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**Could the AAGC Help Improve Cleveland Neighborhoods?** The AAACG is a garden and monument that represents the journey and history of African American slaves.

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# Jeremy Boone Finds Direction



By Katarina Partika

Before embarking on a journey to help young athletes with their mental health, Cleveland native and former football star Jeremy Boone had to face his own set of mental health concerns.

Looking back, Boone realizes the times that he was in transition were the times he needed the most help.

“I played college football myself. I had a brief stint in the CFL [Canadian Football League],” he said. “When I was done playing, I was lost. I didn’t really have a direction. I didn’t really know what I wanted to do. It took me a couple years to realize I was in a depression. And once I realized I was in a depression and I was not living up to my potential, I realized that my goal is to give back to my city, my community, people who look like me.”

Growing up on Cleveland’s

east side, Boone recalls grappling with mental health at a young age. His parents divorced his freshman year in high school, and he was sent to live with his grandfather in Shaker Heights. He did not adapt well to the change.

“It was a complete culture shock for me,” he said. “Growing up, [in] Cleveland Public Schools, I was going to school with everyone who looked just like me.” When he went to Shaker and saw the complete opposite. Boone recalls struggling to apply himself when he first arrived. He didn’t engage with teachers and was receiving multiple truancy calls, ultimately resulting in his ineligibility for his sophomore year football season. “My mom and dad were recently separated... My grandfather, I was living with [my grandfather], but he just recently had open heart surgery. So, it was just a lot.”

The tides did not begin to shift until Boone’s junior year. “I began building relationships with the teachers, staying after school, extra help, and conferences. I started to realize I had an opportunity to go to Division I football.”



Producing his 2019 TV special, “Love & Hope in Cleveland.” (Photo credit: IMDb.com)

With more and more scholarship prospects, Boone set his sights on the University of Cincinnati. Because of his previous academic performance, however, Boone did not pass the NCAA Clearinghouse. “Knowing that the dreams that you have don’t always come true, it was very humbling for

me,” he said.

Looking back, Boone now realizes that he was slipping into a depression. He felt lost and hopeless until he got a call from the coach at College of the Canyons in California asking him to join the team. Although the lack

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# Protect the Kids in Your House from Guns



By Sheila Ferguson



and loaded guns, according to the AAP.

**A Friend’s Story**

Years ago, co-worker and friend Mimi Shearer shared an eerie story about the guns her parents kept at home. They made no secret about the guns or where they were stashed. They were told never to bother them because they were kept handy for protection in case of a break-in. However, Mimi and her two siblings could not resist playing with the guns whenever their parents went out for the evening.

Mimi recalls their fun, pointing the guns at one another, rolling over furniture, and pretending to engage in make-believe shootouts. With tears in her eyes, she said, “This was our chance to run wild brandishing weapons, playing pretend to shoot, bang-bang! My parents would have been horrified if one of us had been killed or maimed for life.”

Mimi’s story is a common one that fortunately ended without



anyone being harmed. Public health researchers, however, stress that death or severe injury is highly likely when kids find guns in the home.

Shearer’s parents missed the realities that:

- It is natural for children to ramble in drawers and closets to discover what hidden treasures can be found in the home;
- When children know that there

is an unlocked gun in the home their curiosity will drive them to locate it

- A child’s feelings or secrecy in possessing a gun can feel delightful and empowering; and
- They will wait for unsupervised moments to play with the gun, and show it to other children and pull the trigger.

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# Jeremy Boone: Finds Direction

From page 1

of scholarship money resulted in some financial turmoil, Boone says that a two-year stint at the junior college was one of the best times of his life. His teammates were just as broke as he was. Their drive and passion for the game made their bond stronger.

"I had days that I didn't eat. But the camaraderie that we built with our friendships was because we were all striving to get to the same level," he said. "We all wanted to play professional football. We all had that common goal with one another." It was the camaraderie that held him together.

Following junior college, Boone decided to stay on the West Coast and play for Portland State University where he received his bachelor's degree in sociology. After graduation, he joined the BC Lions practice squad, a Canadian professional football team in British Columbia. His time there was short-lived, as he was cut from the team at only 24. He thought his life was over.

His mindset began to affect all areas of his life. "Some of the things I was doing, like I can't even imagine myself doing now. I was getting into it with family members. My brothers. Angry with them. Just very angry. But



not realizing that it's [the internal] I have to deal with."

Boone was also going through a divorce. His behavior

led to "seven years of lost time" including a felony conviction in 2016 for fleeing the scene of a car accident. In hindsight, Boone saw

a pattern. The transition periods in his life, the times without football, were when he lacked direction. He reached out for help and began therapy.

Self-reflection, though difficult, was key. "Sometimes you don't want to look at that because it could be an ugly sight," he said. Boone believes that if he had had someone to talk to sooner it would have saved him years of heartache. "When you have so many thoughts built up and not addressing them, sometimes that outpour can affect everyone around you."

Boone, a social worker with the Department of Children and Family Services of Cuyahoga County, will soon earn his Master of Social Work from Case Western Reserve University. Once completed, his goal is to work with athletes experiencing a transition in their lives or careers. He wants to save other athletes from traveling a road similar to the one he endured.

"If I had someone [to talk to] when I got done playing football, that transition, I think I would have avoided those seven years of lost time," he said. "But you know, it still made me the man that I am, so I'm happy about that."

# Protect Kids in Your House from Guns

From page 1

## Safety Tips

Here are some of the life-saving safety tips for parents who own guns. Always:

- Do not underestimate the likelihood that your child could find your gun.
- Store your gun in a locked case.
- Store guns and ammunition separately.
- Never keep a gun loaded.
- Never leave guns visible and within reach of children and teens.
- Use a gun lock.
- Ask friends and family if they own firearms, and how they are stored before allowing your child to visit or spend the night in their homes.

Finally, arm yourself with

critical knowledge about guns when you buy one. To build knowledge, consider the following:

- Learn about safe gun handling through participation in a gun education concealed carry course provided by a state-certified trainer.
- Carry insurance coverage because injuring someone can be costly.
- Maintain regular practice of safe gun handling and marksmanship.

## Closing Notes

Finally, parents who own guns must be aware that keeping loaded and unlocked guns in the home leads to child injury and death. Without proper knowledge, parents can unknowingly cause their child's death or injury or a

sibling murder of other siblings or neighborhood playmates. Unsafe gun storage is also a gateway to the Department of Children and Family Services opening a case of child abuse and neglect and possible parental incarceration when the State of Ohio picks up cases. It can also mean being sued by family, friends, and neighbors for damages, injuries, and negligent homicide.

**Note:** Ohio does not have any "safe storage" laws that specifically require firearms to be kept under lock and key when not in use. However, leaving firearms where children can access them could be an offense under a number of criminal statutes. So please, let personal responsibility, loving care and a commitment to safety guide your actions.

## References:

Hundreds of young children killed playing with guns, CDC reports - CBS News.

How to protect kids from guns in the home: Life Kit: NPR

What You Should Know About Ohio Firearm Owner Rights and Responsibilities (ohio-bar.org)

Dr. Sheila Ferguson is a regular contributor to The Cleveland Observer. At TCO she enjoys writing on personal development and well being. Co-authored works with Dr. Toni C. King on African American Women's mental health. Dr. Sheila Ferguson's works have been published by the Demeter Press, National Women's Studies Journal; The Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders; The Journal of Multicultural Social Work; The Journal of Women and Therapy, and National Women's Studies.



