



Gospel and Praise Singer Timothy Reddick
Photo by Randy O. Norfus.

THE BLACK CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Storefront or Mega, Black Church remains core to community

By Afi-Odelia E. Scruggs
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Gospel and praise singer Timothy Reddick didn't need to pump the audience at his recent live concert recording at the Word Church. They'd been on their feet before he even came on stage.

Prepped and primed by his opening act, The Word Church Praise Singers, the crowd joined in when Reddick

began to sing, lifting their hands in praise, swaying and singing as if they knew each word perfectly.

But the event turned into a deeper worship experience when Reddick soulfully crooned the opening words to "You Covered Me:"

"I don't want to sing the latest song; I don't want to percolate the crowd, I just want to make you smile..."

Never mind the hall was packed on a Saturday night; everyone in the building was in church.

"African American churches touch the lives of all the region's residents, regardless of race, ethnicity or residence."

I attended the concert as a friend and as a journalist. I'd known Red

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FROM THE EDITOR'S PEN

Op-Ed letter re Jackson recall effort highlights community fault lines

Stifling discontent is not a solution

By R. T. Andrews
EDITOR

Last month an op-ed piece appeared in the Sunday Plain Dealer denouncing the idea that Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson should be recalled from office. It was the kind of document that unwittingly reveals far more than its makers intended. Taken together, the timing, the language, and the signatories form the basis for an excellent case study in a political science course.

Our fascination with the piece is not the least bit academic, however. We see it as a "tell" for the deplorable state of politics in this community. "Politics" here does not refer to the kind of partisan battles involving established political parties. We mean the kind of civic give-and-take that exists in a healthy community, where consequential choices involving public policy are debated with an appreciation for the greatest good for the greatest number.

The public letter in short advanced
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Euclid Demolition Program is raising questions about community impact

By Maryjo Minarik
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Inner ring suburbs across America are wrestling with declining property values, population losses, and vanishing jobs. The cumulative effect of these challenges is wreaking havoc on municipal budgets, and the city of Euclid no exception. Its population has fallen more than 12% since 1990, from a census of almost 55,000 to an estimated 48,139 as of 2013. Unemployment is estimated at 6.6%. Property values have declined an average of 25%, with some areas dropping as much as 40%. According to Case's NEO CANDU, Euclid's poverty rate

rose from 9% in 2000 to 16% in 2010, and the number of children living in poverty has nearly doubled to almost 25%. Owner occupied housing dropped from 59.5% to 54%.

In December Mayor Bill Cervnik announced that 2014 income tax revenues were well below projections. He has estimated 2015 revenues to be around \$38 million, but expenses to be above \$39 million. Income tax revenue has dropped \$2 million from \$26 to \$24 million. Approximately \$1 million in local government funding from the State has been pulled over the last few years. The drop in property taxes has cost the city around \$500,000 a year, forcing the city to forego much

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Ohio Auditor skewers Maple mayor, then adds salt

By Richard Donald Jones
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Maple Heights Mayor Jeffery Lansky became a subject of national ridicule last month when a letter he sent blaming the city financial woes on Ohio Auditor Dave Yost and Republican Governor John Kasich along with Yost's subsequent response went viral.

In the letter Lansky labels the pair the "Rumpelstiltskins of political gain." According to Lansky,

Kasich's cuts to municipal funding cost the city millions and threw it into fiscal chaos.

Yost put Maple Heights into fiscal emergency status in February after the city failed to make \$125,000 in payments on sewer improvements bonds and according to Yost, finished the fiscal year with a \$2.7 million deficit.

When made aware of Lansky's letter, Yost told local media he sent Lansky the following reply:

"I wanted you to be aware that *The Onion* has apparently

acquired a copy of your letter-head and is printing letters on it."

The *Onion* is a satirical newspaper that reports fake news.

According to Lansky \$4 million has been lost in state funding and other types of state passed- along taxes in the last four years. Lansky is accusing Kasich and Yost of acting as Republican political partisans and trying to advance Kasich's Presidential ambitions.

While Yost was comfortable enough to dismiss Lansky's al-

legation with sarcasm, when asked flat out if the state's actions had pushed Maple Heights into fiscal emergency, Yost provided the *Real Deal Press* the following email response:

"While the state cuts have affected the amount of dollars coming into the City of Maple Heights, local officials have a responsibility to spend within their resources. If an entity spends more money than it has in resources, deficits occur. When this happens over a period of time, and to the degree

it occurred in Maple Heights, a fiscal emergency declaration is appropriate."

A representative of Auditor Yost said according to current information on hand, the city's fiscal year 2014 deficit was larger than the amount slashed by the state.

Calls made to Mayor Lansky went unreturned.

The state is in the process of appointing a commission to oversee the city's budget and oversee the recovery plan the city is scheduled to present to the Auditor.

Mitchell announces candidacy for mayor

By Richard Donald Jones
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Maple Heights voters now have a second official candidate for the city's mayoral race. Earlier this month Annette Blackwell, who lost against incumbent Jeffery Lansky in 2011, announced a second run at the mayor's office and now former Maple Heights Councilwoman Neomia Mitchell has thrown her hat in the ring.

Mitchell, a retired Cuyahoga County worker, has announced her intent to run as the Democratic candidate.

Mitchell said the reason she wants to run is to lead Maple Heights in a new and better direction. Mitchell told the Real Deal Press that since she left Council she consistently hears so much about how bad the city's finances are and ever-present negative comparisons to East Cleveland and other inner ring suburbs.

"I believe in this city and the people who are here everyday trying to make it better," Mitchell said. "But we have to bring this city together and stop the infighting and bickering."

She said city leadership has a glaring transparency issue and as mayor she will ensure the public not only has access to vital public information but also some form of digital access to track where every dollar is spent by her administration.

"When you go to a Council meeting and a resident will ask about spending and that question is met with nothing but blank stares and silence you have a problem," explained Mitchell.

"People need to feel as if the city leadership is listening. Residents are more likely to support a levy when there is communication between residents and those who will spend their tax dollars."

Mitchell, a 25-year resident of the city, said she sees the struggles people are having financially and she is running to try and turn the tide.

"I want to give it another shot," she said. "There are options such as a new levy and some grants that are out there. These



Neomia Mitchell, former Maple Heights Councilwoman

are ideas we can work on as we work to improve the city's economic base."

Even prior to Ohio Auditor Dave Yost placing Maple Heights in financial emergency status last month, Mitchell says the biggest challenge facing Maple Heights and its residents has been its decades-long march to financial abyss.

With the Auditor's report looming over a potential new administration, possible layoffs, and the need for more revenue to pay for infrastructure needs, the restoration of city services, and other items, Mitchell said the city had to "find more effective ways to cut beyond closing city hall on Fridays."

"I would look for smarter cost cutting measures," she said. "We have residents who can only get to city hall on Fridays maybe it's better we have half days instead of a full closure on Fridays."

Mitchell ran against Mayor Jeffery Lansky in 2011.

She said during the 2011 election Mayor Lansky failed to take the high road and it hurt the city. Mitchell said she will run a clean campaign.

"Mistakes were made in the past but this is about the city not personalities," he said. "My thing is I believe in this city and the people."

