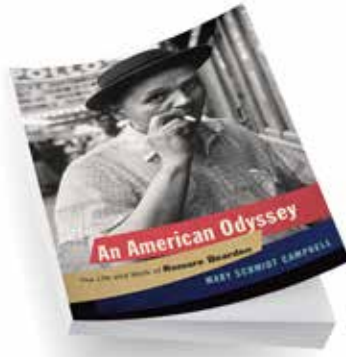


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Black History Month

New Bearden bio links life, art, history

Page 5

THE REAL DEAL PRESS

Volume 4 / Issue 17 / February 17, 2019

moCa, celebrating golden anniversary, launches 'New Agency'



Clockwise from left: New Agency members Casa Bargé, Damien McLendon, cellist Sophie Benn, poet R. A. Washington. (Photos by Nathan Paige)

By **Nathan Paige**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The local arts community came out in force Saturday, February 9, as the Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art (moCa) hosted a kickoff party in celebration of the museum's 50th anniversary. Spoken word performers, musicians, tasting stations, burlesque routines, performance artists and DJs were among the offerings provided by The New Agency, a group of more than 50 of Cleveland's best and brightest creatives selected by the museum.

"We — the staff, the board, and our partners — identified 59 people working currently in Cleveland who are doing amazing work, not just in visual art, but in a lot of different industries...and it is a really fantastic group of people," said Megan Reich, the museum's deputy director.

Members of The New Agency

include Silas Buchanan, founder of Our Healthy Community; Adam King, senior marketing associate for Digital C; Eric Ho, mixologist and owner of L.B.M. Bar; Honey Bell-Bey, executive and creative director; Distinguished Gentlemen of Spoken Word; and filmmaker Laura Paglin, to name a few.

Throughout the year, members will be included in a variety of projects and programs presented by the museum.

"In terms of engagement with the New Agency, we are developing specific programs, some private, some public, with many or all of them, and also seeking funding for projects in 2018 and 2019 that would be developed in tandem with the New Agents," said Reich.

There is also a private summit scheduled for May "with all of the New Agents to explore cross-industry cultural collaboration that drives more compassion, civility,

empathy, and engagement for and with Cleveland's communities," Reich said. "That program will be followed the next day by a public For Freedoms Town Hall on a similar topic, with participation by members of the New Agency."

Mordecai Cargill, a member of the Agency, as well as a partner and co-founder of ThirdSpace Action Lab, is eager to see what will develop from this collaboration. "I'm not entirely sure what to expect, but I'm honored to have made the list," says Cargill. "I'm an organizer, so I'm hoping that this is an opportunity to activate moCa as a place for community building, radical new ideas and transformative multidisciplinary work."

The event was hosted by Rick Smith, widely known for his RAKE (Random Acts of Kindness) organization, and radio personality Robin "Bijou Star" Sadler. A list of New Agency members can be found [here](#).

This Week in Politics

Citizens take initiative while Jackson, Budish stay reactive

By **R. T. Andrews**
EDITOR

A former elected official told us this week it's a bad bargain to be a public official in Cleveland when your fate is dependent on 12% of the electorate who bother to show up.

The comment illuminated the state of Cleveland politics these days where a disengaged electorate seems to expect little from its elected officials and often receives even less.

Cleveland mayor Frank Jackson has been receiving increasing criticism for the fortress-like attitude of his administration. The lack of transparency about what goes on in City Hall seems to have increased with the mayor's extended absence from his office, prompting his defenders at [cleveland.com](#) to disclose what had long been an open secret: Jackson's wife is seriously ill. But even due regard for his privacy has

Continued on Page 4

Community Calendar



Wednesday, Feb. 20 at 6:30p
 - “Reading and Riesling” will consider lessons from *Leap-frog: The New Revolution for Women Entrepreneurs* by Nathalie Molina Nino. Gloria Ware of JumpStart will lead the discussion at Cleveland Urban Winery, 2180 Lee Rd. [44118].

Thursday, Feb. 21 at 6:30p
 - Maple Hts. Mayor Annette

Blackwell delivers the State of the City address tonight at 15901 Libby Rd. [44137]

Sunday, Feb. 24 at 3p
 - Cleveland Realtists Association will install its 2019 officers and board members at the Silverspot Cinema, 27349 Harvard Rd., Building 7 [44139]. Following the program, CRA is sponsoring a screening of *Selma*, in recognition of Black History Month. Tickets are \$20 for children 12 and under, and \$30 for nonmembers. Food and popcorn will be available, along with a cash bar. [Registration](#) is required; no tickets will be sold at the door.

