

**2015 NABJ REGION II CONFERENCE
#NABJCCC**

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Speaker Bios

Khorri Atkinson

Khorri Atkinson is a Master's candidate at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and an aspiring congressional reporter. He recently completed his two-year term on NABJ's Board of Directors as student representative. The 2015 Fellow of POLITICO Journalism Institute is also contributing writer for NBC BLK and a digital intern at MSNBC.com. Khorri is the founding president of York College/CUNY Association of Black Journalists (YCABJ).

Fred Barrett

Producer at Socially Good TV/New Realm Media
Multimedia Graphic Designer for Akron Publishing Company
@newrealmmedia

The University of Memphis graduate and Kent State masters holder is a producer at Socially Good TV/New Realm Media and a multimedia graphic designer for the Akron Publishing Company. Among his work, he served as an adjunct instructor at Kent State for multimedia techniques and storytelling with video, photography and wordpress basics. Barrett also provides video coverage for the Cleveland Cavaliers and events in Northeast Ohio.

Angela Thi Bennett, Esq.

Angela Thi Bennett, Esq. is the Superintendent/Legal Counsel for OAK Leadership Institute. OAK Leadership Institute is a K-8 community school located in Cleveland's historic Hough neighborhood. OAK is the acronym for "Overcome Anything for Kids." At OAK, Ms. Bennett is accountable for the oversight and administration of all operations of the school, from curriculum and professional development, personnel, budgeting, capital improvement projects, program planning and implementation, as well as ensuring student growth and connecting families to resources. Ms. Bennett ensures that the school complies with all applicable local, state, federal and programmatic rules and regulations. For FY14, OAK received the Auditor of State Award for its commitment to fiscal responsibility. Under Ms. Bennett's leadership, OAK has received the Straight A Grant Award, Community Connectors Grant, and the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, totaling over \$1.6 million. Prior to joining OAK, Governor John Kasich appointed Ms. Bennett in February 2011 to the State Board of Education. During her tenure at the State, Ms. Bennett served as the Chairperson of the Committee on Urban Education whereby she spearheaded the HB 555 Initiative to submit to the General Assembly recommendations on how to improve persistently poor performing schools by examining both academic and non-academic barriers to achievement. Ms. Bennett was also the Chairperson of the Achievement Committee, which oversaw the academic standards and curriculum development for the state. She also was Chairperson of the Appointments Committee and a Member of the Executive Committee and the Technology Committee.

Ms. Bennett is a graduate of Shaw High School in East Cleveland, and received her BA, JD & MBA from Case Western Reserve University. She is a licensed attorney in Ohio and the Northern District of Ohio. Prior to her work in education, Ms. Bennett was an attorney practicing in the areas of corporate, real estate, commercial transactions, and education and community development. Ms. Bennett is a member of the Black Women's Political Action Committee and serves on the Board of the Northern Ohio Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (NOBIDA).

Ms. Bennett has three children, Britney, Brett, Jr., and Bryce.

Leon Bibb

Leon Bibb is the news anchor for the noon newscasts and the program, "Kaleidoscope," at WEWS-TV5, the ABC television station in Cleveland.

He is a veteran journalist and broadcaster who worked for 16 years at WKYC-TV3 in Cleveland before joining WEWS in 1995. He has worked in television stations in Columbus, Toledo, and Bowling Green, Ohio, during his long career. Leon actually began his career as a print journalist. Upon graduation from Bowling Green State University, Leon worked as a reporter for the Plain Dealer newspaper in Cleveland.

He covers stories throughout Ohio on a regular basis. He has also covered some national stories, including the Persian Gulf War, when he was imbedded with an Ohio-based Coast Guard unit. In 2011, Leon interviewed President Barack Obama in a one-on-one interview at the White House. Leon has interviewed President George H. W. Bush in the White House and interviewed Neil Armstrong ten years after Armstrong's historic walk on the moon.

In 1978, Leon Bibb interviewed James Earl Ray, convicted assassin Martin Luther King Junior in Ray's prison cell at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary in Tennessee. It is believed to be Ray's only interview with a local television news reporter. Nominated many times for local Emmy awards, Leon Bibb has received the Emmy six times for his news reports.