# Could AAGC Help Improve Cleveland Neighborhoods?



By Sarai Murdock

Cleveland is known for its iconic landmarks, including the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, The Cleveland Museum of Art, and The Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall. However, one hidden gem that often goes overlooked is the African American Cultural Garden (AACG).

The AACG is a garden and monument that represents the journey and history of African American slaves. The garden was dedicated in 1977 but never fully completed. The Association of African American Cultural Garden (AAACG) intends to finish this garden and maintain its beauty and history. It also plans to host more events that spread knowledge of African American history and



Credit: African American Cultural Garden on YouTube.

have places like Shaker Heights or South Euclid or Cleveland Heights even, and in those spaces, inner-city Cleveland is a place that is redlining the only good space for quote on quote the ‘poor people’ and that’s deemed because of how society has put us and placed us.”

Cleveland is one of the top cities in the US deemed most unsafe. Forty-year-old Chris Harris talked about his experience growing up as a young African American in Cleveland.



Credit: African American Cultural Garden on YouTube.

allow people to celebrate its culture. The question? Is this what Cleveland needs to both save our neighborhoods and bring more education and acceptance of diverse cultures?

The monument expresses aspects of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade through an interpretation of the dungeons and “Doorway of No Return” of the slave castles located on the West Coast of Africa. Moving more into the segment, people can reach what is named the “Corridor of No Return,” which are polished black walls representing the tension of slaves traveling in tight spaces not knowing where they are heading.

Cleveland is a place for diverse groups of members to find their place in the community. But what exactly goes into “diversity”? 18-year-old human rights activist Anaya Harvey talks a bit about how she sees diversity in Cleveland in an interview.

“I worked with the city architect here and when it came to understanding what diversity was we looked at the tax market and we looked at race and we looked at things like sexuality and in reality, Cleveland is a place that is predominately people of color because of things like redlining. So you have inner-city Cleveland, you

“I moved around a lot. Personally because of my mother and my father not getting along. Death threats between my family and stuff like that. Drug abuse, things like that.”

He also talked about the violence when he was young versus what it’s like now.

“People were trying to buy drugs or get drugs so they were robbing people that were selling it and if they didn’t get what they wanted they were killing them and stuff. But now it’s like it’s just senseless shooting and killing for no reason.”

Twenty-six -year-old Maya Shaw added to the discussion of violence when she talked about her experience at a 2020 protest for the death of George Floyd.

“That protest was very traumatizing. It was like they treated us literally like animals,” she says. “I even saw a person, a black man, literally right in front of me get shot with something.” She also described how police brought multiple school buses to arrest protesters, saying, “I haven’t been to a protest since then because that one really traumatized me.”

Maya Shaw’s grandmother, Ada Mae Wade, moved from Americus, Georgia to Cleveland during the great migration at the

young age of 20 years old. She was a grassroots organizer in Glenville/ Shaw in the 1970s and continued her work through the 80s.

“This cultural garden is very important to me in the sense that my grandmother felt very, very, very strongly about East Cleveland. She lived and died there, once she migrated there, and she got involved in politics to help black people get registered to vote in East Cleveland and she did everything that she could to really keep things going forward,” Shaw said.

When asked about the importance of having diverse spaces to learn about black culture and history this is what 40-year-old fashion designer/model Alicia Sanderson had to say.

“Because I think if they really see the talent and drive that people have I think it will make people come together as a collective, they’ll stop going against each other. It will be more teamwork which will create bigger dreams. People won’t be so competitive against each other. It will probably make them bond and work together. If people have something else to focus on just maybe it will help take some of the focus off the negativity in the streets.”

CSU student Naron Goggans also looks forward to what the AAACG is bringing to the black community in Cleveland.

“It will be someplace I can probably go to learn more about and see, and one day just look and calm my mind and just see what I’m fighting for. And I always think that I have much to do and much to learn and I won’t be here where I’m at without my ancestors.”

The AACG allows people to learn about their history interactively while also enjoying the beautiful scenery of nature. It can be found in the Rockefeller Park & Greenhouse located on MLK Jr Drive.

You can go to their website, <https://www.aaacg.org/meaning>, to learn more about what each section of the AAACG represents.

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## God Patiently Teaches with History



SCAN TO LISTEN  
by Larry Frazier



The act of waiting is not something we do very well. Scientists have said that impatience speeds up the aging process in our bodies. God, however, patiently does infinitely more for us than we can do for ourselves, and He teaches us with our history.

People in past generations had nowhere near the conveniences that we have today. There are some things that we can have instantly with no waiting required. Technology allows us to communicate around the world with the push of buttons. Travel by air is supersonic and speedy travel on the ground uses horsepower on wheels rather than horsepower on four animals' legs. Yet, with all these advancements, we still allow stress and impatience to rob us of health and peace.

Concerning human troubles, King Solomon says, "There is nothing new under the sun and all things are wearisome" (Ecclesiastes 1:8-10). Solomon's words are worth taking to heart because God gave him wisdom that exceeded all the people of his time (1 Kings 4: 29-34). Indeed there is nothing new under the sun. There are examples of human behavior from ancient times that are still going on today. People don't trust God all the way—that started with Adam and Eve.

Family members become jealous of each other and react violently even to the point of death—the children of Adam and Eve. Sexual immorality permeates society—Sodom and Gomorrah. People break promises made to God and man—Ananias and Sapphira.

Human behavior hasn't changed over the centuries. In cases where we fully understand God's directions for us, we allow anger to take us off course. Consider Moses, God's appointed leader of the people. In anger and frustration at the people's grumblings, Moses disobeyed God's command to speak to the Rock that would provide water. Instead, Moses struck the Rock (a presence of Jesus Christ) and incurred God's anger.

In our impatient world today we are also guilty of taking matters into our own hands rather than waiting for God. Sometimes people become angry and disappointed at

the actions of others and if we are not careful, we can do great harm, road rage for instance. Patience is one of God's gifts to His people through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). If there is a need for an offense to be corrected then trust the Lord for guidance. God's teaching comes in Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."

In the Bible, the life of Jonah is a striking example of what the human spirit will do. Jonah was given a clear mission from God. He was told to go and preach a message of salvation to the people of Nineveh. Thinking that they were not worthy of God's blessing, Jonah attempted to flee from his assignment and God. Of course, God tracked Jonah down and sent him through some trials for correction before commissioning him a second time to go to Nineveh. Jonah went, fulfilled his mission and God's will was done for the people. Jonah, however, remained a reluctant servant. God's patience with mankind is seen so prominently in the life of Jonah. We are so thankful that God is patient with us as well. The Scriptures tell us that if God held our unrepented sins against us, we would perish (Psalm 130:3). Every Christian needs to be reminded, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Let us remember, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

Samson, the strong man in the Bible, was a slave to his passions. Samson is not alone in that, forever since the original sin corrupted our human nature the words of Galatians 5:17 ring true, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh." As in the case of Samson, sometimes a person has reached rock bottom before repentance can do its work. King Solomon says, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning" (Ecclesiastes 7:8). God heard Samson's prayer for forgiveness and granted him one last act of service against the enemies of the Kingdom.

