. The extreme lack of diversity in Kasich's cabinet, and his insulting statement that he was looking for the best people justly drew the ire of the Cleveland SCLC, which [disinvited the one top aide Kasich had designated to represent him at a key black community celebration](#).

It was a controversial play by the local SCLC chapter, but its president, Dr. E. Theophilus Caviness, has been playing political hardball for more than half-a-century. The indefatigable nonagenarian remains a formidable presence. His resume lists time spent as a Glenville area city councilman, aide to former mayor George Voinovich, member of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, and induction into the Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame, all in addition to being the full time senior pastor of Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church.

For a good chunk of the last decade, Caviness has been the simultaneous puppet master of the Cleveland Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC], the local chapter of Al Sharpton's National Action Network, a local ministerial group, and the Cleve-

land NAACP [when his good friend and assistant minister, Hilton Smith, was branch president]. His ability to develop and nurture relationships, together with his willingness to forgive and forget — he went from unrelenting Nina Turner foe during the 2009 fight over county reorganization to very early champion of her 2010 quest for Ohio Secretary of State — has long made Caviness an attractive political ally for the beleaguered and over his head county executive, Armond Budish.

As Budish shrivels under the glaring spotlights directed at his administration for multiple gaffes — his manipulation by his former chief of staff, Sharon Sobol Jordan; the gross mismanagement of the county's IT department; and most tragically, the utter mishandling of the county jail, where eight detainees have died in just over six months — Caviness is riding to the rescue. This Friday, at the good reverend's church, Budish is slated to receive SCLC's Humanitarian of the Year award.

Requiem for Civil Rights Activism?

Giving Budish an SCLC award in the wake of his devolving administration might be best understood as a requiem for the local civil rights community.

Cleveland's black middle class left behind the organizations that made [civil rights] gains possible, leaving to rot, if not burn, the bridges by which they got over.

When a purported civil rights organization deems it suitable to honor a public official whose administration has presided over the deaths of eight detainees, it seems safe to say that organized civil rights activism is dead in Cleveland.

The Cleveland NAACP that once boasted of more than 10,000 members is close to rigor mortis, so arthritic it can't hold an election for new officers because its membership records are in disarray. Last year it was unable to prevent a score or so of local citizens from securing authority from the national office to start a second area branch. But for the efforts of the largely autonomous legal redress committee of the Cleveland chapter, the fledgling Euclid chapter would already have eclipsed the original in terms of community profile and current

effectiveness.

The Euclid chapter, whatever its virtues and promise, is testimony to the long, slow slide of the Cleveland black community's collective spirit. That spirit was likely at its strongest during the brief but impressive heyday of the 21st Congressional District Caucus, brainchild of councilman Charlie Carr and Call & Post publisher W. O. Walker. Marginalized inside the local Democratic Party, the Caucus established itself as an independent force that responded to the imperatives of its own community interests. It mobilized the black community to great effect and swung a number of key elections that rewarded friends and punished foes.

This demonstration of political power, perhaps even more than Stokes' election as the

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Looking Around America

Tending Our Cues

By Marilyn Dyson

I know that like practically everyone I harbor several social and political biases. These judgments make me leery about going into certain groups and communities.

A few months ago, a friend suggested we meet for lunch in Levittown, PA. I cringed at the implications of *me*, an African American, going *there*. Stories of racial conflicts from the 1950s echoed in my mind. Added to those were the more recent white supremacists' events in Charlottesville. How would all of this impact my current experience in Levittown?

Before going to lunch, I compulsively researched Levittown's history.

After World War II, the Levitt family built several housing developments that excluded blacks. In 1957, one African American family moved to Levittown PA. White residents formed a mob that harassed the family for weeks. The vandalism, taunts and intimidation made national and international news. Only court rulings and state troopers ended the overt violence.

I wondered, "What would happen during my visit?" Ultimately, I decided, it was only lunch and worst case scenario, it would be bad service. I'd

survive the two hours. Still, I braced myself for the trip.

On the drive I thought about my experiences in suburban shopping malls. The parking lots are filled with mom cars: SUVs and minivans. Some white shoppers don't see me and when they do they are often rude. In some stores, some salespeople veer to extremes: either they ignore me or they hover.

As I stopped at a light near the restaurant in Levittown, I noticed there were no mom cars: no SUV or minivans. I saw no pickup trucks either. I was surrounded by sedans just like in my Philadelphia neighborhood! It surprised

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A House Divided Cannot Stand

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nation's first black big-city mayor, reverberated nationally. It changed the political equation in this town, firmly establishing black power's right to a seat at the community's political poker table.

As Cleveland's black middle class — taking advantage of the better job opportunities and higher pay that were the direct result of the civil rights battles of the 1950s and '60s — began its rush to the suburbs in search of better education, more space, and quieter neighborhoods, they increasingly left behind the organizations that made those gains

possible, leaving to rot, if not burn, the bridges by which they got over.

