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# THE REAL DEAL

Volume 4 / Issue 26 / April 21, 2019

## PRESS

*Cuyahoga Politics Today*

# Labor, Dem kerfuffle masks deeper issues



County Executive Armond Budish

By R. T. Andrews  
EDITOR

The inability of top county Democratic officeholders to navigate the distinction between policy and politics has cast their party into a crisis the consequences of which are going to reverberate locally, statewide and nationally long after its immediate resolution.

The policy decision by Cuyahoga County Council to transfer operational management of the healthcare of inmates held in the county jail to MetroHealth Hospital — a move that probably should have been made years ago and whose wisdom is *not the issue* — wholly failed to account for the political aspects: termination of organized labor bargaining units and the loss of

as many as fifty jobs.

Organized labor's response was quick, direct, and potent: they announced plans to mount an informational picket at next Sunday's annual county Democratic Party dinner, where US Senator Kamala Harris is slated to be the featured speaker.

Harris, a leading contender for the 2020 Democratic nomination for President, immediately signaled she would not cross the picket line. Virtually certain is that the vast majority of elected officials who normally attend this event — from Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown to a wide array of mayors, judges, state and municipal legislators — will skip it this year.

Most importantly, the hundreds of thousands of dollars in ticket revenues that come from organized labor, directly or otherwise, and which underwrite the lion's share of the county party's annual budget, will not be arriving soon.

How could any Democratic elected official not have expected a strong and immediate pushback from the affected employees, mostly nurses, and the involved unions, the American Federation of Federal, State, County and Municipal

Employees and the United Auto Workers?

AFSCME, which represents the jail's LPNs, and the UAW, which does the same for the RNs, are two of the nation's most potent and progressive labor unions. To disrespect their concerns and the jobs of their members was misjudgment as a matter of public policy and suicidal as a matter of politics.

Council president Dan Brady, along with Dale Miller, certainly knew better. They represent the senior political leadership of the county council, with a combined 70 years in city, state and county legislatures. Their districts are full of working-class members with tidy homes — the fruit of wages negotiated by unions whose collective strength powered the growth of America's middle class.

Expectations of County Executive Armond Budish, whose administration negotiated the MetroHealth deal, are so low that he almost escapes culpability for this political snafu. His woefully inept management and poor political judgment have exacerbated the underlying jail and financial crises the county faces. It appears that no one expects an



Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Shontel Brown is also chair of the County Democratic Party. [Photo Credit: Eli Gibson, RDP]

**Being the first woman or the first black doesn't give you a pass for more than 30 seconds.**

aloof Budish — for crying out loud, a former Speaker of the Ohio House! — to have identified and implemented the easy steps by which this mess could have been sidestepped.

Much of labor's ire has been trained on the chairman of the county party, whose principal job duties are to raise money for party operations, set a strategic direction for the party, steer the party through political land

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# Arts World



Robert Madison and his late wife of 62 years, Leatrice, in Venice, Italy, during his year as a Fulbright Scholar. Dated 4-28-54. Madison opened his architect office later that year upon his return; at the book launch, April 16, 2019, Cleveland Heights.

- We'd never heard of a "sold out" book launch before but that was the case this past Tuesday as Nighttown's main room was packed to the gills in celebration of renowned architect and civic leader **Bob Madison** and the release of his memoir, *Designing Victory*. The title is on many levels an apt frame for Madison's 96 years and counting. The book, published by local house Act3 Creative LLC, is available at local booksellers as well as online.
- Next Sunday at 3p, artist **Sondra Perry** will deliver an artist talk at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 11400 Euclid [44106]. Perry's work will be exhibited in conjunction with her recognition as the inaugural winner of Toby's Prize, moCa's biennial award that recognizes excellence in an emerging contemporary artist. The award carries with it an exhibition, catalogue, and \$50,000.

Perry's exhibit, *A Terrible Thing*, explores the often-invisible yet ever-present architecture, labor, and infrastructure within museums and the interplay between how people make spaces, and how spaces and materials shape people. The talk and exhibit are both free and open to the public. More info on the artist and the museum is available [here](#).

# THE REAL DEAL PRESS

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**QUOTE of the Week**  
**"Success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm."**

— Winston Churchill

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MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

# Social Determinants of Health

By David Miller  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



The health status of black Americans, for all intent and purposes, is abysmal. With high rates of chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, our life expectancy is significantly less than that of whites. Black men's life expectancy is 72.2 years, white men at 76.6 years, black women at 78.2 years and white women at 81.1 years. Some will point to the fact that blacks are underinsured or more likely to be uninsured more than members of other racial groups. Underinsured and uninsured rates in our community remain vastly higher than all other racial groups in turn contribute the overwhelming health disparities present in our communities.

Health disparities between racial groups continue to persist even as medical and technical advances come online each day. One topic that is discussed but not fully understood or addressed is that of social determinants of health. Social determinants of health are defined as the personal resources such as education and income and the social environments in which people live, work, study, and engage in recreational activities.

