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THE REAL DEAL
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PRESS

CODE BLUE

"Something has to be done." — Lead poisoning victim Demetrius Wade, 24, on his deathbed in 2007



Clockwise from top: Parent Darrick Wade, attorney Rebecca Maurer, and former Cleveland City Councilman Jeff Johnson speak at March 16 Lead Safe community forum at Olivet Baptist Church.

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

Demetrius Ware never had a chance. A resident of Lakeview Terrace, one of the nation's oldest public housing projects, he tested positive at age 9 for lead poisoning. Three years later he was diagnosed as diabetic, and before his teen years were done, he had severe liver, kidney, throat, and heart problems. The night before his death — when his liver could have been mistaken for that of a wino with a 50-year history of imbibing — he told his father that something had to be done about

lead poisoning.

Darrick Ware, the father, shared his son's story at a community forum on Saturday, March 16 at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland's Fairfax community. The forum, sponsored by the church and its housing and community development corporation, started a few minutes late, ended a few minutes early, and was sparsely attended. But none of that diminished the power of the program, which set out an unsparing challenge to the city's civic and political leadership: make all of Cleveland's rental housing "lead safe" or we shall.

Ware was part of a very effective panel that included community

health advocate Yvonka Hall, former Glenville councilman Jeff Johnson, and attorney Rebecca Maurer. Together they methodically presented the horrific facts of the city's lead poisoning epidemic — more than 1400 children, mostly black and poor, test positive for lead poisoning *every year* — and put two choices on the table: enact legislation that is either permissive or mandatory in establishing lead safe rental housing.

While the panelists and the moderator, Olivet senior pastor Jawanza Karriem Colvin, came across as reasonable and direct, they made it plain that a mandatory regime was the only acceptable

outcome. They support the current grassroots effort to place a citizen's initiative on the ballot in November that would mandate elimination of unsafe rental units and daycare centers through a combination of legal requirements and market pressures.

Johnson revealed a side of himself that has seldom been on display in his long public career. Putting aside his usual theatrics, a humble Johnson talked about becoming educated to the dangers of lead poisoning by the "toxic neglect" series reported by Rachel Dissell and Brie Zeltner. His proposed remedial ordinance in 2017 never even got a hearing because he was

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Something has to be done

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running for mayor. A third place finish extinguished his campaign — but he has remained engaged notwithstanding an awareness that his involvement provides a convenient rationale for some to remain on the sidelines.

Johnson suggested that one reason the problem remains is that not enough people who are the victims of lead poisoning understand their plight sufficiently to demand a remedy.

“The people who can make the changes are not doing it because they don’t feel the pressure to change it. . . . The [epidemic’s] solution is simple but the implementation is difficult,” Johnson said.

What makes implementation difficult of course is money. Lots of it. No precise figure was established but \$20 million was one panelist’s starting number.

Cleveland’s lead problem is actually greater than Flint, Michigan’s in terms of elevated level test results.

Dr. Colvin, weaving commentary throughout the program, said that not enough people know and care about the problem. Arguing that Cleveland’s lead problem was catastrophic, he referenced the Biblical story of the Ten Plagues, observing that Pharaoh was indifferent to each successive disaster visited upon Egypt until his own infant son died, at which point he acquiesced to Moses’ demands.

“Sometimes,” said Colvin, “things don’t happen because the right child hasn’t died.”

Among those in attendance were August Napoli, president and CEO of United Way Services, and Mitchell Balk, president of the Mt. Sinai Federation. They are key players in a lead safe coalition that is moving at a more conservative pace to address Cleveland’s lead epidemic.

Colvin was emphatic in warning that such deliberate speed was dangerous. He said people are losing faith in the city’s public officials, civic and even religious leaders as a result of their inability or unwillingness to resolve vital issues.

The issue of what to do and how to pay for it may soon quicken. The Cleveland Lead Safe Network has assembled several civic groups under the rubric CLASH (Cleveland Lead Advocates for Safe Housing) to submit 5,000 valid signatures to Cleveland City Council to put their model ordinance on the ballot for voter approval in November, unless council renders their initiative petition unnecessary by enacting satisfactory legislation. CLASH hopes to file 12,000 signatures with the City by April 4 to start the countdown to a November election showdown. If their efforts are unsuccessful, CLASH members fear that civic and political leaders will continue with vocal commiseration accompanied by leisurely deliberations.

Meanwhile, another Cleveland child is diagnosed with lead poisoning every six hours.

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.

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QUOTE of the Week

“The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that’s the essence of inhumanity.”

— George Bernard Shaw



SMART.

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Every Sunday

Bracy Lewis honored with Lifetime Achievement Award



Bracy Lewis is the 2019 recipient of The Cleveland Restoration Society's Lifetime Achievement Award in Historic Preservation in recognition of his long-term efforts to preserve Cleveland's heritage.