We have a God who is merciful, forgiving, and faithful. He keeps His promises made and carried out through His son Jesus Christ Our Savior. God has everything at His disposal to



Hourglass and open bible symbolizing the end times according to the Holy Bible. Time is running out.

patiently save, help, and teach us. The Apostle Paul brings a word from God, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement

they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Paul further says in Romans 5:5, "And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

## Plan for Good Health



**Protect your health and the people you love.**

- Vaccines are safe, save millions of lives, and are the best defense against many infectious diseases.
- If you are 65+ or have a compromised immune system, you may be more vulnerable.

Flu

COVID-19

For more information on how **Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging Public Health** can help you plan for good health, scan this QR code.



For additional information about our services, contact WRAAA's **Ageing & Disability Resource Center** at 216.621.0303

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# Retire Rich: An Easy IRA Guide



By Ray'Chel Wilson

Discover the straightforward path to a prosperous retirement with Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). This guide builds on our previous discussion, simplifying the process of using IRAs for wealth accumulation.

## Understanding IRAs in Wealth Building

1. **Tax Benefits:** Traditional IRAs offer tax-deferred growth, and Roth IRAs provide tax-free growth, maximizing your savings.
2. **Compound Interest:** The power of compound interest in IRAs means your savings multiply significantly over time.
3. **Investment Flexibility:** IRAs allow diverse investment options from stocks to ETFs, fitting various financial strategies.

## Starting Your IRA Journey

1. **Select a Type:** Choose between a Traditional or Roth IRA. In our last article, "Future-Proofing: A Beginner's Guide to IRAs", we explored the nuances of these

options. Your choice depends on your current tax situation and retirement plans.

2. **Open an Account:** Select a financial institution or robo-advisor that offers low fees and aligns with your investment style.
3. **Contribute Regularly:** Set up automatic contributions to ensure consistent growth and take full advantage of compound interest. Use auto-investment features for hassle-free contributions and asset purchasing.
4. **Monitoring and Adjustments:** Regularly review your IRA to ensure it remains aligned with your retirement goals and risk tolerance.

## Response :

Automating IRA contributions streamlines the wealth-building process, making retirement

planning more user-friendly.

**Outcome:** The adoption of automated IRA contributions has led to consistent savings habits and improved financial readiness for retirement among individuals. Evidence: Studies indicate that those who use automated saving strategies enjoy higher retirement savings and better financial stability.

**Insights:** A knowledge gap about the benefits of IRAs remains, underscoring the need for greater financial education.

"Retire Rich: Easy IRA Guide" simplifies IRA management, illustrating that a secure and wealthy retirement is within reach with the correct approach. Automation and wise investment choices empower individuals to effectively build their retirement savings.

Further details on IRAs and

retirement planning can be found at <https://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans>.

Ray'Chel Wilson, CFEI®, is a best-selling & internationally recognized author and CEO from Toledo, specializing in financial education and investment management. Her mission is to bridge wealth gaps with informed financial decisions. Why? To build wealth for our last names. For more information: [info@rtbinvestments.org](mailto:info@rtbinvestments.org).



# Ohio Retirement Credit: A Hidden Gem for Retirees



By Ray'Chel Wilson

Uncover the Ohio Retirement Credit, a lesser-known yet valuable tax benefit for retirees in Ohio. This credit offers a welcome financial relief, making retirement in the Buckeye State more financially comfortable.

## The Tax-Saving Secret of Ohio Retirement Credit

Ohio's Retirement Credit is a unique tax advantage for retirees in the state, aimed at reducing the tax burden for those enjoying their golden years. It reflects Ohio's commitment to supporting its senior residents and making retirement more affordable.

## Qualifying for the Credit

Eligibility for this credit requires meeting specific criteria:

- **Income Threshold:** Your modified adjusted gross income, less exemptions, should be under \$100,000.
- **Source of Income:** The income

must be from a pension, profit-sharing, or retirement plan (e.g., traditional IRAs or 401(k) plans).

- **Ohio Residency:** This income must be included in your Ohio-adjusted gross income.
- **Purpose of Income:** The income is received due to retirement.
- **First-Time Claim:** You haven't previously taken the Ohio lump sum retirement credit.
- **Bonus Tax Tip:** Social Security benefits and uniformed services retirement income deducted on the Ohio Schedule of Adjustments do not qualify for this credit. The maximum credit per return is \$200.

Consult Table 2 on page 29 of the Ohio tax guidelines for a tailored understanding of your potential tax savings. This table

helps you calculate your credit based on your eligible retirement income.

[https://tax.ohio.gov/static/forms/ohio\\_individual/individual/2022/it1040-sd100-instruction-booklet.pdf](https://tax.ohio.gov/static/forms/ohio_individual/individual/2022/it1040-sd100-instruction-booklet.pdf)

## A Boost for Your Retirement Finances

The Ohio Retirement Credit is more than a tax break; it's a financial boost for retirees, ensuring that more of your hard-earned money stays in your pocket. When planning your retirement in Ohio, incorporate this credit into your financial strategy to maximize your post-work years.

The Ohio Retirement Credit is an often-overlooked advantage in retirement planning for Ohio residents. Keep an eye out for more tips and insights on enhancing

your retirement experience in Ohio. Your retirement years are set to become even more rewarding!

Consult with a qualified tax professional to confirm eligibility and correct application of the Ohio Retirement Credit. Tax laws and regulations can change, so professional advice is key to personalized guidance.

Ray'Chel Wilson, CFEI®, is a best-selling & internationally recognized author and CEO from Toledo, specializing in financial education and investment management. Her mission is to bridge wealth gaps with informed financial decisions. Why? To build wealth for our last names. Learn more at [Foro](https://www.foro.com).

For more on the Ohio Retirement Credit and retirement planning, visit [<https://tax.ohio.gov>] or contact your local tax agency. Residents of other states can consult their local department's tax agency for similar benefits. For more information or individual financial education, contact Ray'Chel Wilson at [info@rtbinvestments.org](mailto:info@rtbinvestments.org). Learn more about personal finance and investment strategies at [ForOurLastNames.io](https://www.forourlastnames.io).



## February: Heart Health Month



By Sharon Lewis

Imagine the heart as a tireless conductor, orchestrating the ballet of life within our bodies. It is the pulsating engine that fuels our every step, yet its silent struggles often go unnoticed. If you are trying to make broad sweeping changes to your lifestyle without a real plan, you will fail. One way to make an impact on your overall health is to take care of your heart's health.

A recent Cleveland Clinic survey revealed that most Americans know very little about their heart health. That attitude can be deadly. Heart attacks cause more deaths in the U.S. every year than all forms of cancer combined. Yet coronary artery disease—the disease that causes heart attacks—is largely preventable.

### The World Health Organization reports:



- Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death globally.
- An estimated 17.9 million people died from CVDs in 2019, representing 32% of all global deaths.
- Over 75% of CVD deaths take place in low- and middle-income countries.
- Out of the 17 million premature deaths (under the age of 70) due

to noncommunicable diseases in 2019, 38% were caused by CVDs.