Mitchell was born and raised in Little Rock Arkansas. She joined the Cuyahoga County Alcohol and Drug Addiction Board in 1979, where she worked for 30 years. She has spent the last six years behind the scenes as a community activist.

She and her husband James Wesley Mitchell, of 48 years, live on Watercrest Street where they built their home in 1990. They have raised three children and have two grandchildren and two great grand babies.

Brownlee joins race for mayor

By R. T. Andrews
PRESS CORRESPONDENT



Bill Brownlee, Maple Heights Councilman

District 5 Councilman Bill Brownlee has pulled petitions to run for mayor of Maple Heights this fall.

The former Marine and outspoken councilman thus ensures there will be a feisty, tempestuous and fascinating contest this year for the job of leading the severely-challenged first-ring suburb out of state-declared fiscal emergency.

Ohio Auditor Dave Yost put Maple Heights into fiscal emergency status in February after the city failed to make \$125,000 in payments on sewer improvements bonds and according to Yost, finished the fiscal year with a \$2.7 million deficit.

Regular attendees at city council meetings have told The Real Deal Press that Brownlee is the only council member who seems concerned about the city's parlous finances. Brownlee in effect said the same thing to this reporter several weeks ago when he first confirmed that he would be running for mayor.

Brownlee was elected to the District 5 council seat in 2013. Council members run every two years so Brownlee is giving up his seat to run for the position now held by Jeffrey Lansky. Lansky did not return numerous calls seeking comment on this and other stories regarding Maple Heights. He has not yet announced whether he will seek re-election. In addition to Brownlee, other declared candidates include Neomia Mitchell, who lost to Lansky in 2011, Annette Blackwell, who lost in the 2011 mayoral primary, and Frank Rives.

Brownlee's candidacy is likely to focus on fiscal responsibility and open government. He and his wife run a Maple Heights website that shows every council meeting in its entirety. He says that he offered every councilperson free access on the site to communicate with constituents but that none took him up on his offer. This was perhaps a precursor to his later service on council, where his courteous but per-

sistent penchant for asking questions and challenging established ways led his colleagues to censure him in February. When Brownlee challenged his colleagues to cite instances of his alleged inappropriate conduct, no one ventured to take him on. In an ironic twist, one councilperson said the proof was in the videos he has posted.

Brownlee moved to Cleveland from Chicago in 2011 to attend school. He and his family settled in Maple Heights on Paine Ave., where they bought a foreclosed home and fixed it up. The 32 year-old Brownlee grew up on a farm near Harrisburg, PA, and was an active duty Marine from 2003-2007. He now owns a video production company and says he is bullish on Maple Heights.

"Maple Heights is the best location in Cuyahoga County," he says. It has great access to every part of the county, and notwithstanding some law and order challenges, "is still largely a quite community."

One thing that is not quiet is Brownlee's relationship with Lansky. The duo have been involved in opposite sides of several lawsuits related to city affairs. Just as we went to press came word that a federal lawsuit Brownlee and his wife filed against Lansky, the city law director, and the council president had been settled by the latter two defendants. The law director and council president agreed to pay the Brownlees \$25,000 in damages. Their settlement leaves Lansky as the sole defendant in the lawsuit.

Brownlee recently proposed pay cuts for council members and the mayor as a way, he said, of leading the way on sacrifices that will be necessary given the city's fiscal status. His proposal was opposed by every councilperson.

Faith Credit Union names Deborah Perkins as CEO

Faith Community United Credit Union has picked Deborah E. Perkins as President and Chief Executive Officer. Perkins was named after an extensive search led by executive search consultant Herb Smith of H C Smith Ltd in Beachwood.

Perkins brings more than 25 years of business and financial services experience in New York City and Cleveland spanning commercial, investment, and central banking; economic development; community development; and nonprofit management. For the last six years she was President and Chief Executive Officer of E CITY, a youth entrepreneurship education nonprofit, and then President of The Presidents' Council, LLC, with responsibility for leading the Council's economic and business

development activities in support of African American entrepreneurship in Northeast Ohio and managing its investment portfolio.

Perkins began her career in corporate lending in New York City with Chase Manhattan Bank and then joined the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. She resumed corporate lending with The Bank of New York on Wall Street where she originated and managed over \$1 billion in loans and leases to Fortune 500 companies. Perkins has also worked in investment banking, served as a manager of economic development under Mayor Michael R. White, and co-led a \$300 million mortgage loan initiative for inner-city homebuyers while working in Cleveland's Fannie Mae office.

A graduate of Glenville

High School, Ms. Perkins holds a B.A. in Mathematical Economics from Brown University and an M.A. in Economics from New York University, and is life and annuity licensed. Her civic involvement includes membership in the Western Reserve Chapter of The Links, Jack and Jill, Antioch Baptist Church, Blacks in Management and the Stockbridge Investment Club. She has served on numerous boards including United Black Fund, Towards Employment, and Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

Perkins resides in Pepper Pike and is the mother of two adult sons. She enjoys golf, exercising and yoga.

Perkins told the Real Deal Press she was excited to take the helm at Faith, in part because it offered her the opportunity to leverage, on behalf



Deborah E. Perkins, President and Chief Executive Officer of Faith Community United Credit Union.

of a key community organization, her extensive financial and operational experience, along with regulatory and industry knowledge, gained from a broad range of private, profit, and nonprofit institutional environments.

Faith Community United Credit Union, formed in 1952 as the Mount Sinai Baptist Church Credit Union, became a community development credit union in 1991. It has over 4,000 members and nearly \$13 million in assets.

Hone Barber College Reopens In Maple Heights

By Richard Donald Jones
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

It's been nearly six months since the Hone Barber College closed its Warrensville Center Road location in Maple Heights amid financial issues with the facilities landlord.

And while owner Angela Rice says the closure and subsequent interruption of business stung, she has been hard at work bringing back the school in a new location for her stu-

dents and clientele.

"We got a very beautiful school. And we are in a new space now," she said about the 2,500-square-foot building that has a more open space concept. "We reopened to the public on February third and gradually we are getting the word out. Our customers are finding us and coming back."

To celebrate the school's reopening Rice and her staff will be hosting a Grand Opening on May 9 to invite the community and potential students to tour the new building.

The facility sits at 5670 Dunham Road in location of an old Lawson's and a bakery.

Rice and her ex-husband opened the first Hone Barber College in 1996 in Painesville before business needs necessitated moving the facility to Cleveland.

"We purchased the school around a time when it was doing very well with the idea of turning it around, explained Rice. "In time we had to move as we recognized that our students and client base were in Cleveland."

According to Rice the barber

profession is still an attractive option for those looking for a trade as an alternative to traditional college or university schooling.

"I've been doing it for 20 years. Economically it's still a good field," Rice said. "The economy can be an issue as it is in any business but people still want to get their hair cut and styled.

Rice also mentioned that for those individuals with legal challenges such as felonies the barber profession is a field where an individual with a record can start and grow a career.

"While I don't want to harp on those with criminal records, Ohio does license barbers as independent contractors and that's what we are," explained Rice. "Becoming a barber is way for someone with a felony to become gainfully employed and one day possibly own their own business.

Hone's is open to the public Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9 am until 5:30 pm, Thursdays and Fridays 9:00 am until 8:30 pm, and Saturdays 9:00 am until 7:30 pm.