I am currently conducting research on prostate cancer awareness, knowledge, risk perceptions, and screening intentions among black men. The current literature on this topic reveals disparities that in many ways are rooted in social determinants of health and contribute to us dying from this disease at a rate nearly three times greater than white men. Some aspect of our African ancestry means a more aggressive expression of the disease strikes us earlier, i.e. in our late 40s and early 50s. Given limited utilization of physician visits as well as limited understanding of screening and family cancer history, by the time a

majority of black men with prostate cancer visit a health care provider the disease has often moved beyond localized to metastasis.

As a community, the imperative is clear: we must focus on addressing those social determinants that contribute to the current disparities. Living conditions, working environments, health behaviors and health beliefs are areas which we have talked long enough about and must begin to now seriously address. Rates of smoking, obesity rates (especially among those under 21) and random interpersonal violence — often with guns — are but a few of our own self-inflicted contributing to current health disparities.

As our elders say, "your health is all you got." We must begin to put that saying into action.

As Charles Barkley might say, our health status is terrible, but we can do something about it, if we just do something about it.

*David B. Miller, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.P.H. is Associate Professor of Social Work at Case Western Reserve University's Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and director of its International Education Programs. He is also a former President of South Euclid City Council.*

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**216.973.1086**



## LifeCycles



**HIRED:**

**Michael Bowen**  
Associate attorney, Calfee Halter.



**PROMOTED:**

**Roderick Ingram**  
to Chief Marketing Officer,  
Northeast Ohio Medical University.



**APPOINTED:**

**Carvel Simmons**  
(Ross County): Founder, Trio Trucking, Inc  
to Ohio's Common Sense Initiative, Small  
Business Advisory Council.

**Robert C. Smith** of Westlake has been appointed Chairman of the JobsOhio Board of Directors for a term ending July 5, 2019.

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# Labor, Dem kerfuffle masks deeper issues

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mines, mediate intra-party factional disputes, and be the party's face and voice.

Did we mention the position is part time, unpaid and held by a relative political novice?

Did you know the job is presently held for the first time ever by a black woman?

Or that she is a member of the county council and made a policy decision blissfully unaware of its political ramifications?

Meet Shontel Brown, county councilwoman, protégée of Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, and since June 2017, county Party chair.

While Brown's repeated declaration that she voted for the MetroHealth deal as a matter of political conscience is both believable and commendable, it represents a complete failure to understand her role as Party chair.

Party chair may be a part time position but it is a full-time job. Since she sought and won the title, Brown has never not been Party chair; it goes with the title that you are constantly required to be on, always under scrutiny, your actions always analyzed from an understanding that you represent the Democratic Party in Cuyahoga County.

While Brown's failure to

understand, prepare for, and act consistent with that harsh reality is the proximate cause of the Party's current dilemma, other factors also play a role.

The first factor is structural.

Being party chair means inherent conflicts of interest if one is also an elected public official. A conscientious public servant cannot be an effective partisan warrior. We see this every time we hear from a police union official. Why can't we realize the total

every step of the way by her Congressional mentor. She had neither the experience or the gravitas to kick butt and take names, or to process and manage the myriad challenges inherent in the role.

Most consequentially, while she has grown on the job, she has been betrayed by her own people, however they are defined. Shontel didn't need cheerleaders once she was installed. She needed advisers, counselors, educators, protec-



County Council President Dan Brady and Dale Miller, Ward 2, County Council

ask somebody.

Shontel has her place in history. She likely needs to fall on her sword and resign for the good of the party — a victim of her friends — and to focus on her career as an elected official.

Last note, in some ways the most critical one. Those who insist on the "small p" aspects of the situation — Shontel's race and gender — ignore the larger dimensions: the majority of the affected nurses, clerks, technicians and others in jeopardy of losing their jobs because of the misfeasance of others are female and black.

Black people have no shot as a group, Cleveland has no shot as a community, and America has no shot as a nation, if we continue with the politics of illusion while we stiff the people who are the foundations of our strength, the backbones of our success, and most need our help.

***the majority of the affected nurses, clerks, technicians and others in jeopardy of losing their jobs because of the misfeasance of others are female and black.***

untenable of Shontel's two jobs?

The second factor is mostly a red herring. Brown's defenders have by and large miscast the current situation in gendered and racial terms. Brown is indeed the first black and the first woman to be Cuyahoga party chair. But truth is she didn't earn the job and wasn't prepared for it. She had a thin record of personal political accomplishment; her path was greased at

tors, institutional historians, so she could learn on the job.

Her champions failed her from day one, even as they now rush to defend the indefensible on grounds that are irrelevant.

Being the first woman or the first black doesn't give you a pass for more than 30 seconds. Ask Jackie Robinson, Carl Stokes, Barack Obama, Michelle Obama. If you aren't ready, you are already too late. If you don't know, you better

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