The risk factors for heart disease include family history, gender at birth, race, weight, being sedentary, age, smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. There are also pre-existing conditions that increase the risks of cardiovascular disease which include metabolic syndrome, chronic kidney disease, chronic inflammatory conditions (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, HIV/AIDS), history of preeclampsia, or early menopause (Understand Your Risks to Prevent a Heart Attack | American Heart Association).



There are things that you can do to support your heart health. According to Dr. Bill McEvoy, MD from Johns Hopkins, “Diabetes is the strongest risk factor for heart disease.” High glucose (blood sugar) is a key component in the biology that causes hardening of the arteries or atherosclerosis, which is the main driver of heart attack and stroke. In the cardiology clinic, diabetes is referred to as the number one “silent killer” – even more so than high blood pressure. Half of all heart attacks occur in people who do not have any symptoms or warnings (Heart Smart: A guide to heart care at every age | Johns Hopkins Medicine).

Along with knowing your blood sugar levels, you should also know your body mass index (BMI) which determines if you are in a healthy range for weight or if you are considered overweight or obese),

### KEY NUMBERS TO KNOW FOR YOUR HEART HEALTH

Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women, making it vital for all women to understand their personal risk factors. Knowing your risk starts with knowing four important numbers.

 <b>TOTAL CHOLESTEROL</b>	<p><b>What is it?</b> It's a soft, fat-like substance found in the blood and in all the body's cells.</p> <p><b>How does it affect your health?</b> When cholesterol builds in the inner walls of your arteries over time, it hardens and turns into plaque. High cholesterol contributes to a higher risk of cardiovascular diseases, such as atherosclerosis and stroke. High cholesterol usually has no symptoms.</p> <p><b>What should you do?</b> Get your cholesterol checked with a simple blood test through a finger prick.</p> <p><b>What's a healthy number?</b> Discuss with your doctor what healthy numbers are for you.</p>
 <b>BLOOD PRESSURE</b>	<p><b>What is it?</b> It's the force of blood against the arteries when the heart beats and rests.</p> <p><b>How does it affect your health?</b> High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a condition that makes the heart work harder than normal. High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. If high blood pressure is left untreated, it can scar and damage your arteries, which can greatly increase your risk of heart attack, heart failure and stroke.</p> <p><b>What should you do?</b> Check your blood pressure regularly.</p> <p><b>What's a healthy number?</b> Blood pressure numbers of less than 120/80 mm Hg are considered within the normal range.</p>

blood pressure, and the number of steps you take daily.

The research is in, and the healthiest diet is the Mediterranean diet. According to the Mayo Clinic, “The Mediterranean diet is a healthy eating plan. It is focused on plants and includes the traditional flavors and cooking methods of the Mediterranean region.” Mediterranean diet for heart health – Mayo Clinic. The foods that are favored include:

#### More Fruits and Vegetables

- Fresh, frozen, or canned (watch for added sodium)
- Whole fruit rather than juice
- Eat the Rainbow – Consume as many assorted colors of fruits and vegetables as possible daily to consume the greatest variety of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

#### Healthy Oils

- Olive oil (rather than butter), avocados, nuts, and seeds.

#### Whole Grains

- Brown Rice, oatmeal, barley, and whole wheat.

#### Low-fat Dairy

- Choose skim or 1% milk. Remember to check the labels for added sugar.

#### Lean Meat

- Include fish (ideally twice per week), lean meat or poultry, beans, and legumes, and do not add trans fats or saturated fats when preparing.

#### Avoid Processed Foods

- For example, choose whole wheat bread over white bread and brown rice over white rice.
- Avoid packaged goods, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, added sugars, and sodium.

#### Less Sugar

- Watch for added sugar in your food. Read the labels and look for words ending in “ose” as well as cane sugar, corn sweetener, or raw sugar.

#### Spices Instead of Salt

- Again, read the food labels and watch for hidden sodium. Use herbs and spices to add flavor to your food.

#### The American Heart Association recommends that you “Eat by the Numbers” meaning:

- You should know how many calories you need per day to maintain or lose weight based on gender, activity level, and overall health.
- Keep your consumption of saturated fats to no more than 5-6% of your total calories. That equals 13 grams of fat to the typical 2,000-calorie diet.
- Keep your sodium consumption below 2,400 mg per day if you need to lower your blood pressure. However, optimal consumption is below 1,500 mg per day. Lastly, drink in moderation, if at all. That means one drink a day for women and two drinks per day for men. AHA My Life Check Brochure (heart.org)

If you have not already given up on them completely, try adopting a new healthy eating plan, making those changes one at a time now that you have some concrete information to work with. February is Heart Health Awareness Month.

## 2nd Annual Black Health Expo

### Thursday February 15, 2024

*“Our outcomes are important, and our history matters”*

**TIME: 10:00AM-1:00PM**

Kiwans Lodge:  
27285 Highland Rd, Richmond Heights, OH 44143

Guest Speaker:

Dr. Carolyn Still

Associate Professor,  
Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University

Pre-Registration is required, Please Contact Zakiya at (216) 978-5050

Join us for Free:  
Light Refreshments  
Nutrition Demonstration  
Resource Fair  
Health Screenings  
Black History Exhibit





DEPARTMENT OF POPULATION AND QUANTITATIVE HEALTH SCIENCES



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ON AGING

## Reach Your Health Goals With Integrative Medical Care



By Sheila Ferguson

### Wellness Today

Today's medical consumers are savvier about what good health and healthcare should look like. They are choosing integrative health care over conventional medical care. Consumers want care that combines complementary, holistic, natural, and preventive medicine.

The positive motivation for change comes from feelings of being:

- Misunderstood or unheard by one's physician
- Prescribed medicines that did not relieve or cure pain and illness
- Sicker due to the toxic side effects of some medications
- Unempowered guinea pigs who accept whatever care is given and
- Discounted and voiceless to the point of experiencing discrimination based on age, race, color, or economic status

Research indicates that choosing Integrative Health Care improves your health. According to the CDC, 30% of Americans use some form of integrative medicine that includes holistic, preventive, alternative, and complementary health care. The Common Health and Wellness Vocabulary defines them as follows:

**Holistic Health Care & Wellness:** treating the whole person, body, mind, and social self.

**Preventive health care:** aims to prevent diseases or injuries rather than curing them or treating their symptoms. It includes regular exercise and a balanced diet.

**Integrative Medicine:** A healing approach that considers the whole person and their lifestyle needs. Integrative medicine combines conventional and alternative therapies to support health."

**Complementary medicine:** includes massage, meditation, biofeedback, tai chi, reiki, music therapy, guided imagery, and dietary supplements. Complementary medicine is used along with traditional Western Medicine.

Integrative medicine links to the CDC's Healthy People 2020 health promotion focus. It aims towards

1. "Attaining high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and

- premature death;
2. Achieving health equity, eliminating disparities, and improving the health of all groups;
3. Creating social and physical environments that promote good health for all; and
4. Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy lifestyle behaviors across the life span."

### Three Greater Cleveland Community members discuss their turn to Integrative Health Care:

In her reach to better health, Lucilla Garza said, "I wanted to

now fit enough to have his double knee replacement. "It's given me enough willpower to keep moving forward," he says.