They also left behind the community that had nurtured them and now needs their help.

The abandonment of the black poor by their better off brethren has predictably put in jeopardy those once-solid middle class gains. The black poor, dissed and disconnected, don't vote because they see no reason to do so. This makes it hard to sustain, much less advance, the original gains of the civil rights movement.

Do not misunderstand us to say that the

black middle class is responsible for the plight of the black poor. Black middle class behavior is actually imitative. Substitute class for race and we can see the affluent former Clevelanders who now live in exurban communities have a similar parasitic relationship to a depressed core city.

Cleveland's political weakness has allowed rural and small town conservatives to strip away home rule and urban tax dollars.

Where are the community leaders who understand we are all in the same boat and must learn to paddle together?

THE REAL DEAL PRESS

Reporting on the interplay of race, class and power in the civic, business and cultural spaces of Northeast Ohio and beyond.

Our mission is to attract, articulate and amplify civic intelligence and community engagement for a healthier, stronger community.

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Submit letters, press releases, notices, calendar items, and corrections via email at rta@TheRealDealPress.com or fax 216.672.4304.

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Community Forum Discussions

History, Politics, and the Backfire Theory
Sunday, January 20th • 9:30-10:45 am

Did fear, lies and racism grow stronger throughout the state in the 2018 election? Ohio elections are trending toward deep-seated Republican conservatism, especially in rural areas. How can progressives work with conservatives? According to the "Backfire Theory," when your deepest convictions are challenged by contradictory evidence, your beliefs get stronger. Is this true?



Brent Larkin,
 Plain Dealer columnist
 & former PD Editorial Director.

Dialogues on Activism and Elections: 2019 and Beyond
Sunday, January 27th • 9:30-10:45 am

Countywide activist groups grew immensely in 2018. Will they continue to be stable, grow, or taper off? How will activists advance their agendas this year? What specific community issues, actions, policies, or media encourage volunteer commitment?



How can we personally strategize our activist time and resources?

Panelists: Steve Holecko, Director, Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus; Audrey Morris, Co-Chair, Greater Cleveland League of Women Voters; Norman Robbins, Research Director, Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates. Moderator: Erika Anthony, Vice-President, Government Relations, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, and Co-Chair, Cleveland Votes.

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

• **This afternoon at 3p the Cleveland acoustic music nonprofit Folknet** presents a free concert of Songs for Social Justice. Performers will include Afi Scruggs, Charlie Mosbrook, Ashley Fulton, Tamar Gray, Michael McDonald, Luke Case, Warren Bendler, Christopher Gillespie, and the Forest Hill Chancel Choir.

The concert, which will take place at Forest Hill Church, 3031 Monticello Blvd., Cleveland Hts., is a fundraiser for NEO grassroots organizations. Donations will be accepted. The concert is free, but it's also a fundraiser for NE grassroots Latino organization; donations will be accepted.

• **If any community needs to learn effective direct action strategy and tactics, it's this one.** So hats off to the Museum of Contemporary Art for hosting a teach-in on Martin Luther King Day, **Monday, Jan. 21, from 11a to 3:30p.** Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries of Ohio State University will lead a special learning session that puts King into broader context, and explores various expressions of African American protest and non-violent direct action since the 1960s.

Other sessions will follow: affirmative political sign making, and a For Freedoms Town Hall, featuring a panel of artists and activists that includes M. Carmen Lane, Favianna Rodriguez, Emma Sulkowicz, and Shakyra Diaz. The City Club's Dan Moulthrop will moderate. More info [here](#).

Tending Our Cues

Continued from page 2

me that I gave a sigh of relief and I began to relax.

I wondered, "Am I really comforted by sedans?"

I found the restaurant's parking lot and pulled into a space surrounded by sedans. I started to smile. Three middle-aged white ladies were sitting outside the restaurant's door. I hesitated, wondering if I had locked the car. I did a two-step trying to decide whether or not to go back and check. One woman said, "It's probably not in the car."

I laughed and said, "You're right. I probably won't find it." We all laughed.

I continued into the restaurant, realizing that we were just older people

with the same goal: a relaxing lunch.

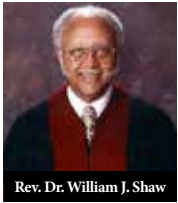
The hostess greeted me and asked, "Are you meeting someone?" I said yes and she led me to my companion.

The waitress was nice. The food was fresh. All of the tension about the past dissipated. I enjoyed my lunch with my friend.

Later, I had to ask myself, "How much stress do I create because of the news, history and my past experiences? What else triggers my comfort? When can I stop carrying the past and enjoy the moment?"

Marilyn Dyson is a career coach. Born and raised in Washington DC, she now lives and works in Philadelphia, PA.