REAL MONEY

The Impact of a Strong US Dollar

By **J. Burner Crew**
Press Correspondent



Since the onset of the “Great Recession” the bond market has rallied to a historic high. Both the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the NASDAQ have rallied to current historic all-time highs. Still, one of the most dramatic changes in the past five years has been the increase in value of the U.S. dollar on a global basis.

The dollar’s rise has been persistent and will have major consequences as Americans travel abroad and U.S. based corporations look to acquire foreign assets to support future earnings.

By example in 2008-2009 the dollar/euro ratio was ap-

proximately 1.40:1. In 2008 it took \$1.40 to buy one Eurodollar; today the price is \$1.06. The dollar has increased in value by nearly 30% against the euro. This means the US dollar buys nearly 30% more than it did just 6 years ago. If you travel or plan to travel to the Eurozone the savings will be meaningful.

If the plan is to visit Great Britain be aware the British pound has held its own against the dollar over the same time period. By comparison the U.S. dollar has strengthened against both the Canadian dollar and the Mexican peso, so vacations to our border nations should be more affordable.

For most individuals and companies the strength of the

dollar is a good thing, but there are some negative consequences. Goods produced in the US and shipped abroad for sale become more expensive to buy in the country of destination. U.S. companies may lose market share abroad and jobs may be reduced, but most international companies have learned to navigate this cycle. Don’t be surprised to learn the price of your favorite Japanese auto has not dropped in price: many are now produced in the U.S. and the labor force is paid in US currency. Therefore, very little savings can be realized.

You may find an adverse effect of the dollar’s strength in the international portion of your 401K. Some employers offer a family of funds that include the

option to purchase foreign companies as a way to diversify your portfolio. The performance of the international fund may have underperformed over the past five years, not because the companies have been unprofitable, but because the local currency has lost value against the dollar.

Now may be the time to take profits from the U.S. markets and deploy those gains to the international equity markets within your 401K. Realize our strong dollar has become a variable that affects performance in your investment strategy. As U.S. market valuations become stretched in coming months, investors looking for good values will find fewer options in our markets. The price to earn-

ings ratio, a measure of relative value, is now near 20 against an average of 15 on a historic basis. This means our valuations are high by any measure versus historic performance. The two exceptions are the energy sector and Europe. The best values are being created because the combination of a strong dollar and an abundant supply in the oil market and a strong dollar plus weak demand in Europe. The oil sector, including drillers, integrated producers and industry suppliers offers good to fair value for long-term investors. As you take profits in the coming weeks and months from stocks and bonds, take the time to research opportunities created by a strong U.S. dollar.

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CLEVELAND HITS RE-“FRESH” BUTTON ON FIRST-MONDAY NETWORK

By **Derek Dixon**
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Cleveland's diverse, vibrant contingent of urban farming stakeholders could hardly wait to display its unity and dedication to growth one early March evening in Ohio City.

After a near three-year absence, March 2 marked the official return of “Local Food Mondays”, where anyone supportive of local farming is welcome.

The buzz intensified as more than one hundred fifty pre-registered attendees filled the Great Lakes Brewing Company's Tasting Room in Ohio City. Each person, couple, or small team represented a different but relevant piece of our region's upward-trending agricultural movement. The marginally curious, the fully engaged, and everyone in-between had a chance to be heard and a benefit to offer in the name of sustainable agriculture.

The last such LFM meeting was hosted back in the fall of 2012 by the now-defunct Entrepreneurs for Sustainability, better known as “E4S”. While that series of meetings slowly lost its core support group, long-time local farmers like Carlton Jackson, co-founder of hoop house installer Tunnel Vision Hoops, fought to revive the network. He was understandably excited to provide opening remarks.

“[Local Food Mondays] is for anyone who supports local food, including urban and peri-urban farming, community gardens, and value-added

products like salsa or pickles—from farmers and chefs to agricultural educators and policy-makers to corporate and private sponsors of local food,” Jackson said. “If you have a vested interest, or just want to see what we're all about, you are welcome. We want to educate, inspire, connect, and help people involved in the local food system.”

By design, the passion local farmers invest in their own nutritional and financial well-being has translated into this popular incubator scheduled for the first Monday of each month. The March event's icebreaker included free beer samples (brewed from locally-grown herbs, of course) and light organic snacks. At the end was a unique hip-hop music and video presentation for “fresh living” by local artist Doc Harrill (aka Dee Jay Doc).

The hour in-between contained more variety than a vegetable stand. The first presenter was Darren Hamm, executive director of Refugee Response, a local non-profit that advocates and supports resettlement and family development for hundreds of refugees in Greater Cleveland. Hamm cleared up several misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding Cleveland's refugee population. According to RefugeeResponse.com, Cuyahoga County has welcomed 862 refugees from various countries since 2007. Hamm also announced an upgrade of Refugee Response's existing

agricultural education partnership with the nearby Urban Community School. Refugee Response continues to run the Refugee Empowerment Agricultural Program (REAP), which allows refugees to earn a living wage by cultivating land at Ohio City Farms, the largest continuous urban farm in the United States.

Hamm was followed by Tom Gill, the Urban Community School's Chief Operating and Development Officer, who shared some grassroots realities about the need for farming education and practice in the inner city. He recounted a recent classroom visit where he asked twenty sixth-graders to draw pictures of their neighborhoods. “What kind of building do you think they drew most often?” Gill asked attendees. “A school? A church?” After several seconds of silence, he responded. “No, it was a gas station. Yes, a gas station. Why? Because that's where they were most often buying their food! That by itself let us know we have to really step up our game when it comes to providing quality nutritional options in the inner city.”

Chris Kennedy of the Cleveland Food Bank and Refugee Response farm manager Margaret Fitzpatrick coled a 45-seconds-per-speaker public announcements segment. Anyone in attendance was permitted to make a plug for whatever food venture they supported, including announcements of future community meetings,

“We want to educate, inspire, connect, and help people involved in the local food system”

— *Carlton Jackson*
Co-founder of Tunnel Vision Hoops

deadlines and guidelines for hoop house applicants, and invitations for educational opportunities concerning agriculture. It was a networker's dream where the ethnic and regional diversity of the crowd absorbed each individual's contribution.

Dee Jay Doc closed the evening by performing two rap numbers from his “Fresh Camp” brand. Doc's mission is cultivating the energy of urban youth through local gardening projects where they are the featured product. He mixed his songs with several video presentations of the leadership roles youth are embracing throughout the city related to the resurgence of their neighborhoods.

By closing time, Jackson was satisfied this re-launch had met its objectives. “If you are concerned with land, soil, seed, distribution, sales, infrastructure, finance, policy... this is the place for you.”

The next meeting is set for April 6 at 5:30pm at the same location, 2701 Carroll Ave.

Gen-Yer Takes International Detour To Cultivate Farming Career

By **Derek Dixon**
PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Post-undergraduate career searching need not become the discouraging maze described by so many of today's youth. Outside-the-box thinkers like Patrick Connolly prove that local farming has emerged as a viable option.

The 28-year-old 2009 journalism graduate took a wide, five-year detour en route from St. Bonaventure University (southwest New York State) to Avon Lake, Ohio. In December, he completed a unique trifecta of food cultivation experiences spanning three continents.