Porter, Garza, and DeWilde know they are central to their medical care and outcomes. Their comments also align with the findings of the Mayo Clinic Guide to Integrative Health Care (2023). This large body of research on alternative approaches to patient care suggests that it is a valid option for improving chronic pain, fatigue, depression, anxiety, and overall wellness.

### Take the Plunge

Most of us get annual physicals.

your motivational springboard.

Northeast Ohio's two best integrative healthcare resources include:

- Cleveland Clinic's Center for Integrative and Lifestyle Medicine, 216-448-4325. Programming addresses patients' physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Services include education, practices, and evidence-based therapies, including acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, and holistic psychotherapy for complex conditions.
- University Hospitals Connor Whole Health 216-260-9164. Offers integrative medicine services that promote attaining optimal health. Essential services include Mindfulness and Meditation, Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Integrative Medicine Consultation, Integrative Oncology, Massage Therapy, Music Therapy, and Research.

### Also, check out these new healthcare books and audibles:

- Mayo Clinic Guide to Integrative Medicine, by Brent A. Bauer, M.D.
- The Dr. Sebi Self-Healing Bible: [13 in 1] The Most Updated Herbalist's Guide to Dr. Sebi Plant-Based Alkaline Diet and Non-Toxic Lifestyle to Restore the Body to Optimal Health and Wellness Paperback – December 7, 2022, by Zachary Morris
- Biofield through Integrative Medicine and Health: Guide to Healing the Human Biofield through Integrative Medicine and Health by Erin Hanson – Audiobook – Audible.com

Cole Integrative Medicine is here to stay. It is time to take a more active and creative role in your health care!

### References

- Healthy People – Healthy People 2020 (cdc.gov)
- 21 Healthy Habits For Your Physical And Mental Health (nafco.org)
- Cleveland Clinic Center For Integrative Medicine in Lyndhurst, OH (webmd.com)
- Our Team | UH Connor Whole Health | University Hospitals | Cleveland, OH | University Hospitals (uhhospitals.org) Erica Steele DNP, ND How to Add Holistic Healthcare into Your Healing | Psychology Today



Key Elements of the Whole Health System

Credit: UW Department of Family Medicine and Community Health (UW DFMCH)

be more of a participant in my Cancer Care. It was frustrating to be told that chemotherapy was all that I needed. Still, I wanted a doable exercise plan, palatable nutrition, a stress management plan, and contact with others walking the same path," Lucilla said. "Integrative Health Programming let me achieve my goals. Now, I am recovering and gaining strength!"

Marilyn Porter said, "It is all about how your doctor makes you feel. "I battled with my Doc in refusing to take a Statin for high cholesterol. Then, I saw an ad for the hospital's new Integrative Medical Center. That was a game-changer. My Integrative medical specialist developed an exercise regimen and changed how I eat. Within six months, my levels were healthy and have remained stable."

Clinton DeWilde struggled with a lifetime of being overweight. Integrative medicine has given him the tools for weight loss and diabetes management. Clinton is

Meanwhile, the daily work of good eating, exercise, and stress management activities takes work to get results. The desire for ongoing better self-care and recovery from a severe illness means scaling up. Naturopathic Doctor Erica Steele (2023) recommends making a gradual transition by:

1. Telling your doctor about wanting to participate actively in your health care.
2. Stressing your interest in learning new skills in relaxation, stress management, fitness, and nutrition."
3. Jointly reviewing your medical records before making changes
4. Collaborative working between yourself and the health care professionals.
5. "Habit stack," by adding one new skill at a time.
6. An integration of holistic, complementary, and integrative approaches; and
7. Letting the programming be

# Top 10 Reasons Clevelanders, Celebrate Black History Month



SCAN TO LISTEN

Staff Writer

Black History Month has its roots in the early 20th century when historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History designated the second week of February as "Negro History Week" in 1926. They chose this week to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two key figures in African American history.

The aim was to highlight the contributions of African Americans and promote a more accurate and inclusive historical narrative. Over time, the celebration expanded, gaining widespread recognition and support. In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially recognized February as Black History Month, urging the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Since then, Black History Month has evolved into a time for education, reflection, and celebration of the achievements and impact of African Americans on the nation's history and culture. It serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for civil rights and equality while honoring the rich legacy of the African American community.

Top ten black history figures from Cleveland Ohio:



## 1. Jesse Owens:

Jesse Owens (1913-1980) was an African American track and field athlete who became a global sports icon for his remarkable achievements during the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Born on September 12, 1913, in Oakville, Alabama, Owens grew up in a racially segregated America.

At the Berlin Olympics, Owens defied Adolf Hitler's notion of Aryan racial superiority by winning four gold medals in track and field events: the 100 meters, 200 meters, long jump, and 4x100 meters relay.

His victories not only showcased his exceptional athletic prowess but also challenged racial stereotypes and discrimination.

Despite his triumphs, Owens returned to the United States to face racial segregation and limited opportunities. He struggled financially but later found success as a motivational speaker, sports ambassador, and goodwill ambassador for the U.S. State Department.

Jesse Owens' legacy extends beyond his athletic achievements. His courage and excellence served as a symbol of resilience against racism and injustice. Owens remains an inspiration, and his impact on breaking down racial barriers in sports and society is widely recognized.



## 2. Langston Hughes:

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) spent a significant part of his childhood in Cleveland, where he attended Central High School. A leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural and artistic movement that flourished in the 1920s in Harlem, New York. Born on February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes became a prolific and influential poet, essayist, playwright, and novelist.

Known for his innovative and soulful expressions of African American life, Hughes' poetry often celebrated the beauty, strength, and resilience of Black culture. His works explored themes of identity, race, and social justice, making him a central figure in the literary and artistic exploration of the African American experience.

Some of his most notable works include the poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," the play "Mulatto," and the novel "Not Without Laughter." Hughes' writing was deeply rooted in the rhythms of jazz and blues, capturing the essence of the Harlem Renaissance and influencing generations of writers.

In addition to his literary contributions, Langston Hughes was a social activist, using his work to address racial inequality and advocate for civil rights. His impact on American literature and culture



endures, and he is celebrated for his enduring legacy as a key figure in the artistic and intellectual awakening of African American consciousness during the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes passed away on May 22, 1967, but his work continues to inspire and resonate with readers worldwide.



## 3. Carl Stokes:

Carl Stokes (1927-1996) was an American politician and the first African American elected mayor of a major U.S. city. Born on June 21, 1927, in Cleveland, Ohio, Stokes made history with his election as the mayor of Cleveland in 1967.

Before entering politics, Stokes served in the U.S. Army and earned a law degree. He began his political career as a member of the Ohio state legislature. In 1965, he unsuccessfully ran for mayor but gained significant support and experience.

In 1967, Stokes ran for mayor again and achieved a historic victory, becoming the first African American mayor of a major city with a predominantly white population. His tenure as mayor was marked by efforts to improve race relations and address urban issues.

Stokes worked to reform the police department, increase minority representation in government, and improve living conditions in Cleveland's neighborhoods. He emphasized economic development and education initiatives during his two terms in office.

After leaving the mayor's office in 1971, Stokes continued to be involved in public service and served as the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Seychelles from 1994 to 1996.

