

THE REAL DEAL

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What is The Real Black Friday Movement?

➤ PAGE 6

The Early Life of a Youthful Offender



By John S. Worthy
Special Correspondent

Editor's Note: John Worthy has worked in Ohio's juvenile corrections system for almost twenty years. His revealing account of his encounters with "Steven" [a pseudonym] is a part of a Real Deal Press initiative to tell the stories of our community in ways that stark statistics, while important, never can.

Readers may wish to consider what public policies might be put in place to provide alternatives to youth and families in circumstances similar to those set out here. What interventions — by relatives, neighbors, public officials — might have made a difference to this family and this young man? Did society fail in its obligations to the individual? And if society has no obligation to intervene in this situation, might it nevertheless be in our

interest to have done so in some fashion, given the obvious costs of not doing so?

In early 2000 I was working as a Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Home Detention Officer when I first met Steven. He was ten years old at the time, a chubby, chunky little boy living on Cleveland's near east side. While I knew he was on house arrest for assault, I couldn't quite understand at the time why this qui-

et child assaulted someone.

That changed quickly as his young mother began to berate him seconds after I walked in the door. She called him 'fat boy', told him 'he stinks' and, shifting her audience to me, said, "He is just like his daddy. Mr. Worthy," she complained, "you can have him. Take him home with you. He eats too f*** much, ... I have to hide food from his a**."

In those few moments I

began to understand why Steven had beaten that boy in the bathroom of Harry E. Davis School. The hellishness of his home life was causing him to lash out where he could. His mother, diagnosed with breast cancer and constantly proclaiming the imminence of her death, treated him with a disdain that masked her love and her fears. She wanted to make him a man fast; she just

Continued on Page 3



Akshai Singh of Cleveland Hts. speaking at East Cleveland meeting on possible merger with Cleveland. Behind him is Angela Thi Bennett who expressed concern over East Cleveland's finances.

Taking to the Mattresses: Merger with Cleveland a mighty tough sell in East Cleveland

By R. T. Andrews
Editor

The demerits of a Cleveland-East Cleveland merger were front and center last month in a pair of hastily called but nonetheless well-attended public forums during

the last full week of July. The meetings, co-sponsored by Ideastream's Civic Commons initiative and Scene magazine, appear to have had their genesis in a drive-by Scene article a few months back that so thoroughly trashed East Cleveland that one of its residents, LaVora

Perry, launched a tiny tabloid, the East Cleveland Narrator, to counter the routine assaults upon her hometown.

The first forum took place, appropriately enough, in East Cleveland's Public Library, one of that city's most heralded assets. The library ful-

ly occupies a small block on the north side of Euclid Avenue immediately to the west of Louis Stokes Station, the eastern terminus of the Red Line of the Regional Transit Authority. [The Red Line and the Station are best known,

Continued on Page 4

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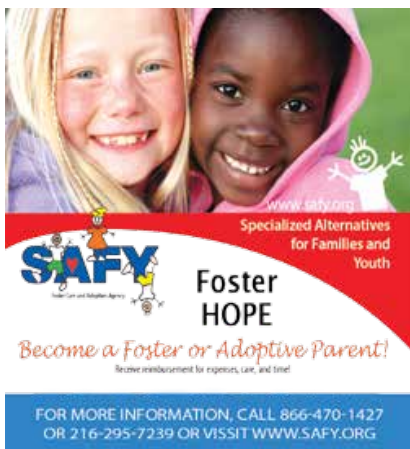
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NEWSMAKERS • JULY 2014



LaRese Purnell, CFO of The Word Church, has been appointed a trustee of South Pointe Hospital.



Vickie Johnson is leaving Fairfax Renaissance Development Corp. to become Senior Director of Community Relations for the Cleveland Clinic.

CORRECTION: A page 8 story in July provided the wrong location for the Rose of Sharon Barber Salon. The shop is located at East 82 and Cedar Ave.

CLARIFICATION: In our last issue a page 5 story used an acronym [CAAO] without identifying the organization for which it stands [Consortium of African American Organizations].