Connolly, a self-described amateur gardener and an attendee at the early March re-launch of Ohio City's “Local Food Mondays”, currently resides with the mother of his girlfriend, Leanne. The couple met as undergrads. “While in college, I worked at an organic farm as a volunteer with a group of nuns from a local convent who owned the farm,” he began. He said he visited about once a week to learn everything he could about plant growth and harvesting. His farming interest had nothing to do with academics. “I only got into gardening to have fresh vegetables at my fingertips.”

Little did he realize how far it would take him, literally and figuratively. From weeding the nuns' garden and picking ripe

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Gen-Yer Continued from Page 6

vegetables, Connolly eventually landed an overseas travel opportunity via Leanne's month-long creative writing fellowship. While bound for Montevideo, Uruguay to write and study Spanish, Leanne offered a corresponding stipend to Patrick. As she settled into coursework, he sought out and met a private local landowner who taught Patrick how to make cheese. Again, although unplanned, he grasped the unusual opportunity.

Connolly returned from Uruguay to his hometown of Medford, MA, where he did manual labor over

the next few years, in the process saving enough money to continue exploring his now enduring penchant for farming. He kept constant watch for opportunities via the Help Exchange (helpx.net), a portal that connects farm owners worldwide to aspiring volunteers so the latter may receive food and shelter in exchange for their willing labor.

His persistence resulted in a two-month exchange on a privately owned farm in Panarea, Italy. "I worked on an animal farm with three donkeys and a dozen chickens. My responsibility was to feed and care for the animals,"

he said. By the time he returned to Avon Lake last December, Connolly had completed this third leg of his amateur farming adventure. In total, he lived three unique farming experiences in three culturally different settings across three continents.

Now helping Leanne's mother with her garden, Patrick's attraction to a farming career rivals — if not exceeds — his journalism interest. "I'd certainly consider having my own farm one day," he concedes while basking in the glow of the March Local Food Monday event. "That's one reason I'm here."



HEALTH CALENDAR

⊙ April 18: Walk MS fundraiser

The Ohio Buckeye Chapter of the National MS Society is hosting its annual Fundraising Walk on April 18 at the Great Lakes Science Center. Register online at MSohiowalk.org. For more information, call 216.503.4183 or 800.344.4867.

⊙ April 18: 30th annual Swim for Diabetes

One in eight people in Northeast Ohio has diabetes. Make a splash for someone you know and register at www.SwimforDiabetes.org to participate in the 30th annual Swim for Diabetes.

⊙ April 30: 13th Annual Minority Men's Health Fair

The Minority Men's Health Fair offers free screenings and information on a range of topics, including diabetes, heart disease, prostate cancer, sickle cell, stress, dental screening, glaucoma, hepatitis, HIV, kidney function, lung health, skin cancer, and wellness.

This free event runs from 5:30-8:30 pm at the main campus of the Cleveland Clinic. For more information and to pre-register, visit clevelandclinic.org/mmhc.

Diabetes Partnership of Cleveland 30th Annual



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**WE WILL HANDLE YOUR
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Yoga is colorblind but yoga industry is not

By **Latha Poonamallee**
SPECIAL TO THE
REAL DEAL PRESS

The benefits of yoga are well established. Dr. Timothy McCall lists 38 benefits of yoga, from building general flexibility, to healing injury to stress reduction. It reduces your blood pressure and blood sugar, regulates your adrenal glands, makes you happier, more relaxed and more focused, helps you sleep better, and improves your lung capacity, among a host of other benefits. But it is also a very controversial practice in the U.S.

Critics claim that white women have colonized yoga in the U.S. and the industry as a whole is said to marginalize and alienate groups such as people of color and fat people.

Data somewhat support this claim. Most yoga practitioners are female, white, young and college educated. Out of the 25 million Americans who practice yoga, 76.5% are white and only 6% are African American.

Most western yoga practice separates the asanas (i.e. Postures) from the spiritual or the contemplative aspect of yoga. An extreme example is a program called DDD Yoga. You might have seen the almost magical transformation of Arthur in his viral video on YouTube. DDD's instructions include 'look at the yoga babe in front of you' and a guarantee that there is no chanting involved. But to his credit, he

focuses on breath although he doesn't call it Pranayama. He calls it Ignition. He runs a yoga empire with chat rooms and support groups. So, separating yoga from its spiritual roots is a dizzying, dis-embedding process but one with very successful commercial implications. It is a \$27 billion industry and is continuing to grow steadily and more than other forms of exercise.

There is a movement to decolonize yoga. Yoga teachers, magazines, and studios are asked to find ways to make yoga more inclusive of fat, black, and other forms of diverse populations. As a post-colonial scholar myself, I laughed. Here are two or three groups in the west that have co-opted a practice that doesn't really belong to them. If anyone could complain about the colonization of yoga, it should be people of South Asian origin. People like me. Or so I thought. Having studied the ethical issues in the commercialization of indigenous and traditional knowledge, I strongly support boundary setting and tribal-centric behaviors for indigenous groups and activists when dealing with commercial interests and firms. So, when stripped of its context and sold as a form of exercise, I told myself, yoga becomes doubly exploited and a tool of oppression.

But Yoga does not care if you are black or white or yellow or brown. It doesn't care if you are fat or thin, short or tall, rich or poor. Even my ethnic Indian heritage grants me no privilege. I still struggle. My heels don't touch the

floor. My knees do need to bend generously. Like any other middle-aged chub, I need to get my spare tires out of the way for a forward bend. So, yes, yoga is free of discrimination, racial and otherwise. But the yoga industry is not.

Like most traditional knowledge systems, yoga operates on benevolent mental models. Benevolent mental models are interdependence-centric with an understanding that knowledge is communal property in service of collective wellbeing. In fact, one of my favorite Hindu prayers is, "Lokha Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu," or "Let all of universe be joyful, free of suffering."

While yoga's roots are in the benevolent mental model, the yoga business operates very much on an exploitative mental model where knowledge is seen as a resource to be exploited for private profit. When collectively evolved knowledge is viewed as a resource to be exploited for private profit, consumers of yoga are merely markets and not seekers of spiritual or personal growth. It is a victimless crime because the knowledge belongs to the public realm but criminals abound.

So why does Yoga journal feature disproportionately high number of white women compared to every other group? In just one issue of the magazine, black and brown women combined represent only 2.5%. There was only one picture of a black male. 98.3% of women pictured are nearly identical and slender. So what is going on

here? Is it a conspiracy to keep black and other people of color out of yoga?

Like most capitalistic firms, the industry is not out to change people's lives, but to bolster its bottom lines. Yoga has become part of the next trillion-dollar industry — The Pursuit of Wellness. We are talking about a very large industry here, with 153,000 gyms worldwide and 273,500 personal trainers and 70,000 yoga teachers in the U.S. alone. (With 67% of gym memberships going unused, this industry is used to its customers paying them for not using their facilities.)

Statistics from the National Institutes of Health tell us that 48% of Americans practicing yoga in 2008 belonged to households earning more than \$65,000 per year. The medium African American household income during the same period was \$37K and has declined to \$33K in 2012. Further, 46.3% of the African America households are headed by women. An average black woman's weekly earning is \$590 compared to a white woman's \$712. No wonder the yoga industry isn't clamoring to sell itself to black and other people of color.