SCLC's annual MLK Gala is Friday



Rev. Dr. William J. Shaw

The 18th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Gala, hosted by the Greater Cleveland Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, will take place this Friday, January 18, at 6p, at The Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church, 1161 East 105 St [44108]. The [Rev. Dr. William J. Shaw, pastor of White Rock Baptist Church](#), Philadelphia, PA, and past president of

the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., will be keynote speaker.

Each year the local chapter recognizes community members of the Greater Cleveland Community are selected for their dedication to service. Among the 2018 awardees are: **Armond Budish**, Cuyahoga County Executive, **Humanitarian of the Year**; **Brandon E. Chrostowski**, founder, EDWINS Leadership & Restaurant Institute, **Economic Diversity of the Year Award**; and **Ty Williams**, Chief Executive Officer, Level 5 Global Corporation,

Entrepreneur of the Year.

Other honorees include: **John Skory**, President, The Illuminating Company, **Corporate Leader**; Norman K. Edwards, Executive Director, ACEE/Black Contractors Group, **Labor Advocate**; Cleveland councilman **Kevin Conwell, D-9, Community Service**; and **Carl Ewing**, President, Association of African American Cultural Gardens, **Cultural Advocate.**

Also recognized will be **Meran Rogers**, founding director, Global Ambassadors Language Academy, **Educational Admin-**

istrator; **Rev. Johnny Twymon**, Blessed Hope Missionary Baptist Church, **Pastor**; **Fred Perkins Sr**, McTech Corporation, Businessman; **Ohio Supreme Court Justice Melody Stewart**, Distinguished Jurist; **Judge Deborah M. Turner**, Cuyahoga Common Pleas Court, Legal Advocate.

Dr. Kenneth Chalker, retired Senior Pastor, University Circle United Methodist Church, will receive the E.T. Caviness Award.

For more information or tickets, contact Jacki Tucker at 216-406-6908. Tickets are \$50.

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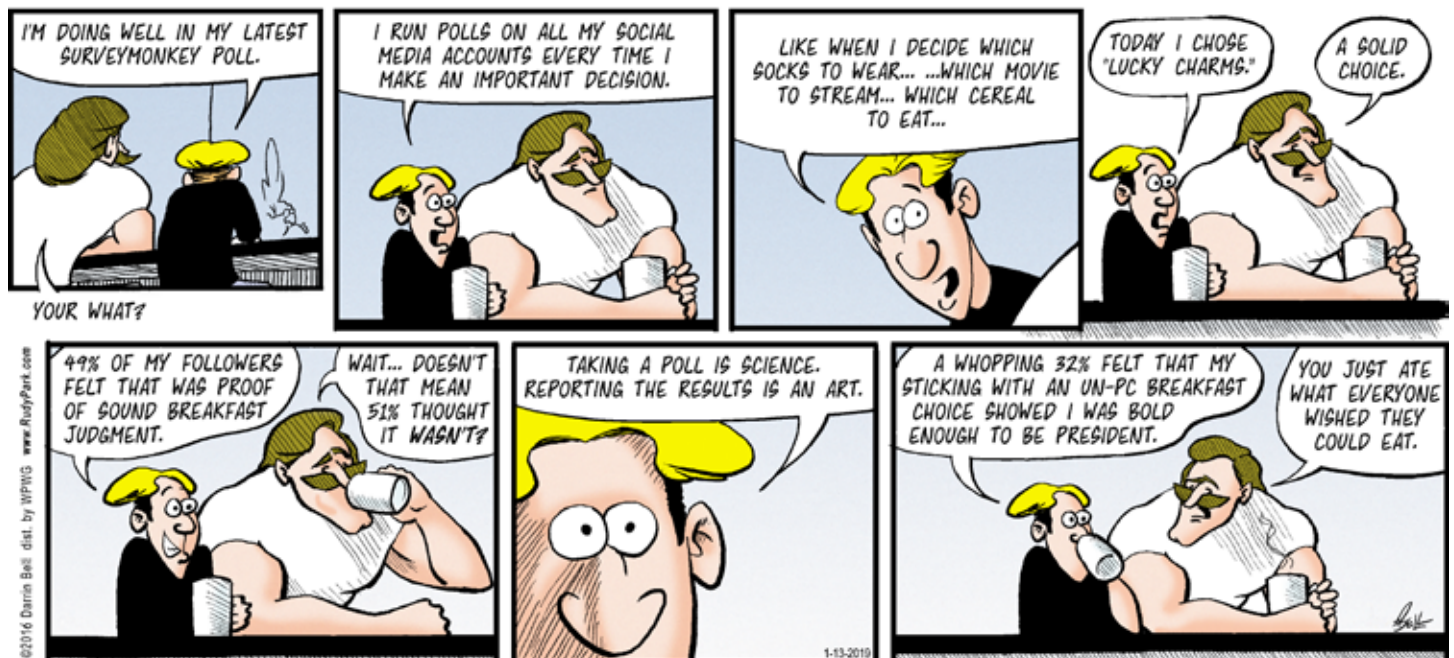
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