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**Ayesha Hardaway to  
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Page 6

# THE REAL DEAL

Volume 4 / Issue 20 / March 10, 2019

## PRESS



Kwa David Whitaker speaks to capacity crowd at Larchmere Arts, March 1. Right: Whitaker, 3rd from right, with Raymon Reed, Ismail Douglas, Everett Prewitt, Steven E. Boyd, and Muqit Sabur.

### *This Week In Politics*

#### **Our metropolitan dysfunction is major national story**

Our fair city keeps cropping up in the national news in accurate but unflattering accounts of how the public's business is conducted. Last month, Jamil Smith, a senior writer at Rolling Stone where he covers national affairs and culture, took [a deep dive](#) into the public health disaster that is Cleveland's unattended lead poisoning crisis. A few days later Mark Gillespie, writing in [US News & World Report](#), reminded the country of the "inhumane conditions" for inmates in our county jail.

And now, just this past week, the nation's most important paper, *The New York Times*, carried a [book review](#) of reporter Kyle Swenson's book, *Good Kids, Bad City*, about the tragic miscarriage of justice perpetrated on three men who collectively spent 106 years in prison for a murder they did not commit.

Smith and Swenson, who now writes for the *Washington Post*, both grew up here. Gillespie is a former *Plain Dealer* reporter.

But what unites these stories of misery, beyond the provenance of the writers, is that the victims of official action and/or neglect are overwhelmingly

Continued on Page 4

## A Journey Up A New Wall With A New Ladder

By Steven E. Boyd  
SPECIAL TO THE REAL DEAL PRESS

*Editor's Note: Earlier this month, Larchmere Arts recently hosted a talk and book signing by Kwa David Whitaker. RDP invited Steve Boyd to provide some perspective on the event. All photographs courtesy of Vince Robinson/Larchmere Arts.*

David Whitaker, JD, PhD became Kwa David Whitaker about the same time I became Kwa Steven E. O. Boyd. We and other black male Clevelanders went through a Rites of Passage process administered via the National Rites of Passage Institute [NROPI] at East End Neighborhood House

in Cleveland's Buckeye-Woodland community. The late Dr. Anthony Mensah of Ghana, at that time a University of Milwaukee professor, and Paul Hill, Jr., then the director of East End and the founder of NROPI, facilitated the process.

The early 1990s was a complex time. The black community, both nationally and in Cleveland, was being challenged by two escalating dangerous — and related — trends: the crack cocaine epidemic and the growing gang/drive-by shooting/car-jacking occurrences. Many of us wondered about the causes of these phenomena and what could we as communities do about it.

***African awareness and consciousness is an immeasurable gift of birthright that can go further than any public policy to evolve the African American psyche from its arrested development.***

Governments on all levels had only one answer: Lock 'em up!

A growing interest in enhanced black/African cultural-historical consciousness, accelerated by the Nile Valley

Continued on Page 5

*Looking Around America*

# Overlooked Black Women Now Getting Their Due

By Marilyn Dyson  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



One hundred years before Rosa Parks sat on a bus in Birmingham, Elizabeth Jennings insisted on riding a segregated New York City streetcar. Almost ten years later, New York City desegregated all of its transit systems.

Mary Ellen Pleasant led runaway slaves to California on a branch of the Underground Railroad. There she became a millionaire and a real estate magnate. She preceded Madame C. J. Walker and her fortune in hair products by decades.

Edmonia Lewis started her sculpting career in 1865, decades before Augusta Savage was born in 1892. Lewis created medallions and busts of well-known abolitionists. Both women struggled in the male dominated art world.

Jennings, Pleasant and Lewis are only a few of the African Americans that the *New York Times* has featured in its weekly obituary column, Overlooked No More. The column is correcting the newspaper's oversight of not acknowledging women and people of color for the past 160 years.

I'm enthralled by these obituaries. I want to believe that only the *Times* overlooked these accomplishments. But when I pulled out and skimmed what I considered to be the ultimate source of African American history, from my college professor Dr. Benjamin Quarles' *The Negro in the Making of America*, I noticed there were very

few women. Like the *Times*, Dr. Quarles did not feature women.