His continuing series of reports, "My Ohio With Leon Bibb," which airs several times a week on WEWS NewsChannel 5, has been received with much acclaim.

Leon has a passion for journalism. He is in the halls of fame of the following organizations:

Cleveland Association of Broadcasters
Sigma Delta Chi Journalism honorary
Cleveland Press Club
Ohio Association of Broadcasters
Bowling Green State University School of Journalism
Glenville High School

In 1996, Governor George Voinovich appointed Leon Bibb to the board of trustees of Bowling Green State University. Leon served nine years as a trustee, including one year as the chairman of the board.

In 2014, the Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation named Leon as its "Professional of the Year." He was awarded the honor before an audience of 700 people where more than \$150,000 was raised to benefit the organization's program of providing college scholarships to students in need.

Leon is also a veteran of the U.S. Army. He served a full tour of duty in the war in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his service. Over the years, he has been a popular speaker at U.S. military veterans events.

When he is not working in journalism, Leon works in the world of theater. He has starred in several local productions of "Save Time Next Year," "Love Letters," "War of the Worlds," "God's Trombone," and several other productions. In 2012, Leon completed work on the feature film, "Made in Cleveland," which was released in 2013. Leon is also author and performer in his own one-man production, "Burning Leaves," which is filled with Leon's poetry and storytelling. The productions have been acclaimed.

He is a fan of all types of music. He has worked as a narrator with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Akron Symphony Orchestra where he has narrated several works including "A Lincoln Portrait," "Peter and the Wolf," and "The Life of John Brown."

Leon Bibb has also worked onstage with many local jazz groups, chronicling the history of jazz and detailing the impact the music, often referred to as “America’s classical music,” has had on the world.

Leon Bibb is currently working on a novel involving themes of romance and jazz music.

He and his wife, Marguerite, are parents of two grown daughters.

He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha and Sigma Pi Phi fraternities.

Sandra Bishop

Sandra Bishop, a 20 year veteran of radio and television was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. A graduate of the University of Akron, she majored in Philosophy spending a transformational year studying in Italy. Sandra is an enthusiastic minister, speaker and trainer who has interviewed local and national figures about overcoming life’s challenge. Sandra is currently part of the ministerial team for Agape Renaissance Church, serves as secretary for Greater Cleveland Association of Black Journalists and is studying to be certified in her EAP field. She travels regularly.

Harry Boomer

Harry, who attended Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria, Va., has called Cleveland home since 1990. He is proud to live in the historic Hough neighborhood in Cleveland. Boomer has over 30 years of news experience, for a total approaching 45-years in broadcasting. He was honored in 2015 to be selected as a member of Silver Circle of National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, denoting at least 25 years in television. In 2014, Boomer was named as a HistoryMaker. His life's story is now a part of the National Archives, a permanent repository of American History.

Harry Boomer is a 2007 Broadcasters Hall of Fame Inductee.

Harry is currently an Anchor/Reporter at Cleveland 19/WOIO CBS and he also is the Executive Producer and Host of CLE 43 Focus a public affairs program covering community issues.

Boomer is a valued member of the WOIO CBS 19 Editorial Board. Harry Boomer has the distinction of being the longest, continuous on air anchor/reporter on both WOIO CBS 19 and CLE 43/WUAB. Harry is President of the Greater Cleveland Association of Black Journalists (GCABJ) for a third time.

He is also a former member of the Board of Directors of The First Tee Cleveland, a program that promotes nine core positive values for youth through the game of golf. His career began in Washington, D.C., where he was a club DJ, an on-air personality, talk show host and he served in various management positions, including two stints as news director, including one as news director for Radio One. Harry came to Ohio in 1988 to manage and program WBXT-AM in Canton. While covering assignments for WOIO/WUAB on a part-time basis in the early 1990s, Harry was heard regularly on WCPN-90.3 FM/Idea Stream, where he had been assistant news director. He was also a reporter, producer and major contributor to National Public Radio. Among other things, Harry debuted a statewide news magazine program titled "Infohio" for the radio station. Increased full-time duties at Cleveland 19 Action News notwithstanding, Harry’s familiar voice was heard on a freelance basis for public radio specials on WCPN. Boomer was a regular guest on the Feagler and Friends on Cleveland Public Television, IdeaStream WVIZ. He has served on the board of the Ohio Associated Press. He is former member of the Board of Directors of Connections, Health, Wellness. Boomer has also served on the board of The Ohio Center for Broadcasting. He is also a member of the Continuing Education Committee at Cleveland State University.