Thanks to our sharp-eyed readers for calling these items to our attention.

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Youth Offender Continued from page 1

didn't know how.

Steven stayed on my caseload for the next six months. He became more vocal, talked about his feelings, and was actually happy to see me when I made my school and home visits. It was clear to me that one of the things he needed at the time was someone in his corner.

The steady flow of new youth at the juvenile detention center creates a revolving door effect, and eventually Steven moved on, replaced by other youth.

Fast forward to the summer of 2006 when a teenager with a familiar grin walked in the door of the intake unit in the detention center. It was Steven, now 16, and from the looks of things, well known and somewhat respected by his peers. He gave me dap and hugged me. To see him again was actually a good thing. Times were tough and the streets were tougher, and with many kids his age being bound over to the adult justice system or dying off on a regular basis, the odds hadn't necessarily favored his still being upright and intact.

When we sat down to catch up, he told me his mother had recently succumbed to her cancer. He was still living in the same neighborhood, only now with his grandmother.

Learning on the Streets

Steven had also been adopted by a new family known as 7-ALL.

At the time 7-ALL was a modest street gang located in the area bounded by East 70 St. to the west, St. Clair Ave. to the north, East 79 St to the east, and Superior Ave. to the south.

Steven had big plans for 7-ALL. After his mother's passing he went to the streets to learn. His first hustle was the dope game but that changed when he connected with someone who had

guns, lots of guns. Just like any urban city in America, There is high demand for illegal firearms in certain areas of Cleveland, a fact that appealed to Steven's capitalist side. He eagerly went into great detail explaining his new business to me.

"I can get whatever you want, whatever you need," Steven told me. When asked for details, he went into his spiel like a true salesman. "I can get 9's and .40's all day; all handguns go for \$100 new in the box" he said. "I got Smith and Wesson, Beretta, ten- and twelve-gauge shotguns, semi autos, laser sights, anything. It is however you want to do it."

My curiosity led me to ask if he had anything bigger. His response made me sit back in my chair.

"Yeah, of course, but it will cost you. I can get M-16's and AK-47's and I can get both of those with the drum barrel magazines." I can even get the same gun the S.W.A.T. team carries."

Once Steven got going it was hard for him to stop talking about gun running. He told me he had sold at least 10 of the large caliber rifles (AK's and M-16's) and at least 2 drum barrel magazines to some of his street gang buddies. (A drum barrel magazine can hold from 90 to 100 rounds of ammunition.) He said, "my dude told me he could even get me bullet proof vests, grenades and dynamite."

Steven's "dude" was the person he sells for; he would not tell who or where 'dude' was. I believe his "dude" is an adult, possibly a person with a dealer license who can buy weapons in bulk and move them quickly with little paperwork.

When I asked Steven if he was preparing for war, he said "nah, just protecting what is mine, these streets, my dope and my boys."

Neither Big Box Retail or Internet

I wondered aloud about the mechanics of this "business". Steven described a simple process. He used his cell phone to take pictures of his dude's stock. He showed his catalog to customers, phoned in their orders and "the next day either picked them up or "dude brings them to me".

In this combination high tech/low tech enterprise, Steven often rode the bus to pick up his merchandise. "Nobody knows what I got, it just looks like a backpack," he said nonchalantly of his deadly cargo.

By the fall of 2008, my work had changed and I was now visiting youth detention facilities across the state. A frequent destination was the Marion

juvenile jail. This is where the toughest juvenile offenders are sent, including many from Cuyahoga County.

It was there that I last saw Steven. Much larger now, he was bullying a corrections officer when I saw him. He stopped when I shouted out his name.

When we talked this time, he said, "This right here will never happen to me again, I have to be smarter and not get caught." When I told him maybe it was time to start a new career, he shot me a side glance that seemed to say, "that ain't gonna happen."

If Steven is alive, he's about 24 years old now. There are a few thousand Stevens in Northeast Ohio. What must we do to reach them early enough that they might make better choices?