I tried to think of other historic sources for women and people of color, but realized that "traditional" sources followed the thinking of their times and included neither. I needed to look elsewhere. Fortunately, there are alternative sources. We have overlooked archives in *The Crisis*, *Ebony* and *Jet*.

Also, many authors are uncovering overlooked accomplishments. A shining example is Hidden Figures. Margot Lee Shetterly researched the experiences of hundreds of African American women who worked for NASA. She featured four, Christine Darden, Katherine Johnson, Mary Johnson and Dorothy Vaughn. If not for these overlooked mathematicians and their decades of hard work, the US space program would not have reached success as quickly.

However, I've taken the advice of another college professor, Dr. Thomas Cripps. He advised that we can gain historic knowledge of how people lived from novels. Following taking that path, I've learned bits of African Amer-

**Mary Ellen Pleasant preceded Madame C. J. Walker and her fortune in hair products by decades.**

ican history from a seemingly unlikely source: romance novels. Beverly Jenkins magically weaves 19th century African American history and western adventures into steamy novels. From one novel, *Breathless*, I learned about the women's suffrage movement and its racial split during the 1890s. Ms. Jenkins includes a bibliography in her historical fiction. *Breathless* notes African American suffragists and the National Association for Colored Women. Thousands of women joined Mary Church Terrell and her colleagues who worked for decades to ensure that all women obtained the right to vote. These women were definitely overlooked.

There are many more sources: events, people and groups that are buried in history.

Some may be in family stories, while others may be found in church archives. Still more may be in the history of our fraternal and social organizations. The *Times* is looking for women and people of color who help move the country forward. We need to let everyone know about their accomplishments. We need to have them Overlooked No More.

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# Construction: “The Best Industry in the World for Women”



Clockwise, from top right: Architect Margaret Hewitt moderates panel discussion on Women in Construction at Cuyahoga Community College Manufacturing Center; Maureen Korosec of Cleveland Clinic, Julie Meyer, Ohio Dept. of Transportation, and Cynthia Friedmann, president of The Dependable Painting Company chat during a break; attendee Natalie Beasley talks about working with her hands.

By **Montrie Rucker Adams**  
APR

“Where have you been all my life!” exclaimed Natalie Beasley after hearing five women panelists and a moderator discuss their career paths, challenges, skills needed, networking strategies and plans to add more women to their construction industry “sisterhood” at *Engaging Panel Discussion* on Tuesday, March 5 at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C).

The Construction Employers’ Association (CEA) partnered with Tri-C and The National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) to celebrate Women in Construction (WIC) Week. Several events and activities were held during the week.

The panelists, ranging from “newbies” to those who have worked in the industry more than 40 years, offered unique construction career paths. Moderated by Margaret Hewitt, LEED AP, president of The Construction Green Team, Imani Young, Michelle Craw-

ford, Fatimah Ware, Julie Meyer and Cindy Friedmann openly shared their experiences and plans to include more women.

Crawford, a Capital, Construction & Facilities Project Manager at Tri-C, did not experience a straight path. She initially wanted to design cars, but her love for construction began while volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and later building houses in North Carolina.

As a Construction Area Engineer at The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Meyer has worked in construction almost 20 years. After working on a multi-lane project, said Meyer, “I loved the daily challenges, the different occurrences and interactions with the project engineers and contractors. I felt engaged. That was where I belonged.”

When asked about professional networking, Friedmann, owner of The Dependable Painting Company, a family business founded in 1928, suggested volunteering. “Get involved in associations, boards, give back, network and know your competitors,” she said.

It’s important to introduce young girls to the industry, as, according to an article in *Occupational Health & Safety*, more than 40 percent of construction workers are “baby boomers,” born between 1946 and 1964. As these workers age out of the industry, the pipeline needs to fill.

Ware, owner of Ware’s the Dirt Construction, HVAC contractor suggested going into the schools. “Talk to the girls and explain to them that women in construction don’t just stand outside and hold a flag. Show them that everything they see had a beginning,” she offered.