Community Bulletin Board



Mental Health

Mental illnesses are common in our society, with some estimates suggesting that nearly one in five American adults lives with a mental illness, ranging from mild to moderate to severe. It’s an issue that most of us would rather not discuss, which is problematic, because you can’t cure a problem that isn’t acknowledged or named.

The Cleveland chapter of 100 Black Men and the Northeast Ohio Young Black Democrats are collaborating to bring light to this issue. This Saturday, Feb. 23, at 11a they are co-hosting a discus-

sion, “ Let’s Talk About It: Black Men’s Mental Health”. Presenters include Dr. Gary Carrington, Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Emanuella Groves, Let’s Get Healthy Cleveland founder Marvin Ferguson, and Dr. Richard Montgomery II.

The program will take place at County Democratic Party headquarters, 3615 Superior Ave. [44103]

HBCU Tour seats still available

The Urban League of Greater Cleveland still has seats available for its Spring 2019 HBCU that this year will visit Grambling State, Southern University, Jackson State, Alabama State, Alcorn State, Tennessee State, and Xavier University of Louisiana. Tour dates are March 24-30. The cost includes transportation and lodging. Visit/call www.ul-cleveland.org / 216.622.0991.

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CORNERSTONES — Construction, Building Trades, Community Benefits

The construction industry has long represented a pathway for the average Joe to support himself, his family. For the more enterprising and industrious, it can also be a path to wealth.

Two organizations are hosting events for those interested in exploring a career in construction.

The Northeast Ohio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Construction Opportunity Fair this Friday, Feb. 22, at H J Weber Co., 3140 West 25 St. [44109]. Call 216.281.4422 for info. This is an event for both contractors and for those seeking to learn about jobs in construction.

The Construction Employers Association, comprised of the largest union contractors in the region, is hosting a series of career education programs aimed at recruiting men and women who are least 18 and willing to consider a job where they can earn \$60,000 annually after a few years. The industry is re-entry friendly and requires no college degree.

CEA's Opportunities in Construction information series will present the pros and challenges of a career in construction at the following dates and locations: Tuesday, Feb. 26, 5:30p-7p at Warrensville Hts. High School, 4270 Northfield Rd.

[44128]; Saturday, Mar. 2, 11a-12:30p at Ohio Technical College, 1374 East 51 St. [44103]; and Monday, Mar. 4, 5:30p-7p at Killingsworth Meeting Place, 4127 East 131 St. [44105].

Some industry reps say the construction field will add 790,000 jobs by 2024. For more info on the programs, visit www.ceacisp.org.

Opportunity Corridor meeting

The Opportunity Corridor Inclusion Advisory Committee will meet this Wednesday, Feb. 20 at 1:30p at the Lonnie Burten Recreation Center, 2511 East 46 St. [44104].

Citizens take initiative...

Continued from Page 1

not muted the criticism, especially with accusations from AT&T that the city has dragged its feet for six months in failing to issue permits for the telecom's giant multi-million dollar network improvements.

The administration, while vehemently pushing back against AT&T's allegations, issued a lengthy email proclaiming a new effort to keep citizens informed about all the great things it is doing. Of course, emails to the citizenry is kind of like giving frozen dinners to people without refrigerators or stoves, since so much of the town is either offline or can connect only at the speed of molasses. And that goes back to AT&T and hoodwinked state legislators who signed off on a deal a decade ago that has resulted in the digital redlining of large swaths of the city.

But the mayor had a bonanza of a week compared to county executive Armond Budish, who found his offices at county headquarters raided by state law enforcement authorities as part of an ongoing criminal investigation into several members of his administration. County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley, no friend of Budish, turned his part of the investigation over to newly-installed Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost to avoid likely conflicts, since O'Malley is bound by law to defend the county executive against a spate of civil lawsuits that may involve some of the same matters that criminal investigators are reviewing.

With the community's top public CEOs seemingly operating in quicksand, and their respective councils in their usual docile

mode, private citizens are leading public policy initiatives. CLASH, Cleveland Lead Advocates for Safe Housing, filed a petition at City Hall Friday, starting a process to get its lead safe legislation on the November ballot. And while we haven't checked lately, we understand that petitions are continuing to circulate to put the issue of council reduction on the ballot as well.

