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Michelangelo hits the Heights

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THE REAL DEAL

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PRESS

Essential Diversions

Gordon Parks exhibit a "can't miss"

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

The just-opened Gordon Parks exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art is a must-see for all Americans of all ages. The genius and talent on display is staggering, both in front of and behind the camera.

The subjects include iconic African American intellectuals Langston Hughes and Alain Locke; the tenements and ghettos of Harlem, Washington DC, and Kansas; the industrial might of the United States; Parisian high fashion; the villages of Italy; the coalmines of north-west Canada; and the everyday struggles of people who are largely invisible in government, business and society circles no matter the era. **PICS**

Amazingly, these brilliant portraits are all from the first decade after Parks initially picked up his first camera and decided to become a photographer. So powerful are the images, so prescient is Parks' eye for composition and detail, so varied are the settings and subjects, that, falling into conversation with a docent $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the more than 100 photographs, I was in disbelief



when she observed that these photos were only from the first decade of Parks' career.

Gordon Parks [1912-2006] was a self-taught photographer who, as CMA curator Barbara Tanenbaum observes, in the span of a decade went from working as a railroad porter to a "brilliant portraitist and a master of the photo essay." Parks' career change came, as he later recollected, when he



realized "that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all kinds of social wrongs."

Parks' work accomplished that in the 1940s and continues to do so today. One photograph in particular — of five young siblings peering through a screen door — evoked for this viewer a visceral connection to young people in our city trapped in

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This Week In Politics

Shontel executes, Beto excites, Fudge perturbs

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

People are talking about:

... How County Democratic Party Shontel Brown used her prerogative recently to fill the ranks of the Party's Executive Committee. We hear some west siders are so disgruntled at the chair's selections as to be openly discussing a challenge to her leadership. Meanwhile, eyes have also been raised over Brown's putting several people on the executive committee who were active in the effort to recall Cleveland councilman Ken Johnson. Since Johnson's ponytail doesn't even crack the top five reasons his constituents should be embarrassed by his representation of their ward, Brown may just be reading the tealeaves.

Overall, Brown's work is dispelling to some degree the concerns of some who thought her too inexperienced to lead the state's largest and most important county party and feared the party's notorious wolves would leave her shorn.

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Why We Can't Wait

As we continue to ponder our civic indifference to the problem of lead contamination in so many Cleveland residences, we were suddenly struck by how the realization that lead comprises the first syllable of leadership.

The connection is at once uncanny and unmistakable. The presence of lead in the homes of so many of Cleveland's poorest residents after so many studies, exposes, and documented cases, studies and exposes, points conclusively to a distinct lack of leadership in our city's civic, political and yes, religious communities.

Today we highlight the latter.

Every year we celebrate the life, service and sacrifice of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Of course, too often we do so with a heavily distorted emphasis on his dream and a corresponding dismissal of his righteous call for equal justice, which he demanded with increasing urgency in his latter years.

As local historian James Ro-benalt reminded us in his book on the Glenville shootout, King came to Cleveland in April 1963 to speak at Cory Methodist Church in what was then the heart of the Glenville community. He was fresh from his release

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... **How Brown and her team pulled out the stops** on Monday for the first local appearance of **former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke** as he stopped in Cleveland Monday afternoon as part of his first campaign tour in his quest to become the 2020 Democratic presidential nominee. O'Rourke has no campaign organization — which may or may not be the reason he was behind the wheel of the Dodge minivan that pulled up to Gino's Cento Anno neighborhood bar — so he was dependent upon the local party on short notice to do the advance work of picking the location and whipping up a crowd. [We doubt the party's work included a recommendation that O'Rourke's party of four stop at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Based on the [Vanity Fair profile](#) of the ex-rocker, he likely made an executive decision on what he said was a 20-minute pit stop to pay homage to the elders.]