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THE REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Families and Funerals

The recent death of a loved one has me reflecting on the nature of family, of the love and pain between relations, the things that we carry while our family is alive, and after they pass.

All of us are flawed individuals, and no one suffers more for our flaws than those we are related to. We can forgive our spouses their faults more easily than our fathers and mothers, because we have chosen our spouses, and agreed in the bargain to live with their baggage. We have balanced the love and value they bring into our lives against the pain. And, if the balance sheet comes up negative, separation is possible.

Our siblings and our parents and grandparents, however, are thrust upon us by fate.

How easy it becomes, then, to put emphasis on the pain these relationships cause, and forget the love! Resentment grows easily because we feel stuck to the people we are resenting. No matter how many miles or years separate us, we can never truly escape our families: they are too deeply imprinted on our hearts, minds and souls.

Funerals are important in part because of those hidden resentments, because they can be washed away. A family is an ocean of interconnected love and baggage, each relationship similar, built upon shared history, but special and unique. Each member carries his or her own grab bag of sadnesses, misunderstandings, misconceptions, vindictiveness, and pain. But what is shared, what can be shared, is the love.

Done right, the wonderful thing about the funeral is the opportunity to come together as community, in that love, in the face of the feelings of loss that love has caused, and celebrate that which binds us together. If we are lucky, if the family and the community allow themselves to be collectively pulled by the lodestone of love and not the anchor of hurt, we can leave the resentment behind, bury it like the body of the one who has passed, who we will miss forever for the good times and the positive things they have done, in spite of the fact that they were flawed, human, and had, on occasion or often, hurt us. We are not only allowed to mourn, but by doing so, but are saved.

— Alan Howard

County Councilwoman **Yvonne Conwell**
& Cleveland City Councilman **Kevin Conwell**

Salute the Glenville Community on the occasion of the
37th Glenville Community Festival

AUGUST 9, 2014

Merger Continued from page 1

respectively, as the airport Rapid and Windermere.]

The Library itself is all that remains of what was once a three-branch system, forced to shrink a few years ago in part because of financial challenges and population loss. East Cleveland once boasted nearly forty thousand people in its compact three square miles after its almost total demographic makeover driven in the early seventies by the twin engines of blockbusting and redlining.

The Library itself possesses many wonderful features, including a modern performing arts center, a beautiful youth section, and the underutilized Ichabod Flewellyn Collection of African American memorabilia. There is even a Russian

language collection to serve the hundreds of Russian immigrants concentrated in several apartment buildings partway up the hill that leads to East Cleveland swankiest eras, the Forest Hills and Rockefeller neighborhoods that blend into Cleveland Heights.

Notwithstanding these virtues, the Library itself has become emblematic of the dyspeptic politics that seem to infuse all aspect of East Cleveland public life. When library trustees, all of whom are appointed by the East Cleveland Board of Education, recommended a merger with the fine Cuyahoga County Library system, the school board torpedoed the proposed agreement. This

Continued on Page 5

BUSINESS BRIEFS

The Real Black Friday Movement will launch in Cleveland the weekend of August 15-17. The brainchild of LaRese Purnell, RBFM aims to spotlight black-owned businesses, more than 150 of which have registered to participate in this event. Purnell wants to encourage patronage of black-owned businesses and to reprise The Real Black Friday as an annual event similar to Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday. Co-sponsors include So Curly So Kinky So Straight and NuLife Fitness Camp. For more information, call 216.214.9710, email therealblackfriday@outlook.com, or visit therealblackfriday.com.

The Presidents Council Foundation is in the final stages of recruiting its 2014-15 class of Emerging Entrepreneurs. The program is designed for African American business owners who have been in business three to fifteen years and are ready to take the time to position their company for growth. Criteria for ideal candidates include annual revenues of at least \$50,000 and established in business between 3 - 15 years.

Interested parties should visit <http://www.thepresidentscouncil.org/eeapp.php> or contact Athena Nimmer, PCF Program Director, at 216-771-8702 X224 or Athena@thepresidentscouncil.com.