Perhaps Budish, Jackson, and Congresswoman Marcia Fudge can take some solace in the admission by some grassroots activists that their efforts to recall the trio have petered out.

In other news, this will be the last week for Pat McDonald as top official at the County Board of Elections. He has been tapped by Gov. Mike DeWine to be Director of the Ohio Lottery Commission.

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.

We welcome letters to the editor. Please include your name, address, and best phone number. [Address and phone will not be published.] We may edit for clarity and space.

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

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Black History Month

New Bearden bio links life, art, history

By William H. L. Dorsey
SPECIAL TO THE REAL DEAL PRESS

Romare Bearden is best known as a collagist whose work portrayed deeply human aspects of the experience of African descendants in the United States. A light-skinned black man who could have “passed” as white, Bearden’s personal development paralleled the development of African American consciousness, with his *oeuvre* developing in a way that eventually met the changes in African American expressive culture in the 20th century that coalesced in the Black Arts Movement, as a facet of the Black Power Movement.

In *An American Odyssey: The Life and Work of Romare Bearden*, Mary Schmidt Campbell has produced a masterful biography that explicitly relates Bearden’s development as a human being and his artistic production. It’s a biography told with the same kind of attention to detail and humanity found in Isabel Wilkerson’s also excellent work, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration*, which recounted the struggles of African Americans to actualize their humanity; not “struggle” in the sense of heroic actions — though those certainly occur throughout the history of black people — but in the simple fact expressed by Frederick Douglass, “Without struggle, there is no progress.”

To become simply one’s own person, as to become an accomplished artist, struggle is not only unavoidable but is, in fact, the crucible for the fuller actualization of oneself.

Campbell, president of Spelman College since 1915, takes us to Bearden’s development as a seminal portrait of African American

life only after situating him in both historical and familial context, the development of his philosophy of life and the sense of being black that centers that philosophy, and, further, the *significance* of being black as enacted by three generations before him, beginning with those who started out in enslavement. She meticulously traces the contexts and life of Bearden [1911-1988] in three parts: his birth into a “proper” black middle class household in Charlotte North Carolina within the context of viciously derogatory popular imagery in print, on stage and, soon, on screen with *The Birth of a Nation* [1915].

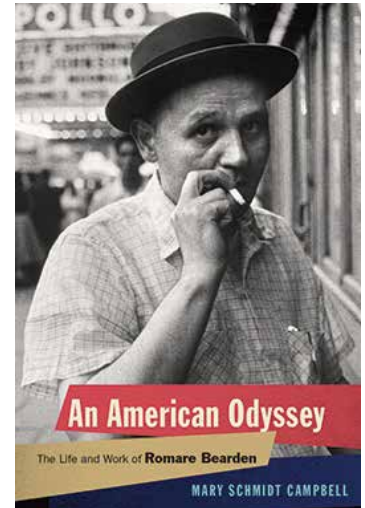
The familial pushback against such dehumanization, expressed as a fully developed appreciation of the humanity of black folk, was reinforced by the black communities of Harlem and Pittsburgh, where young “Romie” moved with family and where his experiences familiarized him with various versions of black life in the ten years or so leading up to the time of the nationwide flowering of black life subsumed under the term Harlem Renaissance. Part I ends with “The Evolution of a Race Man,” which is developed around an electrifying 1934 essay of his, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art.”

Although born into the quite small segment of Black America that had attained middle class status by the early 1900s, Bearden lived a kind of life somewhat common among middle class African Americans at that time, developing as a “race man” while also freely experiencing and intelligently commenting on national and international events. As a college student on black and, later, on white campuses, he became and for a time after was an editorial cartoonist whose work

sometimes reflected black issues, while at other times addressed events taking place in the many realms outside of that community, despite the era’s Jim Crow segregation.

Bearden’s full turn to art and development as an artist saw him move from drawing to painting and eventually into collage. It took place under the influence of other kind of catalysts: the rise of the 20th century’s iteration of white supremacy resulting from the codification of “scientific racism,” World War I, its expansive aftermath that included the Harlem Renaissance, and then the contraction that came to be known as The Great Depression. From there he immerses himself in a few niches of art in North America and in Europe, with art and individual each continually collaborating in the development of the Romare Bearden now known to the world.