People of all colors should remember that yoga belongs to the knowledge 'commons.' No one owns it. The Government of India has created a public database for yoga and other allied areas of science such as Ayurveda to return these knowledge resources to the public domain so we all can use it.

If you cannot afford a stu-



Kim Archibald Russell, yoga student and instructor, Fairfax-Hough resident

dio lesson, there are a number of widely available high quality videos posted by yogis who understand the benevolent nature of yoga. These yogis, regardless of their color and size are sites of micro-resistance against the yoga industry. You don't need fancy yoga clothes or yoga mats. And you don't need to be bony-skinny to do yoga. If you know yogis in your community, get them to offer lessons on a sliding scale or donation options. Engage in group practice. Get your church of community center to give you free space so you can keep the costs down. Get the older people in your community to practice it. Resist the commercialization of yoga by exploitative wellness entrepreneurs.

Yoga belongs to you and me and everyone. Take it and feel well.

Dr. Latha Poonamallee is an aspiring yogini and an Associate Professor at Michigan Technological University. More of her work can be found online at www.poonamallee.wordpress.com.

Grounded in yoga's spirituality, Shaw grad soars in business

By **R.T. Andrews**
EDITOR

"My whole life has been yoga."

So said Latia Phillips-Bey, when we asked how she got started with yoga.

It may not be too much to say that Phillips-Bey sees yoga as key to both her spiritual and physical salvation.

"I was a teen-age mother, pregnant at 18, and I didn't want to be a product of my environment", she said matter-of-factly in a recent telephone conversation.

Realizing that as a single parent she needed to continue her education to be able to take care of the daughter who was on the way, Phillips-Bey finished Shaw High in East Cleveland and enrolled in Cleveland State. The

granddaughter of former East Cleveland city manager Elijah Wheeler, Phillips-Bey had to tote her baby along because "I couldn't afford a baby sitter."

Thus started a journey that today has Phillips-Bey with an associate's degree, two bachelor's degrees [business management and human resources], an MBA, and on her way to a doctorate in health management.

Phillips-Bey began to study yoga originally as a means of meditating and spiritual grounding. So deep is her connection to yoga's metaphysical aspects that she recounted her odyssey from single parent absorbing the spiritual aspects of yoga to owner of a business that in just four years has gone from teaching three students in her home to a 700+ client base without even mentioning

when she began to practice yoga's physical side.

Phillips-Bey balanced eight years of yoga classes with the demands of a growing family — she's been married for the last 20 years and now has an 18 year-old son along with her daughter, now 23 — before deciding to apprentice with a yoga master. Parallel to her academic career, she has logged nearly 2000 hours of training that now qualify her as both yoga therapist and Reiki master.

Three years ago, she moved her fledgling Zen Yoga Studio from a small space in South Euclid to a 1500 SF operation in Mayfield Heights, where she and a growing staff offer "every form of yoga class you can imagine."

Phillips-Bey thinks that a lot of African Americans haven't embraced yoga because



Phillips-Bey

"we don't understand that it's really about self-mastery and freeing yourself from your own demons." For black women in particular, these demons can include negative images of

self and body.

The staff and clientele at The Zen Yoga Studio are diverse, says Phillips-Bey.

"Yoga is for every body," she says.

LOCAL CIVIC CALENDAR

April 11 • Top Ladies of Distinction will hold its annual Status of Women Fundraising Luncheon at Landerhaven at 11:30am.

This year's theme is "It's Our Time...Enhancing the Status of Women Worldwide" and will be in support of "Dress for Success Cleveland". TLOD hopes to raise \$30,000 to use in support of "Back to Work" job readiness

programs and scholarships for high school teenagers.

April 15 • Author Iyanla Vanzant and talk show host Wendy Williams will headline the inaugural EmpowerONE Expo at the Cleveland Convention Center from 11am-6pm. Tickets are \$25 for general admission. For more information, visit wzak-cleveland.hellobeautiful.com/

category/empowerone/.

April 24 • The Case Western Reserve Office of Multicultural Affairs is hosting a "Diversity Speaks" speaker series to share the stories of people from varying backgrounds. The series will begin Friday, March 27, and conclude on Friday, May 1. Each session is from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. in Sears Building, Room 450.

On Friday, April 24, Cassi Pittman, CWRU assistant professor of sociology, will present "To Braid or Not to Braid: Cultural Constraint at Work." RSVP to sessions in the speaker series at students.case.edu/multicultural.

Light refreshments will be served at each session, but attendees should bring their own lunches.

April 25 • Rock the Red Jacket Gala

City Year Cleveland's annual celebration this year will honor Cleveland Schools CEO Eric S. Gordon as the Idealist of the Year. The gala will be held at The Metropolitan at The 9 from 7:30-10pm.

For more information, call Teresa Schleicher (216-373-3421) or visit <http://www.cityyear.org/cleveland>.

Black Church Continued from Page 1

dick since he was a youngster; even then, his talent was prodigious. I was awed by his committed performance.

But the journalist in me saw the concert as proof of the profound changes in African American churches over the last 40 years. In a three-part series, I'll be writing about the changes and challenges facing the congregations that make up the city's most influential institution.

It's safe to say African American churches touch the lives of all the region's residents, regardless of race, ethnicity or residence. One reason for that depth of influence lies in religious practices of African Americans themselves.

African Americans comprise 53 percent of Cleveland residents, according to the 2010 census, and 30 percent of residents in Cuyahoga County. Thus the region is home to a racial group that is "markedly more religious...than the U.S. population as whole," according to a 2009 report from the Pew Research Center.

That national study found a whopping 87 percent of African Americans had a formal religious affiliation, compared to 83 percent of the total population. Plus almost 80 percent of African Americans — whether affiliated or not — reported religion was important in their lives. In the nation overall, only 56 percent of adults held that view.

Other research from the Pew Center reveals African Americans are fairly comfortable with mixing religion and politics. White evangelicals hold the same view, but African Americans are on the left of the partisan divide, accord-

ing to the Pew Center.

"On a variety of other questions, including political party identification and opinions about the proper role of government in providing services to the citizenry and assistance to the poor, there are few differences in the views of African-Americans across religious groups. Perhaps most strikingly, the partisan leanings of African Americans from every religious background tilt heavily in the Democratic direction."

Is it any wonder then, that Cleveland's African American churches are the home base when it comes to everything from getting out the vote for 2012 presidential election to mobilizing the community response Department of Justice report on the Cleveland Division of Police?

Although I'm using a singular noun — institution — I understand it in the collective sense of the word. The city's African American churches are incredibly diverse. The worship experience at a place like the Word Church is vastly different than that of a small deliverance center on Superior Ave.

Take Reddick's concert.

Churches have long been venues for performances. In her memoir "In His Presence," veteran choir director and pianist Helen Turner-Thompson details how gospel singers and church pastors sustained and promoted each other during the 1930s and 1940s.

"If a pastor wanted to increase the church's membership, he would schedule a monthly program with quartets. It not only increased the church's popularity but drew a following," Turner-Thompson wrote. However, there was

a clear division between the church and the world.