Beasley mentioned that she wishes she were that young girl. “I wish that when I was young, that I’d met a woman that was strong and confident enough to say, ‘You like playing in the dirt. You like painting and getting messy. Let me show you how to have a career in this.’”

To find out more about NAWIC and CEA, visit their websites at <https://www.nawicleveland.org> and <https://www.ceacisp.org/>

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people of color who are impoverished.

The message in each instance is that of our collective gross civic indifference, an image that stains not just our elected representatives, but our entire community. The reputation that comes with such reports cannot be whitewashed by, say, a 2016 NBA title, a national political convention, an All-Star game, the self-proclaimed status of block chain hotbed, etc.

P.S. in case you didn't hear, the Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association, the union representing rank and file Cleveland police officers, has appealed the decision upholding the firing of Timothy Loehmann who falsified his job application to become a Cleveland policeman. Not long after he was hired, Loehmann fatally shot and killed 12-year Tamir Rice within two seconds of approaching him on a city playground in November 2014.

**Quick Hits:**

- Cleveland Mayor **Frank Jackson** debuted a [YouTube video](#) this past week in which he talks about city services, its recreation centers and its new \$7 million dog kennel that "will house animals".
- U. S. Senator **Sherrod Brown** announced that he would not run for President in 2020.
- Gov. **Mike DeWine** delivered his first State of the State address. It was noteworthy for its extended emphasis on the need for an 18¢/gal. gas tax hike and for the empathy the Gov. displayed towards typical Democratic causes. The talk was well received even though Democrats wonder how sincere the promises were and House Republicans immediately slashed the requested gas tax hike. DeWine is expected to release his biannual budget this coming week.
- *The Washington Post* piece that discussed the wrongful imprisonment of three black men for more than a collective century also referenced Cleveland's serial murderer

Anthony Sowell, the devastation wreaked by subprime lenders, de-industrialization and disinvestment, and last decade's corruption scandal. It also speaks to the "debilitating cutbacks" that continue to ravage the *Plain Dealer*, suggesting the unhealthy effects that may have on the community's ability to uncover injustice.

• Which reminds us that we lacked the space to report a few weeks ago that **Mark Puente**, one of the nation's foremost watchdog and accountability reporters, has left the *Tampa Bay Times* for the *Los Angeles Times*. Puente was the lead local reporter on last decade's county corruption scandal that resulted in more than 60 convictions, including top dogs in the county Democratic Party. Ironically, his son, Ryan Puente, was hired last year as the party's executive director, charged with its rebuilding.

• Finally, US Senator **Kamala Harris** (D-CA) will keynote the county Dems annual dinner next month on April 28.

# 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](mailto:rta@TheRealDealPress.com) or fax 216.672.4304.

Published weekly at Cuyahoga County OH. All rights reserved. © 2019.

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## QUOTE of the Week

**"We recognized that we could center communities of color, marginalized communities, and talk about their needs without alienating the white community. That's been a false narrative that's been part of politics, especially in the South, for a very long time."**

— Stacey Abrams, former minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives.



# A Journey Up A New Wall With A New Ladder

Continued from page 1

Conference of the early '80s, and the evolving focus on black capitalism being chronicled in the pages of *Black Enterprise* magazine, began to develop alongside community efforts to address these threats.

In Cleveland, a group of concerned black men began to meet informally on Saturdays at the newly opened Fuddrucker's Restaurant to discuss and strategize about our collective future. The conversations, here and elsewhere, included a focus on the need for a new March on Washington that would showcase black male leadership and community engagement.

Two initiatives emerged from the Fuddrucker's Group.

One related to a new NRO-PI-sponsored Rites of Passage process. The other was the inauguration of a local chapter of a new national organization called 100 Black Men that was spreading around the country. Fuddrucker's attendees helped facilitate and support both initiatives, along with the 1995 Million Man March.