Carl Stokes played a crucial role in breaking racial barriers in American politics, and his achievements paved the way for other African Americans in leadership positions. His legacy is remembered for promoting inclusivity and addressing social issues during a pivotal time in U.S. history. Carl Stokes passed away on April 3, 1996.



## 4. Dorothy Dandridge:

Dorothy Dandridge (1922-1965) was an American actress, singer, and dancer who broke barriers as one of the first African American women to achieve success in Hollywood. Born on November 9, 1922, in Cleveland, Ohio, Dandridge began her career in show business at an early age, performing in a family musical act called The Dandridge Sisters. Dandridge's breakthrough came with her role in the film "Carmen Jones" (1954), where she received critical acclaim and became the first African American woman nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. This achievement was a significant milestone in the history of African American representation in Hollywood.

Throughout her career, Dandridge faced racial discrimination and limited opportunities due to the prevailing

*Continued on page 9*



## Top 10 Reasons Clevelanders Celebrate Black History Month

From page 8

racial prejudices of the time. Despite these challenges, she continued to pursue acting and singing, leaving an indelible mark on the entertainment industry.

Dorothy Dandridge's performances showcased her talent, beauty, and charisma. She continued to make notable contributions to film and music, starring in productions like "Porgy and Bess" (1959) and "Island in the Sun" (1957).

Tragically, Dorothy Dandridge faced personal and financial struggles, and her career experienced a decline in the 1960s. She passed away on September 8, 1965, at the age of 42. Despite the challenges she faced, Dorothy Dandridge is remembered as a trailblazer who paved the way for future generations of African American actresses and left an enduring legacy in the entertainment industry.



### 5. Garrett Morgan:

Garrett Morgan (1877-1963) was an African American inventor and entrepreneur best known for his significant contributions to traffic safety and industrial safety devices. Born on March 4, 1877, in Paris, Kentucky, Morgan's inventions had a lasting impact on public safety.

One of Morgan's most notable inventions was the development of the three-position traffic signal, which he patented in 1923. This innovation included the addition of a warning signal, helping to improve road safety by providing clearer instructions to drivers. Morgan's traffic signal played a crucial role in shaping modern traffic management systems.

In addition to his work on traffic safety, Garrett Morgan invented the safety hood or gas mask in 1914. Originally created to protect workers from inhaling toxic fumes while working in mines, it later gained significance during emergencies such as fires. Morgan's safety hood was used by firefighters and became a vital tool for personal safety in hazardous environments.

Despite facing racial discrimination during his lifetime, Garrett Morgan's inventions had a lasting impact on public safety,

and he received recognition for his contributions. He also owned and operated a sewing machine repair business and a tailoring shop.

Garrett Morgan passed away on July 27, 1963. His legacy lives on as a pioneering African American inventor whose innovations continue to benefit society, particularly in the fields of traffic management and industrial safety



### 6. Louis Stokes:

Louis Stokes (1925-2015) was an influential American politician and the first African American congressman from the state of Ohio. Born on February 23, 1925, in Cleveland, Stokes served in the U.S. Army during World War II before pursuing a legal career.

Stokes earned his law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law and became a prominent civil rights attorney. In 1968, he made history by winning election to the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Ohio's 21st Congressional District. Stokes went on to serve 15 consecutive terms in Congress, making him one of the longest-serving African American members in history.

Throughout his congressional career, Stokes advocated for civil rights, education, and healthcare. He played a key role in investigating the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a member of the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

Louis Stokes was known for his dedication to public service and his commitment to addressing issues affecting African Americans and marginalized communities. He co-founded the Congressional Black Caucus in 1969, becoming its first chairman.

Stokes retired from Congress in 1999, leaving a lasting legacy as a trailblazer and advocate for equality. He passed away on August 18, 2015, but his impact on American politics and civil rights continues to be celebrated.



### 7. Halle Berry:

Halle Berry, an Academy Award-winning actress and producer, was born on August 14, 1966, in Cleveland, Ohio. Berry rose to fame for her breakthrough role in "Monster's Ball" (2001), where she made history as the first African American woman to win the Oscar for Best Actress.

Before her Oscar win, Berry gained recognition for her work in films such as "Boomerang" (1992), "X-Men" (2000), and "Swordfish" (2001). Her performances have consistently showcased her talent and versatility as an actress.

In addition to her success in film, Berry has been involved in television, starring in series like "Extant" (2014-2015) and "Bruised" (2021), where she made her directorial debut. As a producer, she has been actively involved in projects that champion diverse voices and narratives.

Beyond her career in entertainment, Halle Berry is an advocate for social justice causes and women's empowerment. She continues to be a trailblazer, breaking barriers for women of color in the film industry.

Halle Berry's impact on Hollywood and her commitment to diversity make her a respected figure in the entertainment world. With her enduring talent and dedication to meaningful storytelling, she remains a prominent and influential force in the film industry.



### 8. Charles Oakley:

Charles Oakley, a former professional basketball player renowned for his toughness and

defensive prowess, was born on December 18, 1963, in Cleveland, Ohio. Playing the power forward position, Oakley enjoyed a successful career in the National Basketball Association (NBA) known for his tenacity on the court.

Oakley's NBA career spanned from 1985 to 2004, during which he played for several teams, including the Chicago Bulls, New York Knicks, Toronto Raptors, Washington Wizards, and Houston Rockets. He achieved significant acclaim during his tenure with the New York Knicks from 1988 to 1998, earning the reputation as one of the league's premier enforcers and rebounders.

Known for his fierce competitiveness and physical style of play, Oakley became a fan favorite and a vital part of the Knicks' success in the 1990s. His contributions to the team's defensive efforts and leadership on the court left an enduring impact on the franchise.

Post-retirement, Oakley has remained involved in basketball-related activities, including coaching and various philanthropic initiatives. He continues to be recognized as a basketball icon, remembered for his indomitable spirit and contributions to the sport.

Charles Oakley's legacy extends beyond the basketball court, solidifying his place as a revered figure in NBA history. His resilience, dedication to the game, and commitment to excellence have left an indelible mark on the sport of basketball.



### 9. Ruby Dee:

Ruby Dee, an iconic American actress, poet, playwright, and civil rights activist, was born on October 27, 1922, in Cleveland, Ohio. Dee's remarkable career spanned seven decades, leaving an indelible mark on stage and screen.

Dee began her acting career in the 1940s, becoming known for her powerful performances in theater productions such as "A Raisin in the Sun" (1959) and "Purlie Victorious" (1961). Her on-screen work included notable films like "A Raisin in the Sun" (1961), "Do the

Continued on page 10

## Top 10 Reasons Clevelanders, Celebrate Black History Month

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Right Thing" (1989), and "American Gangster" (2007).

Throughout her career, Dee received critical acclaim and numerous awards, including an Emmy Award, a Grammy Award, and the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award. Alongside her husband, Ossie Davis, Dee formed a dynamic artistic and life partnership, often collaborating on projects that addressed social issues and promoted civil rights.

Dee was a passionate advocate for social justice, actively participating in the Civil Rights Movement alongside influential figures like Martin Luther King Jr. She used her platform to address issues of racial and gender inequality, becoming a respected voice for change.