Harry has won awards from the Ohio Associated Press, Ohio Educational Telecommunications, Women In Communications, the Press Club of Cleveland and the National Association of Black Journalists. Harry is active in

the community, often serving as master of ceremonies at events throughout northeast Ohio. When he's not working (which isn't often), he enjoys talking politics and visiting friends and family around the country. Boomer is a proud father. He has two wonderful grandchildren. Harry is truly a Baby Boomer. His last name really is Boomer. He's the baby of a family of ten and he is a member of the Baby Boom Generation.

Terry Butler

Terry Butler is Vice President Emeritus of Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and currently serves that institution in a consulting capacity. In his vice presidential role, he provided strategic leadership and direction for multiple youth and community serving programs and brought more than \$40 million in grants and scholarship opportunities to the students of Tri-C. He is also a former student, teacher, coach, assistant principal and principal in the Cleveland Public Schools.

He is a graduate of Cleveland's historic John Adams High School and holds degrees from Cuyahoga Community College, Kent State and Cleveland State Universities and doctoral studies at The Ohio State University. For more than 35 years, he served in a variety of education-related teaching and leadership positions including multiple higher education administrative positions including Vice President for College Pathway Programs and Interim President of the Metropolitan Campus of Tri-C.

Terry serves on local, regional and national boards including Cleveland Early College, Promise Academy, Community Re-entry, Richmond Heights Planning and Zoning Commission, and, Greater Abyssinia Baptist Church. He chairs the education committee and serves on the executive committee of the Cleveland Branch of the NAACP. He is a lifetime member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity and a member of Phi Delta Kappa Education Fraternity, Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the National Action Network.

He is a father, grandfather, a Baptist Deacon and avid roller skater!

Nathaniel Cline

Sports Producer for Northeast Ohio Media Group
@nathanielcline

Nathaniel Cline is currently a sports producer covering primarily over 170 high schools for the Northeast Ohio Media Group. He also assists with coverage of collegiate and professional sports teams in the Cleveland area. His professional experience in communications started with BBC Radio in the mid 1990's. Cline's career continued as a reporter and editor with the Lakeway Publishers of Virginia newspapers in the Northern Neck of Virginia from 2007-2013.

Wayne Dawson

Wayne is co-anchor of Fox 8 News in the Morning, Cleveland's Number 1 morning show, seen weekdays from 430a to 10am. Before teaming up with the morning crew, Wayne served as co-anchor of the weekend editions of FOX 8 News – rated Number 1 for five consecutive years with Wayne behind the desk.

For two years prior to joining WJW in the late -'70s, Wayne was an anchor/reporter at WNIR Radio in Kent, Ohio. The 1979 graduate of Kent State University holds a bachelor of arts degree in journalism. An eleven time Emmy winner, Wayne is a member of the NAACP, the National Association of Black Journalists and the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity. He is also a member of the Broadcasters Hall of Fame. In 2014 Wayne was inducted into the NATAS Silver Circle and also received the Chuck Heaton Award for the Cleveland Press Club. He was also awarded the William Taylor Alumni award from the Journalism and Mass Communications School of Kent State University.

Wayne was also twice named one of the Jaycees "Outstanding Young Men of America." Beyond that, the Professional Women's Business Association selected Wayne as "Outstanding TV News Reporter" and Delta Sigma Theta named him "Man of the Year." Wayne Dawson is also an ordained minister.

Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge

Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge represents the Eleventh Congressional District of Ohio, a diverse district that encompasses 32 communities in Northeast Ohio from Cleveland to Akron. First elected in 2008, she fights for all of her constituents and maintains a steady focus on creating jobs, promoting health, investing in a quality education for all children and strengthening Social Security and Medicare.