By the early 2000s, the idea of bringing Afrocentric education to public schools and the community was generating support, as the drug and gang epidemics showed signs of subsiding, especially after the Million Man March. Here in Cleveland, black arts initiatives like Hue People Vocal Ensem-



Kwa David Whitaker signs copies of his book, *Why I Became an African Chief*, at Larchmere Arts, 12726 Larchmere Blvd. [44120].

ble, Dance Afrika Dance, and African Soul International began to appear.

Implicit in the Rites of Passage process was the need to go to Africa. Dr. Whitaker, along other NROPI participants, including me, ventured to Ghana in 1996.

Whitaker's newly published autobiography, *Why I Became an African Chief*, speaks to the powerful paradigm shift of our rites of passage experience and Ghanaian trip:

"[I] climbed the top rung of the academic ladder only to find that it was leaning against a structure devoid of substance."

Kwa David's rites of passage, as we experienced it in his book, guide and impel us all to discover more substance and deeper purpose in our lives. The book's thoughtful description of his journey causes the reader to reflect on his own life purpose. As an educator, Kwa David found the keys he needed to work his purpose. He details his moves up the ladder on the new substantive wall of clear perception and knowledge of traditional culture and helps us understand the relevance of his moves along the way to the present.

The subsequent ASHE Cultural Center we established on West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, the community rites of passage

programming, the efforts with the MATAH movement, the POWER networking conference were each rungs up the ladder, including Whitaker's eventual entoolment as an African Chief of a Ghanaian village. The founding of Wings Academy charter school in Cleveland and the Gloria Pointer School in Ghana represent fulfillment of a continuing conscious, purposeful climb towards self-awareness.

African awareness and consciousness is an immeasurable gift of birthright that can go further than any public policy to evolve the African American psyche from its arrested development.

As a 40 year certified computer programmer and A+ practitioner, and one of the first black people to work in marketing capacity for IBM, how can we purport to want STEM education for our children without finding creative ways to put traditional African constructs, history, theoretical precepts and origins in our children's academic diet?

Kwa David Whitaker's journey offers a clear suggestion about what Africa could mean to us African Americans as we heal our conditions, raise our lot and see ourselves with deeper purpose and strength.

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## Business Ledger



### ODOT announces Civil Rights Transportation Symposium speakers

Adrienne Trimble, president and CEO of the National Minority Supplier Development Council, and Albert Shen, senior advisor for the Toyota Mobility Foundation, will keynote ODOT's 2019 Civil Rights Transportation Symposium. Trimble will speak on the opening day, April 9; Shen will be the featured speaker on the closing day, April 10.

Charles E. James Sr., director of U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Civil Rights, will also attend the symposium as a special guest.

The symposium will be held at the Columbus Hilton, April 9-10. To register, visit [www.transportation.ohio.gov/odotcivilrights](http://www.transportation.ohio.gov/odotcivilrights)

## Community Bulletin Board

• The Solution, a newly formed community think tank, will hold its inaugural event this afternoon from 3-5p at the MidTown Tech Hive, 6815 Euclid. Jerry Primm, speaking for the new endeavor, says the intent is to bring the community into dialogue around important issues in a way that develops solution. Today's topic: black voter participation. All are welcome.



• Professor Ayesha Bell Hardaway has been appointed director of the Social Justice Law Center at Case Western Reserve University Law School. Hardaway joined the Case's law faculty in 2012 after serving as an assistant county prosecutor and a litigator at Tucker Ellis LLP. She has published on issues of racial inequality and social reform. She is a member of the Shaker Heights Board of Education.

To highlight the Center's work, the Center will host two newly endowed lecture series, the Dr. Maya Angelou-Professor Calvin Sharpe Interdisciplinary Lecture, which will be held April 4, and the C.B. King Lecture, which will be held in 2020. The Center is also expected to provide research opportunities for the dozen Stephanie Tubbs Jones Scholars in each class.

## LifeCycles



- **Nathan Lilly**, to Director of Marketing, Cleveland Play House.
- **former Cleveland mayor Jane Campbell**, to president/CEO of the **Capitol Historical Society**, Washington DC.
- **Lakecia Foster Stickney**, a CSU Cleveland-Marshall graduate, to policy director for House Democratic Caucus Chair, Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY).



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