Merger Continued from page 4

led to a mass resignation of library trustees, ushering in an era of chaos that has seen nearly 20 or so trustees serve on the library board in the last three years. The chaos has spawned a torrent of litigation with employees suing trustees, the firing and rehiring of the library director, and even a legal row over the school board's claim that they were authorized to remove trustees. At one point nine trustees considered themselves authorized to hold one of the board's seven seats.

While these power struggles at the library have quieted, at least for the moment, the seemingly insatiable drive East Cleveland residents have to quarrel with one another is now manifest at the school board, where Patricia Blocho-

wiak sued fellow board members over repeated violations of the state's open meeting laws. All of this is occurring amid intermittent rumblings about recalling Mayor Gary Norton, now in his second term, and the city's struggles to emerge from what seems like congenital fiscal emergency.

None of these problems seemed to give even the slightest pause to the phalanx of ardent East Cleveland defenders who attended the two discussions about a possible merger. Not only were they quick to cite their ability, desire, and intent to remain independent, they often did so by pointing out Big Brother's shortcomings, especially Cleveland's out-of-control police force.

Of course the repeated references to the infamous

November 2012 chase involving over 100 Cleveland police officers that resulting in 137 bullets being fired by 13 officers at two unarmed citizens in a school parking lot, killing them both, was no surprise. But what did raise eyebrows were so many East Cleveland residents expressing admiration and affection for their safety forces. East Cleveland Councilman Nathaniel Martin boasted that response times for his city's EMS force were the best in the state. Others pointed out that East Cleveland police shootings of civilians are very rare, in contrast to the record of the Cleveland police.

Clearly, roguish behavior by the Cleveland Police is a huge impediment to any favorable merger discussion.

Other reasons cited in op-

position to a merger included the troubled state of adjacent Cleveland neighborhoods, primarily Glenville and Collinwood, the problems of abandoned housing, crime and a sense that Cleveland was in as bad if not worse shape than East Cleveland, and with less responsiveness by government officials.

The Cleveland councilmen who attended either session, including Council President Kevin Kelley, Mike Polensek of Collinwood and Zack Reed of Mt. Pleasant, were unanimous in saying that the majority of Cleveland City Council does not favor merger.

A few East Cleveland residents in attendance, notably former State Board of Education member Angela Thi Bennett, who runs a charter

school in Hough, and Sandra Morgan, who works at Kent State, expressed qualms about their city's present and future. Bennett asked what was the financial plan for East Cleveland, saying, "we cannot survive on the road we are on". Morgan said she cringed at the way City Council operated and at seeing "city leaders behaving in outrageous ways."

While there were a few in each session who favored the merger as a commonsense win-win for both cities, it was clear that this idea will go nowhere without a champion on each side of the cities' demarcation. And anyone who emerges to galvanize East Cleveland pro-merger forces will need tough skin.

'Cause it ain't business, sonny. It's personal.

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Obituary

Dr. Jefferson P. Rogers, 1917-2014

Pastor, Scholar, Civil Rights Activist spent years in Cleveland

DAYTONA BEACH, FL—Jefferson P. Rogers, born January 24, 1917 in Quincy, Florida, passed away on August 1, in Daytona Beach at the age of 97.

Rogers graduated from Florida A & M University in 1940 with a BA in history. The Rev. Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President of Morehouse College arranged a scholarship to Howard University for him to study for ministry. Dr. Mays also wrote a letter to his grandmother and sent for him so that he could persuade him to accept the scholarship. The young Mr. Rogers yielded and earned the M.A. degree in religion and philosophy from Howard in 1943, where one of his professors and mentors was Dr. Howard Thurman.

After graduating from Howard and serving as director of Christian education at Jones Tabernacle AME Church in Philadelphia, Rev. and Mrs. Rogers [née Mary Grace Harris] decided to continue their education at Yale University from 1945 to 1947. She received the MA degree in sociology, while he earned a third degree, this one in social ethics.