A native of Shaker Heights, Congresswoman Fudge is the former mayor of Warrensville Heights and former finance director for the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office. She obtained her law degree from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University and is a graduate of The Ohio State University. She is a past national president of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. The Congresswoman currently serves on the Agriculture, and the Education and the Workforce Committees in the United States House of Representatives. Congresswoman Fudge's work ethic, problem solving approach, and ability to build collaborative relationships has earned her a reputation among her colleagues in Washington and at home as an insightful leader and knowledgeable legislator.

As a dedicated public servant, she begins each morning with a firm promise "to do the people's work." It is this simple philosophy that defines Congresswoman Fudge as a Member of substance and character who always keeps her promise.

William H. Gary, Sr.

William H. Gary, Sr., has been named executive vice president of Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®)'s Workforce and Economic Development Division (WEDD).

Gary brings more than three decades of private and public sector management experience to Tri-C. His background includes leadership roles in a variety of fields, including higher education, steel manufacturing, health care, information systems, telecommunications and aviation.

"William Gary offers unparalleled expertise when it comes to workforce and economic development issues," said Alex Johnson, president of Tri-C. "With his guidance, the College will continue building programs and training workers to grow the economy in Greater Cleveland."

Gary spent the past 14 years as vice president of workforce development at Northern Virginia Community College, where he led regional economic development initiatives and oversaw job training programs. In 2010, local officials there appointed him to a task force charged with finding ways to better attract and retain businesses in the community just outside Washington, D.C.

He is past president of the National Council on Workforce Education, an association of community colleges and workforce and education professionals affiliated with the American Association of Community Colleges.

Gary also has testified before Congressional Committees on emerging workforce issues.

Gary holds a master's degree in industrial relations from Rutgers University in New Jersey and a bachelor's degree from Morehouse College in Georgia.

He replaces Susan Muha, who retired in June after more than a decade at the helm of WEDD. Muha oversaw the College's workforce program from 1997 to 2004 and again from 2011 to 2014.

Kevin Heard

Kevin 'Chill' Heard is the Managing Editor of the Call and Post newspaper.

Kevin also serves as the Executive Director of The International Men of Excellence, a non profit organization that provides educational and cultural mentoring and leadership programs for male teens.

Kevin has appeared on Cleveland news stations WKYC, WEWS, FOX 8, WVIZ and WNPR to share his political and social viewpoint on local and national topics.

He served for several years as the “Hollywood Reporter” for the popular local TV show Urban Flix Live.

Kevin is the print vice president of the Greater Cleveland Association of Black Journalists. He is a member of the Press Club of Cleveland and is a founding member of the African American Film Critics Association based in Los Angeles. He is an associate board member of the United Black Fund. Kevin is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and has served as Assistant Editor its international publication, Kappa Journal. Kevin was inducted into John F. Kennedy high school’s Hall of Fame and is a member of the Los Angeles-based Organization of Black Screenwriters. He is currently involved in several film projects as a screenwriter.

In 1985 Kevin gained fame as Ohio's first national rap artist MC Chill and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame twice commissioned his paraphernalia for it’s archives.

Felecia Henderson

As assistant managing editor, Felecia Henderson leads a 20-member department of journalists who report entertainment and lifestyle stories for The Detroit News. The award-winning editor also serves on the newspaper’s senior management team that oversees newsroom policy and operations.

She joined The Detroit News in 1989 as a copy editor/page designer and worked her way up the editing ranks, with her first managerial position as editor of the weekly On Detroit section from 1993-1999.

In 1999, Henderson joined the Detroit Free Press as an assistant features editor. Two years later, she returned to The Detroit News as features editor. She was promoted to current position in 2007.

Henderson received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Radio-TV and Journalism from Murray State University in Kentucky and is pursuing a Master of Organization Development degree from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. She previously worked at the Courier-Journal in Louisville and The Cincinnati Post.

In 2014, Henderson was named president of the Detroit Chapter National Association of Black Journalists. She previously served as the organization's vice president-print.