A crowd of perhaps 250 jammed Gino's to hear Beto, and many were

forced to stand outside to await the candidate's arrival. He did not disappoint, as he addressed those in the parking lot both before and after his speech inside. His remarks were high energy and conveyed a combination of both thoughtful reflection and heartfelt conviction. His only false note was saying the country has never been more divided. Texas school authorities seem to have a lot of strange ideas about public education, so it's not altogether certain where the Civil War fits into their public school curriculum.

O'Rourke took questions after his remarks and posed for selfies with just about everybody who wanted one as he slowly made his way back to the wheel to head for Lordstown. Expect a larger team and a bigger venue for his next visit.

... **What area Congresswoman Marcia Fudge**, D-11, had to say about Cleveland schools CEO Eric Gordon when she sat down with the [cleveland.com/Plain Dealer](#) editorial board this week. [The article quotes her](#) as saying the

schools are failing, that Gordon is doing a "horrible job", and that "nobody holds anybody accountable in this town."

What has many people upset is the helicopter nature of the Congresswoman's comments and the credence they give to the blanket condemnation of schools for alleged poor performance without any analysis of the complexities, resource disparities, and differential challenges that distort a fair look at school outcomes.

The article also says Fudge is dubious that a progressive candidate could defeat Trump, claimed that she "could've come really close to" defeating Nancy Pelosi in the race for House speaker, and "wants poverty and race to be key issues in the 2020 election."

... **Recent Facebook posts by former Republican officeholder Richard C. May** that raise questions of whether GOP county council members Jack Schron and Nan Baker are vulnerable to Dem-



ocratic challengers. May, who now leads the county Libertarian Party, sees Trump's rise as turning off many county Republicans, citing Phil Robinson's election as state rep. in the Solon area as an example of Democratic gains.

In other political news, Nancy Pelosi will headline the Ohio Democratic Party's annual dinner on May 17 in Columbus. All the parties' presidential candidates will be in by then, including, it says here, former Vice President Joe Biden, and several will have come and gone with barely a notice.

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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The Word on Small Business

Fed Probing Minority Business Potential

By Kirby Freeman
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Minority businesses could eventually overcome their difficulties in obtaining adequate capital – in the form of commercial loans and lines of credit – through effective training and mentoring in business management practices, according to a recent study on small business published by the Federal Reserve System.

“Given the relationship between a small business’s access to financing and its outcomes, and given the growing share of minorities in the U.S. population, it is important that creditworthy firms and entrepreneurs, irrespective of race or ethnicity are able to secure adequate financial resources to achieve growth and success,” according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, in its study paper “Mind the Gap: How Do Credit Market Experiences and Borrowing Patterns Differ for Minority-Owned Firms?”, published last Fall.

I think we all know that the loan application process – as it is for so many other experiences in life – just is not the same for all people. As a recovering banker, who has at one time or another been on nearly all sides of the borrowing process, I know African American business owners often must show immense resolve to apply for commercial loans, especially if it’s earmarked for expansion.

The Federal Reserve study served to confirm my experience watching minority business owners sweat out the lending process – oftentimes only to end up borrowing at levels that are well below what they asked for or needed. The study was secured from data derived from a survey of small businesses throughout the U.S. taken in 2016.

The Fed review indicated that only 61% of black-owned businesses seeking capital through the loan application process “received at least some of the financing requested,” compared with 80% of white-owned businesses. About 75% of Hispanic- and Asian-owned businesses received at least some of the funding they requested.

In the study, the Fed indicated that of the 75% of minority (African American, Hispanic, and Asian-American) businesses that were considered “low credit risk”, and who were approved for at least some of the financing they wanted, only 40% were ap-

proved for the entire amount they requested. In contrast, 68% of low-risk majority-owned firms received the full amount asked.

The Fed noted previous economic and finance research on entrepreneurship, which have attributed success with attracting capital to the amount of personal and family wealth held by the borrower.