"Interestingly, if the members of the quartets were not church-affiliated or members in good standing, the pastor would be reluctant to have them perform in their (sic) church."

A person unfamiliar with the modern African American mega church wouldn't have seen much difference between Reddick's concert and one at a small, secular arena.

The audience sat in chairs, not pews. The singers performed on a large platform that extended into the seating area. When the audience left their seats, they were an arm's length away from Reddick.

Two large monitors flanked the stage. During the performance, editors in the control booth fed a complementary stream, complete with cutaways to the audience and close-ups of Reddick and other performers.

That combination of the sacred and secular is a defining characteristic of the African American mega church, says Dr. William H. Myers. He is the president, founder and CEO of the McCreary Center for African American Religious Studies. He is also a senior professor of New Testament and African-American Religious Studies at Ashland Seminary.

"The mega church is not to be defined simply by numbers. It is also to be defined by the model of the business world they have adopted," says Myers, who has taught Word Church pastor R.A. Vernon.

"It's not just the music, it's not just the technology. They auction off cars. They do things you see on television. That kind of attracts people... and then you get young people



Photo of St. John A.M.E. taken in 1973. Used courtesy of Cleveland State University, Cleveland Memory Project, Clay Herrick Slide Collection.

who are into technology and are very busy, and who are not really the traditional churchgoers in the way our parents and grandparents were."

That generation gap, in worship practice and worldview, especially challenges the African-American legacy churches such as Shiloh Baptist Church, St. James AME and Antioch Baptist — where I am a member and staff musician. How do they embrace innovation, while maintaining traditions that stretch more than 100 years?

For all their longevity, the area's African American churches are not immune to the social and economic maladies affecting Cleveland and its suburbs.

Almost 35 percent of Cleveland residents are poor; the city's heralded revitalization threatens to overlook its East Side neighborhoods. The racial segregation made those neighborhoods home to African American churches. But two generations of population shifts lured African American out of the neighborhoods and into the suburbs. The larger, most influential churches, therefore, minister to neighborhoods their parishioners left. What is their responsibility to

the community around them? The smaller churches, especially, simply struggle to pay bills and keep their pews occupied. How can rise above survival?

One final word: I'm reporting this series as a friend and as a journalist.

I'm a friend because I am intimately involved in the African American church. I was baptized at 5. I've been a church musician for close to 45 years. I play electric bass guitar for two churches — Antioch Baptist and Progressive Evangelistic Baptist Church on 63rd near Quincy — and for a local gospel group. So I'm in church more than I am at home.

At the same time, I observe and listen with a reporter's eyes and ears. I see vacant pews and empty collection plates and wonder why. Because I am a friend and a journalist, I ask tough questions and strive for balance and fairness.

But I can't catch everything, so I need you. If you have a question or a topic I should consider, a source to recommend, or a critique to give, send an email to afiscruggs@gmail.com. You can also follow me on Twitter @aoscruggs.

Euclid Demolition Continued from Page 1

needed capital improvements for the second year in a row.

To staunch the bleeding, over the last year the administration turned its jail operations over to the county. It is in the process of moving its dispatch center to Chagrin Valley Dispatch and it is ending its self-insurance program in favor of a county employee health plan. These actions are expected to result in a savings of several million dollars, but it's not enough. To balance the budget as required by law, Cervenik is not filling open positions in Police, Fire and Housing and is laying off 2 firefighters.

These factors have led many to focus on the decline of Euclid's housing stock and the city's response.

The housing crisis may not be as acute a national problem as it once was, but it remains a big problem in Euclid. Vacancies through forced foreclosure or abandonment abound. The distressed home sale market has undercut arms-length transactions. The 5% increase of rental property in the single-family home market coupled with the already high apartment and two-family rentals contributes to a high transiency rate. Euclid Schools estimate the student transiency rate close to 38% — about 2,000 children a year. As owner-occupied homes shift increasingly to rental investments, the transiency rate rises and neighborhood destabilization accelerates.

In the last ten years, Euclid has lost over \$1 million dollars in property value. All 17 census tracts are at risk, and HUD has scored 16 of them as "areas of greatest risk". In

August 2011, CSU's Levin College of Urban Affairs published a study, *The Housing Crisis in Euclid, OH: Analysis and Outlook*. Authors Brian Mikelbank and Eugene Basile examined arms-length sales and distressed sales. Arms-length sales are homes sold between two non-related parties, the typical buyer-seller arrangement. After the housing market's initial bottom out, Euclid is beginning to see an uptick in median price in the arms-length market. Distressed sale prices though, are still falling and make up almost 75% of single-family homes sold. These sales erode both the city's overall property value as well as homeowners' confidence in the value of their own houses.

The pattern of decline was set years ago. In "The Complications of our Deteriorating Inner Ring Suburbs", Daniel McGraw of the online Belt Magazine wrote on January 5th that part of the problem is Euclid's aging housing stock:

"About 67 percent of the housing in Euclid was built between the end of WWII and 1959. Given the economy in Northeast Ohio, the market for such homes has basically vanished. Millennials looking for starter homes can find cheap houses in urban redevelopment areas like Ohio City or Gordon Square in Cleveland, or move further out to suburban Mentor or Solon and grab a better home for not too much more... Cheap starter homes as a bridge to a better one have little value."

One way the city is attacking the distressed housing problem is through demolition. Since 2008 Euclid has re-

ceived close to \$4 million for demolition and rehab. Most of the funds have been used for residential demolition. As of February, the city has taken down over 150 blighted structures. In February the city applied for a \$1 million demolition grant from the county. If approved 12 more homes and eight commercial establishments will be torn down.

Is Demolition Working?

Tyronne Ave. in the northwest quadrant is comprised of 56 lots. It is fairly typical of the streets between East 185 and East 200. Seven of the 56 lots (12%) are owned either by the City, the County or the banks. Eleven (20%) are investment owned. Five houses (10%) have been torn down and another is scheduled for demolition.

Numerous studies support the use of demolition in conjunction with strict housing code enforcement and long term planning. Thriving Communities Institute, a program of Western Reserve Land Conservancy studied the impact of demolition on home equity and mortgage foreclosure from 2009 to 2013. Their recently released report suggest "[there is] an available hedge in real estate equity from strategic and targeted demolition activity in relevant markets."

Some members of city council are beginning to look at the impact of the current demolition program on city neighborhoods and overall Euclid's property values.

Ward 6 Councilman Pat Delaney is concerned the city has no long-term plan for demolition. On two sepa-

rate occasions he has publicly asked Development Director Jonathan Holody for the city's plan. "What I would like to see is a little more effort in planning. We have to put more thought into how we approach these buildings, not just hey, city council you've got a list. There has to be some sort of criteria that we look at."

Delaney is not necessarily opposed to demolition but is looking for evidence that the city has a viable overall plan. He thinks the process the city and county have gone through has "squandered a lot of opportunity and a lot of resources just in Euclid."

Delaney's requests have been met with silence from the Cervenik administration.

Ward 1 Councilwoman Stephana Caviness has concerns from a socio-economic perspective. "There are many factors that have come into play to force the decline in property values throughout the nation. But when we look at Euclid specifically, I wouldn't want to just look at those factors but also the effect that it is having on our families. Look at the change in

the demographics in the past 10 years. This is not just seen as ethnicity but to look at the make-up of households, i.e. the increase in single-parent households, unemployment/underemployments; the effects that this has on the children; how this social/economic change effects our schools and community."