Rogers' keen interest in racial issues, theology, and social justice led him to Cleveland, where in 1947 he became Race Relations Secretary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, headquartered in Cleveland. The Rogers' lived on Parkside Road in Glenville, and remained close to many in the community even after they left for Washington DC in 1953, when he was called to pastor Plymouth Congregational Church. Rogers became well known there for his scholarly, intellectual and spiritual presence, and for his devotion to promoting integration, and his participation in the civil rights movement.

In 1957 he founded the Church of the Redeemer in September 1958, serving as its pastor until 1970, and where his eloquence led The Washington Post to call him as one of Washington's "gifted preachers" and the Washingtonian Magazine to recognize him in December 1969 as one of the city's "Golden Dozen", i.e., best preachers.

Rogers quietly became a member of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s brain trust, and served as head of the lo-

cal chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC]. His home often served as a center for strategy sessions with Dr. King, Rev. Andrew Young, Dr. Wyatt T. Walker, Jesse Jackson, and many other stalwarts of the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1970 Rogers became president and executive minister of the Black Ecumenical Commission in Boston. In 1972 he was called to Hollis Presbyterian Church in Hollis, New York, as that congregation's first African American pastor.

Around 1980, Rev. and Mrs. Rogers moved to Miami where both he and Mrs. Rogers joined the faculty of Florida Memorial University, and where he also directed the Center for Community Change. The Rogers worked together to foster educational, economic and social development projects in Miami. They also established the New Birth Corporation, Inc. in 1981, which eventually acquired, renovated and continues to preserve of Thurman's childhood home in Daytona Beach.

Local architect Robert P. Madison met Rogers as a freshman at Howard in 1940, the beginning of a friendship that lasted almost 75 years. He recalled Rogers' tenacity and commitment to filling "the social, cultural and educational void in our society" through his 20 year effort to preserve and restore "the childhood home of Howard Thurman as a national historic landmark and the construction of a conference center, office center and private school on the home site of Thurman in Daytona Beach FL. Dr. Howard Thurman, a giant theologian, scholar, world traveler and mystic was the person who Rev. Rogers loved most, respected most, and dedicated his life to honoring."

The Rogers eventually relocated to Daytona Beach where, in partnership with Stetson University in nearby Deland, FL, he established the Thurman Lecture Series, which ran from 1996 to 2011. The series featured outstanding scholars, authors, and civil rights stalwarts, including Professor Derrick Bell, Kwame Ture [fka Stokely Carmichael], Congress-



Howard Thurman House • National Historic Preservation Site

man John Lewis, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, author Taylor Branch, and many others.

A lifelong lover of music, Rev. Rogers served as a mentor and counselor to many, including tennis great Arthur Ashe and civil rights giant Stokely Carmichael.

Rogers is survived by three children, Anita Rogers Howard (Richard T. Andrews) of Cleveland Heights, OH, Qasim Abdul-Tawwab (Najwa) of Daytona Beach, and Weldon Rogers of Atlanta; a niece, Barbara Anders (James) of Miami; a nephew, Byron Jones of St. Petersburg, Florida; eight grandchildren; and thirteen great grandchildren. Mary Grace Rogers, his wife of more than 70 years, predeceased him in April 2012.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Everyone is invited to the 7th annual **Iri-Ji and Igbo Cultural Festival & Celebration** on **August 9** at the Ariel International Center, 1163 East 40 St. The Nigerian community's NNINO [Nzuko Ndi Igbo of Northeast Ohio] is sponsoring this event. Tickets are \$30 and include dinner, entertainment and dancing. For more info: Nnamdi Michael Obi, 216.583.9420 or ndy1000@yahoo.com or John Oka-Odu, 216.409.3374 or okaodu@hotmail.com.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, senior editor at The Atlantic, will make the case for reparations on **August 22 at noon** at the City Club of Cleveland. His appearance is part of the Center for Community Solutions' 72nd Annual Human Services Institute. Call 216.621.0082 for info/tickets.

License Plate of the Month



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