In addition to her acting prowess, Ruby Dee was a skilled poet and playwright, contributing to the literary landscape with her thoughtful and impactful work.

Ruby Dee's legacy is characterized by her artistry, activism, and unwavering commitment to social justice. She passed away on June 11, 2014, but her contributions to American culture and the fight for equality continue to inspire generations.



### 10. Jim Brown:

Jim Brown, an American football legend, actor, and activist, was born on February 17, 1936, in St. Simons, Georgia. Brown's impact on the National Football League (NFL) and his contributions beyond the football field have solidified his status as one of the greatest athletes of all time.

Beginning his professional football career in 1957 with the Cleveland Browns, Jim Brown quickly emerged as a dominant force on the field. Renowned for his exceptional speed, power, and agility, he set numerous records and achieved remarkable success during his nine seasons in the NFL.

Brown's list of accomplishments includes eight

Pro Bowl selections, three MVP awards, and leading the league in rushing yards eight times. His extraordinary achievements prompted his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1971, despite his relatively short playing career.

Post-retirement from football, Brown seamlessly transitioned into acting, with notable roles in films such as "The Dirty Dozen" (1967) and "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (1988). Beyond entertainment, he became an influential advocate for civil rights and social justice.

Jim Brown's commitment to activism and community service became evident through initiatives such as the Amer-I-Can program, aimed at empowering individuals to lead successful lives. His impact extended far beyond the realms of sports and entertainment, making him a respected figure in the fight for equality.

As an enduring symbol of athletic excellence, Jim Brown's legacy encompasses his achievements on the football field, his contributions to the entertainment industry, and his unwavering dedication to social change. His influence as a multi-

faceted individual continues to resonate, shaping conversations about sports, activism, and cultural impact.

Approach Black History Month with respect, authenticity, and a commitment to fostering understanding and unity. It is an opportunity to recognize the achievements, struggles, and resilience of the African American community throughout history.

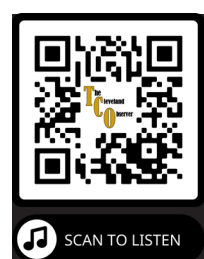
The Cleveland Observer

## Student Media News Desk

**The Cleveland Observer  
Student Journalist  
Paid Reporting**

- September 2023 thru May 2024
- Bi-weekly meeting
- Solutions Journalism Training
- Community and peer to peer interview
- Write blog and social media posts
- Create video content
- \$2000.00 stipend for content submission

## New Year, Fresh Start with help from Legal Aid



by Tonya Sams

Happy New Year! A new year is an opportunity for a fresh start and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland can help.

Legal Aid has been offering free civil legal services to those with low incomes (up to 200% of the federal poverty guideline) since 1905—the fifth oldest legal aid organization in the U.S. Legal Aid serves residents in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain counties. Legal Aid cannot assist with applications for benefits or criminal cases.

**Call Legal Aid if you need help with:**

- Housing: foreclosure; eviction; landlord/tenant issues; utilities; public housing
- Work: unemployment compensation; IRS tax issues; sealing criminal records; securing a valid ID or professional license

- Money: loans (school, payday, auto, debt); public benefits (food stamps, energy assistance, cash assistance, supplemental security income); bankruptcy
- Family: domestic violence; divorce; custody; immigration; education; estate planning
- Health: medical bill collection; access to medical records; Medicare and Medicaid; marketplace tax credits and penalties

Legal Aid was able to help Tiffany (name changed to protect privacy). Several years ago, Tiffany was arrested for domestic violence but was never charged or convicted. Unfortunately, the record of that arrest continued to appear on background checks, interfering with her ability to gain employment. Tiffany's Legal Aid attorney researched the situation, contacted the arresting law enforcement agency, and asked them to request that the Bureau of Criminal Investigation seal the records regarding Tiffany's arrest. Sometime later, Tiffany's Legal Aid attorney received confirmation from the arresting law enforcement agency. Tiffany's arrest record was

sealed as requested, giving her the fresh start she was seeking.

Legal Aid provides more detailed information on these topics on our website. Go to [laslev.org](http://laslev.org), click "Services & Resources", then "Legal Resources" and choose a topic.

Legal Aid attorneys provide one-on-one consultation at Brief Advice Clinics. These brief clinics are held in libraries, community centers, and other trusted sites. Some are based on a first come, first serve basis while some are by appointment only. For more information on our brief clinics, go to [laslev.org](http://laslev.org), click on the "Events" tab, then "Clinics".

Attorneys also represent clients at court and administrative hearings and go into the community to educate residents regarding their rights and the services that are available to prospective clients.

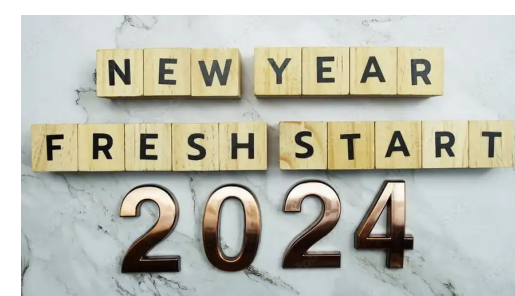
If you have quick questions regarding tenants' rights and rental housing, call the Tenant Info Line at 440-210-4533 or 216-861-5955. For quick questions regarding employment, unemployment, and student loans, call the Economic Justice Info Line at 440-210-4532

or 216-861-5899.

Help is also available by calling Legal Aid at 888-817-3777 during normal business hours or by applying online 24/7 at [laslev.org/contact/](http://laslev.org/contact/). When speaking with a Legal Aid intake specialist be sure to have income information and necessary documentation related to your legal issue on hand. Legal Aid can provide interpreters and translation if English is not your first language. Legal Aid also uses the Ohio Relay Service to support those with a communication limitation.

To request an outreach/education event or materials for your community group, email [outreach@laslev.org](mailto:outreach@laslev.org).

Tonya Sams is a Development & Communications Manager at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.



## The Legendary Karamu House Theatre



SCAN TO LISTEN



By Bob Ferguson

The Karamu House Theatre is the oldest African American performing arts theater in operation today in the United States. Karamu was established and opened its doors in 1915 as The Neighborhood Playhouse Settlement, located at 2239 E. 38th Street. The word (Kara-mu) in Swahili means “a place of joyful gathering,” where families can assemble to share their stories, feast, celebrate, and enjoy all in a festive atmosphere.

It was opened by founders Russell Jelliffe and Rowena Woodham. The couple met while studying to be social workers at Oberlin College, a fine arts institution in Ohio. After finishing at Oberlin, they spent a year in graduate school at the University of Chicago. Shortly afterward, the couple married and came to Cleveland with big ideas and established the East Side Settlement House that eventually became The Karamu House Theater.

It was essential to create a space like the Karamu House because during the mid-1850s until the early 1930s, vaudeville theater houses were very popular in downtown Cleveland. Vaudeville shows were minstrel entertainment which included white actors in blackface. The shows featured negative caricatures and repulsive images of Black people dancing and grinning like buffoons to 19th-century music.

One such venue opened its doors in March 1903, named The Colonial Theater located on Chester Avenue. At that time, vaudeville shows were popular in America with very scripted stereotypes by minstrels combined with burlesque shows that catered mainly to the



Photo courtesy of the Western Reserve Historical Society

upper class. The shows were generally divided into two parts and the productions normally began with silent “dumb darkie acts” and ended with a headliner performance featuring very colorfully burlesque models.