Possible Election Issue

Euclid's has spent millions of dollars on its demolition program, and vacant lots now outnumber occupied dwellings on some city streets. Questions remain, however, whether the city's policy is positively affecting the city's tax base.

Euclid may have a unique opportunity to re-invent itself through smart planning and targeted demolition that restores Euclid's tax base, while at the same time improving quality of life through principles of smart growth, place-making and new urbanism. It will be interesting whether city residents, especially its property owners, will hold city officials and candidates accountable in this election year.



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

By Chardé Hurst
REAL DEAL CORRESPONDENT



your journey to becoming a Tri-C student.

Raquel: Unfortunately, after being raised in a home of domestic violence, I also entered into a relationship similar to my parents'. After years of living in this situation, I found the courage to leave. All I had were my 2 daughters, a garbage bag of clothes, and a food stamp card. We went to a foreclosed home and became squatters until the property manager found out. During this time I was beginning the Women in Transition (WIT) program at Tri-C. WIT is a non-credit 8 week-program that helps women to transform, while empowering them to move forward and achieve their career, educational and personal goals. After completing this program, I enrolled as a student and will graduate on May 14, 2015 with my Associate of Arts degree.

RDP: *What do you hope telling your story will do for others?*

Raquel: I hope that my story shows others what can happen when you stick to it. Oftentimes we tell ourselves that we want something better, however, we don't do the work needed to achieve the goal. We must ask ourselves, 'how bad do you want it?' When we are truly tired of our situation, our actions will reflect it. I want to encourage others to push through the obstacles, because a reward is always at the end.

RDP: *What's the next step for you? Where do you plan on going from here?*

Raquel: I have been accepted to Cleveland State University and will continue my education there in the fall of 2015. Tri-C has given me so many tools and resources that have helped me both profes-

sionally and personally. As a student, I was able to have several of my writings featured in various publications such as Breakwall Magazine, Eber & Wein Publishing and the school newspaper. I plan to continue growing in my craft and publishing more writings as well as my autobiography.

RDP: *Please share with us where more information about Women in Transition can be found, and how we can stay updated on your publications.*

Raquel: Visiting www.Kel-writes.com is the best way to stay updated on my work. For more information on WIT, visit www.tri-c.edu/women-in-transition/ or call 216-987-2272. I would encourage all women in need of a change to apply. Tri-C helped me tremendously in all areas of my life. I am forever grateful to the faculty and staff for the resources, time and support that they continue to give to me.

lished writer and single mother of two daughters, ages 9 and 10, she recently paused long enough to share her story of victory with us.

RDP: *How did you become interested in writing?*

Raquel: My love for writing began as a child at the age of 8 years old. I grew up in a home full of domestic violence and would use writing to cope with the chaos that surrounded me. I often sat in the corner of my bedroom, while my parents argued, and wrote in a notebook. As time went on, my love for English grew and my writings eventually turned into daily journaling, poems and short stories.

RDP: *Your love for English also pushed you to pursue a degree from Tri-C. Tell us about*



“When we are truly tired of our situation, our actions will reflect it.”

Raquel Wilbon is a 1988 graduate of West Tech HS currently studying English and Theater at Cuyahoga Community College. A pub-



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Community Fault Lines Continued from Page 1

a number of contentions for why recall was a waste of time and energy. It essentially argued that the mayor is doing well, the city is doing well, and while he and we could be doing better, all in all, we're o.k.

What makes it fascinating, and indeed important, is how it came to be written, how the signatories were assembled, its timing, and what it says about who has power in this town and what they are and are not concerned about.

I looked at the signers of the letter before I read the contents. Where you stand, as they say, depends upon where you sit. I knew most of the names and many of the people. Of the 45 signers, about 20 are African American, including several people I know, trust, and count among my good friends. So I want to emphasize that I'm talking about the power structure here.

In essence, that March 8 letter got prime space in the Sunday paper because there are volcanic fissures in the social fabric of our community. The lingering effects of the Great Recession, the chronic use of excessive force by an undisciplined police department that occasionally resembles an occupation army, and the palpable sense among large portions of the citizenry of being disrespected, disregarded, and relegated to the margins of an increasingly untenable inner city, have great kinetic potential.

The unresolved issues of the 137-bullet massacre in 2011 and the killings of Tanisha Anderson and Tamir Rice last fall have stirred more energy in the black community than anything I can remember since Carl Stokes galvanized armies of voters more than 50 years ago. While the would-be organizers of a recall do not possess the kind of track record that suggests their efforts could be successful in the sense of actually ousting the mayor, the very agitation of such folks in a combustible environment is

the kind of threat that careful central planners want to snuff out before it has any chance of ignition.

Put simply, the Republican Convention is coming to town. That means everything: money, power, influence, the Presidency. The city fathers — this is still a patriarchy — want no unhappy wards in the living room when the world comes to visit next year. A recall campaign would be oh so uncool. An Occupy Cleveland movement next June around a brand new Public Square would be a serious problem.

(The funny thing is that the mayor couldn't care less about a recall attempt. He is who he is. He does what he does, and if the registered voters of Cleveland were to send him back to East 38th Street, well, he's likely to say, that's their prerogative. Just don't ask him to bend his principles or his beliefs.)

Our town's unelected leaders have no such nonchalance. And so, they did what they have been doing for decades. They rounded up a passel of "civic leaders" and announced what the adults had decided: the mayor is doing a good job, a few dead bodies and some systemic issues notwithstanding. Move along, nothing to see here.

The list of signatories has a much higher component of melanin and estrogen than used to be the case, because our civic leaders are super politically correct.

Unfortunately, they gave themselves away with the first half of their second sentence when they said, "We write as a broad cross-section of the community..." WHAT???? Do they know the demographics of Cleveland voters?

That "broad cross-section" claim undermines the whole letter. First, most of the signers don't live in Cleveland and can't vote one way or the other. Second, and more telling, not one of the signers earns less than \$100,000 a year, and for many, that sum is chump change.

But let's not kill the messengers. Let's instead ask what we as

a community should be doing to have some real dialogue about the issues that concern most residents of Cleveland, and a whole lot of folk in the inner ring suburbs: inferior education, lack of jobs, inadequate public transportation, vacant and abandoned housing, deflated property values, crime, a regressive tax structure, excessive use of force by law enforcement.

Once upon a time, the black community had an organization that at least brought these kinds of issues up every once in a while. It was called the Cleveland NAACP. It has collapsed more ignominiously than the Iraqi army in Desert Storm. But the chapter's disintegration took place over decades, so when i

There is a tattered remnant of that civil rights army, however, and they happen to be holding the People's Grand Jury this month. The pro-

“The unresolved issues of the 137-bullet massacre and the killings of Tanisha Anderson and Tamir Rice have stirred more energy in the black community than anything I can remember”

ceedings will be April 7 from 6-9pm at Antioch Baptist Church at 89th and Cedar Ave. How many from that broad cross-section of signers will show up to engage, or at least listen to, the people?