Bearden not only began as but always thought of himself simply as an artist, not a black artist, an appellation that was nevertheless bestowed upon him when his artform began to coincide with emerging sensibilities of the Black Arts Movement, one of the many forms of activism that developed along with the Civil



An American Odyssey:
The Life and Work of Romare Bearden. By Mary Schmidt Campbell [Published Sept. 2018 by Oxford University Press] \$34.95. Also available as ebook.

Rights Movement just after the midpoint of the twentieth century.

William Dorsey retired in 2018 as associate professor of sociology and African American Studies at Atlanta Metropolitan State College.



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Arts Calendar

'At Last', by local playwright Mary Weems, opens this weekend at Ensemble Theater

At Last: Celebrating the Lives of Black Women, brings the lives of eleven extraordinary women to the stage. The work by poet, playwright and author,

Dr. Mary Weems, highlights Zora Neale Houston, Bessie Smith, Josephine Baker, Mahalia Jackson, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, June Jordan, Etta James, Phyllis Hyman, Michelle Obama, and Queen Latifah.



Sherrie Tolliver



Ashley Aquilla

The play, directed by Ashley Aquilla, opens Feb. 22, coinciding with Black History Month and Women's History Month; additional shows Feb. 23-24 and March 1-3. Sunday matinees are at 3p, Fri. and Sat. shows start at 7p. The cast includes Sherrie Tolliver and Sha'ton L. Moody.

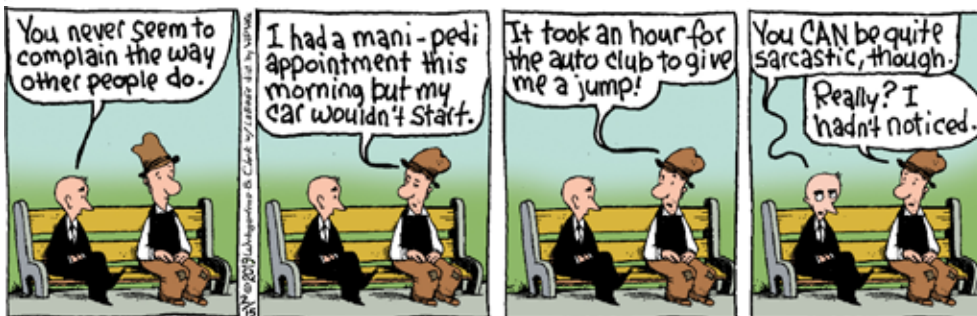
Tickets are \$25. The Ensemble Theater is located at 2843 Washington Blvd. [44118]. For more information: maryweems.org.

Martin, Malcolm onstage this Friday in Shaker Heights

- *Conversations in Courage: A Staged Reading of The Meeting*, a fictionalized conversation between Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will be presented Friday, Feb. 22 at 7:30p at Heights Christian Church, 17300 Van Aken Blvd. [44120]. Actors Peter Lawson Jones and Greg White Jr. portray Malcolm and King, respectively. Tickets are \$25 [\$15/students] and can be purchased [here](#).

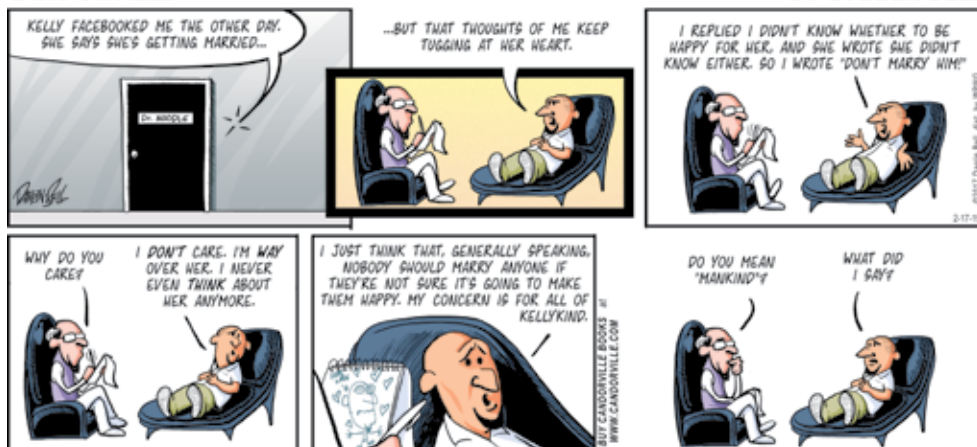
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