In 1930, the Conley Theater hosted its last show, “Mysteries of Love, and closed its doors. The building stayed empty until 1932 when it was torn down to make way for a parking lot.

At that time, Cleveland had no outlets or organizations that welcomed African Americans where they could develop or display their acting, musical, and dancing talents and skills.

Cleveland’s Karamu House Theater was one of the primary influences that encouraged America’s theaters to project more positive images of Black people. Rowena Jelliffe made a concerted effort to get Black children to audition and cast them for interracial stage plays. These plays featured both Black and white children, which eventually led to drama classes for Black adults. During the Harlem Renaissance, the Karamu House became the principal place for aspiring African-American artists, writers, and performers to have a chance to display their talents on stage. Within a short time, The Karamu House became nationally and internationally known for promoting multiracial theater and arts. In 1939,

a fire destroyed the old theater building on East 38th Street.

In 1945, Karamu broke ground for a 2-theater complex located at 2355 East 89th and Quincy Avenue. The new building provided more provisions for music, better dressing rooms, and several other updates for dance classes and visual arts. The financial contributions from philanthropist Leonard Hanna Jr. and the Rockefeller Foundation were incredibly beneficial for the future of the theater.

Many actors, actresses, poets, singers, and dancers who trained at Karamu have gone on to appear on Broadway, in Hollywood, and on concert hall stages all over the world. Talented people such as Langston Hughes, Ruby Dee, Ron O’Neal, Robert Guillaume, Imani Hakim, Bill Cobb, James Pickens Jr, Vanessa Bell Calloway,

and numerous others. Tony Award-winning South African, Zakes Mokae performed at The Karamu House during the 1960s before gaining international acclaim for his work on Broadway and in films. Another notable star is Cleveland’s own Peter Lawson Jones who began his acting career at The Karamu House. Jones has gone on to appear in several major television series and has also embraced the Hollywood silver screen in movies like “White Boy Rick,” “Alex Cross” featuring Tyler Perry, and most recently as Ruben, the estranged friend in the film “A Man Called Otto.” Today, Karamu House is well recognized for producing playwrights, producers, directors, film equipment operators, stagehands, costume designers, and numerous other artistic professionals who have gained access to every theatrical sphere imaginable.

At present, Karamu’s building on East 89th Street is undergoing a major restoration and renovation and is slated to reopen in late spring of 2024. Currently shows are being held downtown at Playhouse Square in the Allen Theater and will continue until renovations are complete.

The Karamu House has done incredible work for decades toward developing minority artists and bringing them together to make Cleveland, Ohio proud of its theater’s legacy.



The original 1930s Karamu House. Photo credit: Western Reserve Historical Society

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?

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**AIDS taskforce**  
OF GREATER CLEVELAND

# Changes to New Marijuana Law Being Debated in Ohio Legislature



By Gregory Moore

The full impact of Issue #2, passed last year by Ohio voters legalizing adult use of marijuana, has yet to be fully implemented. Ohio lawmakers continue to grapple with a series of modifications to the voter-approved statute. The Initiative to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol, commonly known as Issue #2, was passed on Nov. 7, 2023, with the overwhelming support of 57% of voters statewide. Since their return to session in early January, the Ohio Legislature has been debating making modifications to the new law along with the required regulatory guidelines for cannabis sales.

Many parts of the new law have already taken effect as of Dec. 7, 2023, and allow adult users to possess, grow, and cultivate cannabis for personal use. Adults over 21 years old in Ohio can now legally possess up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana and 15 grams of extracts, as well as cultivate up to 12 marijuana plants per household for individual use at home.

When the new law took effect, there were no designated dispensaries where Ohioans could legally purchase marijuana products for recreational use. Issue #2 gives the state an additional nine months to establish guidelines and regulations for cannabis industry dispensaries across the state. Governor Mike DeWine and Republican leaders are looking to quickly pass new provisions that would allow current medical marijuana dispensaries to become the initial sites for cannabis sales to discourage purchases in the still active illegal drug market.

Other more controversial areas where the Republican legislative leaders had sought changes include decreases in the level of potency of legal marijuana products sold under the new law. Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman, (R-Lima) has expressed interest in lowering the THC content potency caps which were set in Issue #2 at 35% for marijuana plants and 90% for extracts. Huffman initially sought increases in the sales tax rate from 10% to 15%, an over 50% increase in the voter-approved tax rate.

In the Ohio House, Speaker Jason Stephens, (R-Kitts Hill) has advocated for anticipated state

cannabis sales tax revenues being redirected away from social equity funds specifically called for in Issue #2. Instead, Republican leaders want to redirect social equity funds to general state funding with earmarks for law enforcement and jail construction.

The Coalition to Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol which led the Yes on Issue #2 Campaign has strongly opposed the proposed changes. Issue #2 spokesperson Mark Herron stated that the lower potency and higher prices of state-regulated cannabis products being proposed by legislators will only “entrench the illicit market and force Ohioans to continue to buy products in Michigan. This is not what the voters wanted.”

There are several important restrictions on the use of marijuana in public places under the new laws including:

- Smoking or vaping marijuana while operating a car, truck, boat, or any passenger vehicle remains illegal under the state's current Operating a Vehicle while Intoxicated (OVI) laws.
- Smoking marijuana in “public areas” is illegal and considered a misdemeanor, under the same provision as smoking a cigarette.
- Smoking marijuana in rented apartments and multi-unit housing would be prohibited under the rules of Ohio's current indoor tobacco smoking regulations.
- Landlords and property owners are granted the right to decide for themselves whether to accommodate marijuana use in outdoor public spaces adjacent to their property.
- Public and private employers can still set their own policies for the use of marijuana by their employees.
- Individual industry rules around drug testing and on-the-job use will remain in effect and will not be impacted by the new law.
- Employees who use marijuana

on the job can still face disciplinary action and can be denied employment under the newly passed law.

Many Ohio business industry leaders opposed the Issue #2 ballot measures & including the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Business Roundtable, and the Ohio Manufacturer Association. Since its passage, they have expressed concerns over the impact of a workforce with an increased number of employees using marijuana. Concerns included the potential for decreased work productivity, increased worker absenteeism, higher turnovers, and lost revenues from increasing enforcement and related legal costs. The new law's potential impact on the hiring process was

also a concern with industry leaders fearing new complications in the hiring process and retention of employees in an already tight labor market.

Many Democrats in the legislature have joined with advocates in opposing changes to Issue #2 beyond the required regulatory licensing guidelines. They have urged the legislature to refrain from making major substantive changes to the initiative language that was overwhelmingly approved by voters.

The proposed bill included provisions that would set up a process for the expungement of marijuana possession convictions that was not a part of Issue #2 but has been favored by Democrats and criminal justice reform advocates for many years. The language included creating a funding stream to cover court costs and legal fees related to expungement.

The Ohio Senate Bill 86 was overwhelmingly passed on a bi-partisan basis on Dec. 6, 2023, by a vote of 28-2. Lawmakers in the Ohio House and Senate are expected to pass the final version of SB 86 in the coming weeks.



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