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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Photos by Randy O. Norfus

WARRENSVILLE HEIGHTS•HIGHLAND HILLS•NORTH RANDALL

State of the City set for April 2



Warrensville — Mayor **Brad Sellers** will deliver the State of the City on Thursday, April 2 at

6:30pm at the Warrensville Heights Branch Library, 4415 Northfield Rd. The event is open to the public but space is limited and an overflow crowd is expected.

School Board puts levy on ballot, holds public meeting

for Supt. finalists

• The Warrensville Heights City School District has placed a renewal levy on the ballot for next month's May 5 Primary Election. Issue 4 is a five-year renewal levy in the amount of \$6.9 million that will generate approximately \$1.8 million per year. As a renewal levy, Issue 4 will not raise taxes for district homeowners. Absentee balloting starts April 6.

• The School Board held a community meeting March 28 in the high school auditorium to give residents a chance to meet and interact with the four finalists for the Superintendent position.

Each candidate was given an opportunity to discuss his or her background, their vision for leading the District, and to answer questions from the moderator and the audience. About 140 people were in attendance.

The final four:

— James Brady, Business Manager for East Cleveland City Schools and former Superintendent of Schools for Westfall Local School District

— Donald Jolly, Academic Superintendent, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

— Guy Parmigian, Superintendent, Benton-Carroll Salem Local School District

— Octavia Reed, Coordinator of Elementary Curriculum, Cleveland Hts.-University Hts. School District. Pics of each

The Board met on March

30 as we went to press to narrow the field to one or two candidates. A final decision is expected by mid-April.

BEDFORD HEIGHTS

Berger delivers State of the City report



Stephanie Takai & Fletcher Berger

Mayor Fletcher Berger's told city residents that notwithstanding "vast challenges" Bedford Heights was on solid financial ground and would continue to provide the high level of service they had come to expect. He said that the

municipal workforce had been reduced by 40 fulltime and 32 parttime employees since his administration began in 2008. The reduction was due primarily through attrition without any diminishment in the level and quality of service.

In a presentation full of numbers, Berger said that the city had spent \$415k on trash collection in 2014 and promised forthcoming innovations that would reduce this expenditure.

Berger praised city employees for their expertise in securing grant funds to help meet the city's \$26.7m 2014 budget. He said the city spent \$12.7m on city services, \$12.4 on safety forces, and \$1.7 on the community center. He announced that the center's mortgage was fully paid off in December and that the city's

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- How to repair your credit
- Recognize signs and dangers of predatory lending

6. CHECK IT OUT

- Types of bank fees
- Write checks and use ATM or Debit cards

7. SET YOUR FINANCIAL SIGHTS

- Know how to prioritize your financial goals

8. CHARGE IT RIGHT

- Know the costs of using a credit card
- Potential problems with credit

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total debt, which stood at \$5.6m when he took office, would be only \$800k by year-end. And in a nod to his plan to seek re-election, he said the city would be “debt-free by the end of my next term.”

Berger has pulled petitions to run for a third term this November.

Berger also announced that 35 new businesses moved into the city in 2014, including Myce-stro, makers of the world's first wearable computer mouse. He also discussed the new regional dispatch center housed in the city's police department, fully paid for by federal and county funds.

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS • UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

School Board puts levy on ballot

• The Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District is asking voters to support a 5.9 mill levy next month in the May 5 Primary Election. Proponents say Issue 2 is for operating support that has not increased since 2011.

SOUTH EUCLID

Jason Russell announces run for South Euclid Council



Jason Russell, has declared his candidacy for one of the three at large council seats voters will fill this year. Russell, 29, chairs the

city's planning commission, said in a press release that he “wants to bring his passion for urban communities and government efficiency to South Euclid City Council.”

Russell is a city planner by profession, currently working for the City of Lakewood. More on his campaign can be found at jasonfor-southeuclid.com

Black Women Celebrate Black Men

The Black Women's Political Action Committee stopped to recognize the decades-long contributions of half a dozen black men who have supported their efforts to advance in the political arena.

Recognized at BWPAC's annual Women's History Month celebration, for their contributions, both

public and private were Robert Boyd, Charles E. Brown, Sr., George Forbes, Charles T. [Chuck] Hall,



Charles Brown



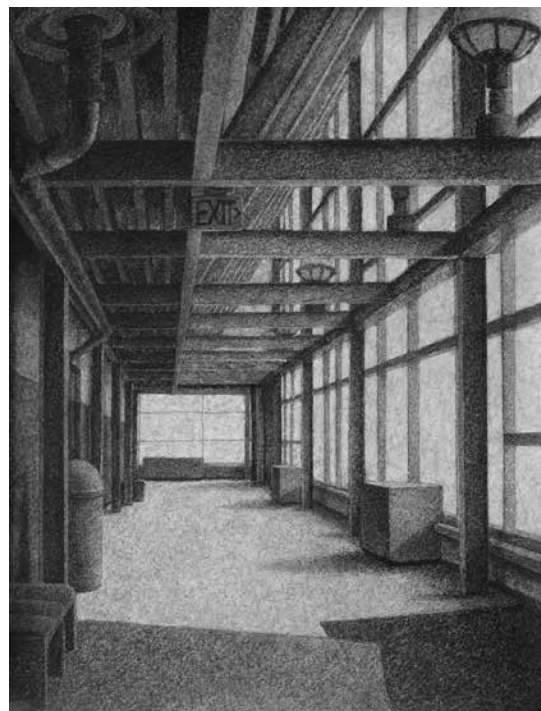
Charles Hall



Louis Laisure

Louis Laisure, and Hon. Louis Stokes. Brown, Hall, and Laisure were in attendance to receive their laurels. Former Congressman Stokes was represented by his nephew, Cordell Stokes, while Boyd did not attend due to the illness of his wife, BWPAC co-founder and former state representative, Barbara Boyd.

The program was held March 28 at the Harvard Community Center



Baowen Tang, “Hallway”, Charcoal on Paper

Gallery East Announces the 43RD Annual Juried Student Art Exhibit 2015.

Gallery East of Tri-c's Eastern Campus, presents an exhibition of outstanding works of art created by students attending tri-c eastern campus. Media includes painting, drawing, ceramics, printmaking and photography. The Student show is a Juried exhibition of work created by student while enrolled at the eastern campus. The exhibition provides an opportunity for student to show their work in a profession, well recognized exhibition setting. Work will be for sale for anyone interested in purchase.

Looking for Internet Radio and Internet Shows, Stations



The Real Deal Press is looking to speak with owners or operators of internet radio and television shows oriented towards Northeast Ohio communities of color. If you fit that description, please contact us at 216.672.4301 or rta@therealdealpress.com.



License Plate of the Month

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DaShawn Hickman, a dual MD-PhD biomedical engineering student at Case Western Reserve University, took over last month as the national chair of Student National Medical Association [SNMA]. With more than 7,000 members, SNMA is the largest student medical organization in the country focused on supporting underrepresented minorities—both as medical

students and as patients. The hyper-busy South Carolina native, who holds an undergraduate degree from Yale, says his high school theater teacher, Miss McKenna Crook, had the greatest impact on him because “She encouraged me to be who I am, to be open, to not be afraid.” For more, visit thedaily.case.edu/news/?p=37235.

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