The tribute to Lewis notes that he was the only banker to answer the call to be a financial partner in launching the agency's low interest loan program to turn around

Cleveland's neighborhoods suffering from decades of disinvestment. As of this writing, 1,700 loans for \$70 million have been made to homeowners across the county.

A son of the city's Glenville neighborhood, Lewis graduated from Fenn College — the forerunner of Cleveland State — and began his banking career at Quincy Savings & Loan in 1963. He assisted count-

less families in the purchase of their first homes, in the process developing a reputation for outstanding customer service and probity.

Bracy joined Euclid National Bank in 1975 and moved quickly through the ranks, learning all aspects of retail, private, and commercial banking. By 1987, when Euclid National had been merged into Bank One, Bracy was tapped to develop the bank's first community investment program.

Lewis joined the Board of Trustees of Cleveland Restoration Society, becoming President and eventually an Honorary Life Trustee. Under his leadership, the Heritage Home program expanded to each Cleveland ward and to neighborhoods of older homes that were not designated his-

toric districts.

His co-chairmanship of CRS's 40th Anniversary Legacy Project — The African American Experience in Cleveland — resulted in the first complete survey of African American historic resources citywide, led to the designation of over fifty Cleveland landmarks and laid the groundwork for the Society's current Lee-Harvard Cultural Heritage Initiative:

Lewis also engaged in historic preservation on a national level but never forgot his local roots. He has been a lifelong supporter of Cleveland's oldest African American civic institutions: Karamu House, where he has underwritten many activities, and Eliza Bryant Village where he has provided a library and garden.



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Business Ledger



Cafe Phix MidTown formerly Coffee Phix Cafe • Hours are 0730 am to 4:30 pm



South Euclid coffee shop reopens in Midtown
Café Phix Midtown, which started life in South Euclid several years ago when retired US Navy yeoman Jackie Larkins scratched her entrepreneurial itch, has relocated to the bustling Midtown Tech Hive, 6815 Euclid Ave. The shop's current hours are weekdays 7:30a-4:30p. Larkins says she will likely open Saturdays come June, when the nearly completed extended stay hotel, Tru by Hilton, opens next door.

Realists, Urban League offer business start up advice

The Cleveland Realist Association, in collaboration with The Urban League of Greater Cleveland, is offering sound advice to help start, sustain, and grow your business. Entrepreneur and former banker Michael Obi of the Entrepreneurship Center will answer your questions and provide information about the Capital Access Fund that provides African American and other minority business owners in Greater Cleveland with access to capital and pre-and post-loan counseling. Register [here](#) for the no-cost information session, set for this Thursday, March 21 from 5:30-7:30p at the Urban League, 2930 Prospect Ave. [44115].

Presidents' Council offers looking at your business's legal issues

Work it Wednesday, the periodic business intelligence series offered by The Presidents' Council, will focus on the most common legal questions regarding human resources, payroll, insurance and other consequential matters this Wednesday, March 20, from 8-11am at Paytime, 31105 Bainbridge Rd., Solon [44139]. Breakfast is included in the program. Register [here](#) [\$25.]

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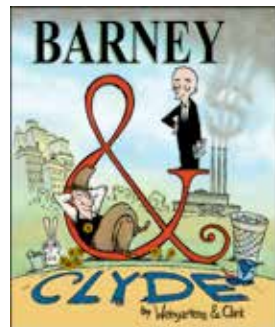
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LifeCycles



Careers

Darnella Robertson to Regional External Affairs at First Energy.
LaTanya Autry, to Diversity Fellow at Museum of Contemporary Art.



ENGAGED

Jason Russell & Tiffany Tarpley. Russell is Neighborhood General Manager at The Van Aken District and president of South Euclid City Council. Tarpley is a news anchor at WKYC-TV3.



MILESTONE

Aryanna Jones, Shaker HS '15, first in University of Charleston school history, to score 100 goals in lacrosse.

Community Bulletin Board

Environmental Justice, Race and Power on the agenda

Case Western Reserve's Social Justice Institute and its Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health will host *Company Town: A Documentary and Discussion about Environmental Justice, Race and Power* on Monday, March 18, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in Tinkham Veale University Center, 11038 Bellflower Rd [44106].

The film investigates environmental injustice, corporate accountability and community action in a rural Arkansas town, detailing the egregious businesses practices of a company owned by the billionaire Koch brothers, government negligence and a devastating cancer cluster that galvanized a town to fight back. The event

will be free and open to the community. Light refreshments will be served. RSVP to socialjustice@case.edu or 216.368.7568.

National Council of 100 Black Women to honor Yvonne Pointer

The Cleveland chapter of the National Council of 100 Black Women will recognize entrepreneur, evangelist, and author Yvonne Pointer for her professional achievements and service at its annual Woman of Vision Scholarship Reception this Saturday. The event is scheduled from 3p-6p at the Hilton Cleveland East Beachwood, 3663 Park East Dr. Tickets are \$50 and will help support the group's scholarship fund. For more information, call/email Marcella Boyd Cox 216.410.4120 / nc100bwgcc@gmail.com.

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