In 2011, Henderson was among 55 named Women of Excellence by the Michigan Chronicle. The honor was preceded in 2010 when she was named an Esteemed Woman of Michigan, an honor recognizing 75 Michigan women who excelled in their profession, risen above unacceptable circumstances and found ways to help others. Henderson has received awards from the Society of Professional Journalists Detroit, the Michigan Press Association, the Gannett Corp., and the Society of Newspaper Design. Memberships include the National Association of Black Journalists, Society of Features Journalism, Leadership Detroit XX, Omicron Delta Kappa Honor Society and the Detroit Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Henderson was married to the late Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, Radio One talk show host and minister Angelo B. Henderson. Their son, Angelo Grant Henderson, is a junior at the University of Michigan Dearborn and is the owner of Greatness The One LLC, a brand dedicated to inspire young people to be great through fashion, product and design.

Rachel L. Hill

Rachel L. Hill was born and raised in Shaker Heights, Ohio and is a graduate of Shaker Heights High School. She was an accomplished athlete in the sports of Field Hockey and Lacrosse. Rachel graduated from The Ohio State University with a B.A. in Sociology and obtained a Masters in Sports Management from Cleveland State University. She also spent time serving her country and was a member of The United States Army National Guard. She goes by the moniker "The First Lady of Sports," currently hosts her own sports talk show on No Static Radio.com. She has numerous Radio and Television credits to her name. Television credits include "All Bets Are Off with Bruce Drennan", "The Look but Don't Touch Sports Show", and "Game Time". Her radio credits include "Cover 3", "Sports Wrap", "The Last Round", "The Ronnie Duncan Morning Show", "The Rundown", "Be Cool to the Old School" and "Unsportsmanlike Conduct". Rachel has also been a sports contributor with The City News, and Patch.com. Rachel has also been a coach a Field Hockey and Lacrosse coach at her former alma mater Shaker Heights High School. Rachel has spent time as a volunteer with Big Brother, Big Sisters as well as the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center. She loves sports, sports, and more sports. She also loves to work out and stays active by playing Lacrosse in an adult league. Rachel loves any outdoors activity, cooking, traveling and anything that is fun and entertaining. Rachel wants to be in inspiration to anyone that wants to follow in her footsteps and show that women can be intelligent about sports as well. Rachel resides in her hometown of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Ben Holbert

Ben Holbert invested 25 years in the Cleveland area media as a radio and television news anchor, talk show host, and producer. He began his broadcasting career as an engineer but quickly moved to on-air roles as a radio talk show host on WJMO-1490 AM and a reporter with the original Ten O'clock News on WUAB-TV 43. Ben won four Emmy Awards at Channel 43 – receiving accolades from his peers for news stories promoting the positive activities children. He also worked as a reporter and news anchor on WOIO – CBS 19 News and Channel 3 News.

In 2004, he was recognized by the Akron Broadcasters Hall of Fame, as "Personality of the Year." He is also a recipient of the Phenomenal Men Association Award and Knights of St. Peter Claver African American Male Image Award and Kent State University named Ben as one its Sixty Outstanding Journalism Alumni.

His life after television included work with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Chief Communications Officer; United States Census Bureau, Senior Partnership Specialist; and Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Business Opportunity Specialist. He is experienced in planning and executing community forums and business events. Ben has served as corporate spokesperson and coached administrators on how to successfully conduct media briefings and respond to reporter inquiries. A sought-after public speaker, Ben has served as emcee, keynote, and moderator for special events.

In 2012, Ben earned his Master of Business Administration (MBA) from University of Phoenix. Ben was honored to provide the student keynote address during the commencement. Ben earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Telecommunications from Kent State University in 1984.

In 2015, he was selected to management courses in the Cleveland Leadership Institute, CaseWeatherhead of Management, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving for Project Leaders. Ben serves as President of the Woodmere Village Council and became a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity in 1980.

Mayor Frank G. Jackson

Cleveland's 56th Mayor, Frank G. Jackson, took office January 2, 2006. He has since been re-elected twice - in 2009 and 2013.

As Mayor, Jackson is focused on ensuring that the City offers an excellent quality of life for every resident, business and visitor; and, is addressing every aspect of operations and policy to guarantee that he reaches that goal. He is

committed to providing exceptional, quality service and has led positive change throughout his tenure as mayor, particularly in the areas of Public Safety, City Finances and Operations, Education, Sustainability and Development.