“Low levels of wealth and personal liquidity constraints can thus create substantial barriers to entry for would-be entrepreneurs because an owner then has little wealth to invest directly in a business or to use as collateral to obtain business loans or other financing. Lenders and investors frequently require a substantial level of investment from an owner’s own capital to approve a loan or investment,” the study stated.

In its study, the Fed noted that the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that one-half of all African American households had less than \$9,211 in wealth in 2013, while one-half of all Hispanics had less than \$12,458 in wealth, well below levels for non-Hispanic households.

This amounted to African American household wealth levels being only 7%, and Hispanic household wealth levels totaling about 9.4% of non-Hispanic white household levels. Only Asian households had similar wealth levels to those of whites at 85%.

The survey and study also noted that Hispanic- and African American-owned firms have been more likely to apply for financing from newer online lenders, which tend to have higher interest rates and lower customer satisfaction levels.

The historical low African American and Hispanic wealth levels will obviously not be a factor that will be addressed overnight. However, the Fed study cites concerted efforts at providing technical assistance, which would include training in business management practices on the part of minority business owners, as a crucial key to enhance capital access to these entrepreneurs.

Although the Fed study reinforced many issues that had already been thoroughly researched in the past, it possibly highlights the minority business success as a stated policy goal by the Federal Reserve System. “As the minority population continues to rise, it is more important than ever that these prospective business owners have the resources they need not only to launch but also to grow,” the Fed stated.

QUOTE of the Week

“I suffered evils, but without allowing them to rob me of the freedom to expand.”

— Gordon Parks

SMART.

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Every Sunday

LifeCycles



Rev. Stephen D. Sullivan Sr.,

longtime pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church, died March 20. Funeral will be 11am, Saturday, March 30 at Temple Baptist Church, 1862 Noble Rd. [44112]. A wake will be held at 10am. Funeral arrangements by Gaines Funeral Home, 5386 Lee Rd. [44137].

Why We Can't Wait | Page 2

from the Birmingham jail where, it turns out, King wrote one of his strongest rebukes to the forces of delay and denial. In the misbegotten glow of northern and colored smugness, we nod at King's eviscerating denunciation of Southern church leadership.

Consider this excerpt from his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*: the "greatest stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice, who prefers a negative piece which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the

presence of justice." Given the go slow counsel of our civic and political leadership, and with precious few exceptions from our churches — we hear you Olivet Baptist and South Euclid UCC — what would the Dr. King who died in lockstep with Memphis garbage men say today about our leaden indifference to the health and safety of our young black children? Twenty-eight Cleveland children have been contracted lead poisoning since we wrote our [CODE BLUE](#) piece last Sunday. SCLC. BMC. UPM. GCC. UWS. We're listening.

Gordon Parks exhibit | Page 1

poverty and exposed to lead. *Gordon Parks: The New Tide, Early Work 1940-1950*, opened yesterday and will run through Sunday, June 9, 2019. Admission is free. The Museum is closed Mondays. A variety of programming accompanies the exhibit. There are special exhibition tours on Wednesdays at 2p, Fridays at 7p, and Sundays at 3p; curator talks

on April 2, 16, and 30 [noon]; and even a salon, on Friday, May 24 at 7p, about Parks' connection to figures from the Chicago Black Renaissance. Parks' career evolved to include film, music, and more. His film credits include *Shaft* [1971] and two acclaimed features that will be shown in 35mm film next month: *The Learning Tree* [1969] and *Leadbelly* [1976].

Visit clevelandart.org for more information.



Michelangelo hits the Heights [Heights Art Gallery](#) is featuring Cleve-

land artist Michelangelo Lovelace in its Spotlight Gallery in an exhibit that opened March 22 and will run through Sunday May 5. Lovelace's unique style is rooted in his lifelong Cleveland residency; its meaner streets are the subject and inspiration for much of his work. Lovelace won a 2015 Cleveland Arts prize. At his New York last spring in a show called *The Land* at Fort Gansevoort Gallery, every painting was sold.

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