Mayor Jackson is a Cleveland Public Schools graduate and Army veteran. He earned an associate's degree from Cuyahoga Community College and his bachelor's degree, master's degree, and law degree from Cleveland State University. Jackson began his public service career as an Assistant City Prosecutor in the Cleveland Municipal Court Clerk's Office. From 1990 through 2005, Jackson represented Cleveland's 5th Ward on Cleveland City Council.

From 2002 – 2005, Jackson also served as President of Cleveland City Council.

Basheer Jones

Basheer Jones is a young man with a unique story. His story is one of pain and relief; sadness and happiness; struggle and success. Warm and uncomplicated; when he speaks people listen. Basheer Jones is an attractive personality, both engaging and inspiring. He's a natural, born leader with a life story that gives him mass appeal.

Born in Brooklyn, NY on October 25, 1984 and later transplanted to Cleveland, OH. Basheer graduated from Martin Luther King High School, where he became involved with B.R.I.C.K – Brother, Respect, Intelligence, Conduct and Knowledge – a program led by Tim Roberts, a mentor and basketball coach who would become a father figure and inspire Basheer to pursue his love for both the written and spoken word. Extracting hope from the shelters that he found himself living in as a child, and still choosing to speak of a brighter day to those in similar situations, has placed Basheer in a class all his own.

His ability to inspire others has opened up many doors for him. One in which was a chance to attend the esteemed, Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, where he graduated with high honors with a degree in African-American Studies in 2006. He later pursued graduate studies at Howard University. During this time, he continued to make a name for himself as a poet, community leader, and radio show host. His life experiences have been the fuel behind his sincere words and soul stirring delivery, as he speaks to the hearts of many through his positive messages.

He is emerging as a powerful and forceful voice in media and entertainment. He is rising up as a fiery and impassioned leader, and motivational speaker with a message of empowerment and change. Having been requested to be interviewed by Time, JET, and Essence Magazines and to open for leaders such as Barack Obama and Tavis Smiley, Basheer proves that he possesses something very special. Basheer played an important role in the city of Cleveland during the 2008 Presidential Election. Being in a swing state, he hosted Barack Obama rallies and held one of the largest youth voter registration efforts in city history alongside influential people such as Cornel West, LeBron James, Hill Harper, and Russell Simmons.

Basheer's dedication and commitment has enabled him to recently release his first published book, entitled, I'll Speak for Change, and indeed he does just that. From the rough streets of Brooklyn, NY to his adopted home city of Cleveland, OH, Basheer became the youngest News Talk Radio host in the country. He is also a proud member of the NAACP and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., as well as the President and Founder of The Basheer Jones Foundation. Mr. Jones continues to live up to the belief that we must "be the change that we want to see in the world."

Sheryl King Benford

Ms. Benford is the first African American to serve as Chair of the Board of The Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio (formerly NCCJ). She has been recognized for advocacy and commitment to fair housing by both The Housing Research and Advocacy Center and Cuyahoga Plan of Ohio.

Ms. Benford is affiliated with a number of volunteer organizations. She is Secretary of the Board of the Cleveland Sight Center. She is Past President of the Cleveland-Marshall Law Alumni Association, Cleveland Chapter of the

Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) and the Cuyahoga County Law Directors Association. Ms. Benford was the first African American to serve as President of the Ohio Municipal Lawyers Association. She is Past President of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA).

Ms. Benford was the Black Law Students' Association (BLSA) 2014 Scholarship and Awards Honoree and received the 2014 YWCA Women of Achievement Award. Ms. Benford has also received The 2013 Norman S. Minor Bar Association's Annual Trailblazer Award, and was a 2013 Crain's General and In-House Finalist. She has received the Distinguished Alumna Award from the Cleveland-Marshall Law Alumni Association, was named a "Woman of Note" by Crain's Cleveland Business, and was listed in the "Top 500 Most Influential Women in Northeast Ohio" by Northern Ohio Live Magazine. Ms. Benford received the Charles Rhine Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in local government law from IMLA and The George B. Davis Distinguished Alumni Award for her service to Cleveland State University.

PROFESSIONAL

Since April 2000, Sheryl King Benford has served as the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's General Counsel and Deputy General Manager for Legal Affairs. She formerly served as Law Director for the City of Shaker Heights and Assistant Law Director for the City of Cleveland. She has also served as Assistant Dean at Cleveland-Marshall College of Law.

Charlie LeDuff

Charlie LeDuff is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, formerly at the New York Times, the News and currently Fox TV's The Americans with Charlie LeDuff. He was one of several reporters who worked on The New York Times series "How Race Is Lived in America," which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 2001. He also produced a ten-part television series of participatory journalism called "O" for Discovery Times. LeDuff has covered the war in Iraq, crossed the border with Mexican migrants and chronicled a Brooklyn fire house in the aftermath of 9/11. He is the author of The New York Times best seller, Detroit: An American Autopsy; US Guys, and Work and Other Sins. LeDuff lives near Detroit.

Valarie J. McCall

An asset to the Jackson Administration, Ms. Valarie J. McCall was named Chief of Government & International Affairs by Mayor Frank Jackson. In this position, Ms. McCall serves as the Administration's primary liaison to local and state governments, and all federal and international agencies and organizations. Ms. McCall oversees and administers the Jackson Administration's appointments to internal and external boards and commissions. Ms. McCall is the Mayor's primary representative to several national organizations, including, but not limited to: the United States Conference of Mayors; National League of Cities and the National Black Caucus of Local and Elected Officials, to name a few. She is also charged with assisting Mayor Jackson with the implementation of his policy initiatives designed to promote regional growth and cooperation, both nationally and internationally.

Ms. McCall shares her energy with her community and currently serves as Vice Chair of the American Public Transit Association's Executive Committee; the American Public Transit Foundation and is currently Chair of the Transit Board Members Committee. In addition, Ms. McCall serves on the boards of The Cleveland Leadership Center; The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum; Destination Cleveland (CVB); The Downtown Cleveland Improvement District; The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority; PolicyBridge; Global Cleveland; Greater Cleveland Sport's Commission; St. Vincent Charity Development Foundation Board and the Cleveland 2016 Inc., Board, which is the Host Committee for 2016 Republican National Convention and serves as the Chair of the City of Cleveland's RNC 2016 Special Events Committee. In addition, Ms. McCall is on the Board of the Northeast Ohio Area wide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), where she was the first African American female President. She also served on the board of GG9 (2014 Gay Games Host Organization).

Ms. McCall serves as the Mayor's representative to the Ohio Municipal League's Board; Cuyahoga County Mayor's and Managers Association and the Northeast Ohio Mayors & Managers Association. Ms. McCall serves on the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs Visiting Committee; the Government Affairs Committees of the United Way of Cleveland and the Center for Families & Children and has served as a member of the advisory board of Cleveland State University's Center for Nonprofit Policy & Practice. Ms. McCall serves on the Executive Committees of both the Cuyahoga County & Ohio Democratic Parties and as an Ohio Representative on the Democratic National Committee.

Her accomplished leadership allowed Ms. McCall to travel internationally to multiple countries and serve as an American Council of Young Political Leaders Fellow to Japan. Ms. McCall, has traveled to China, where she was a panel member at the United Nations International Development Organization's Conference on Urban Agglomerations, which took place in Nanning, China and included a tour and meetings with high level officials in both Shanghai and Beijing. Ms. McCall serves as a member of the Rouen Business Schools International Panel, which is located in Cleveland's Sister City in Rouen, France. In 2003, Ms. McCall became an American Marshall Fellow of the German Marshall Fund, which fosters transatlantic partnerships to build international relations. Ms. McCall traveled to the Europe with the German Marshall Fund in the spring of 2003 met with European Union leaders in Prague, Czech, Hamburg and Berlin, Germany, Athens, Greece and other important European cities.

She had the opportunity to tour the Olympic headquarters in Athens before the 2004 Summer Games, which allowed her to examine organizational methods employed to bring about the games, and she was in Berlin at the onset of the Iraqi War, which allowed her to take in initial European views of the war firsthand. Ms. McCall gained knowledge of Europe's regional social and economic issues through this experience, which she has been able to incorporate into the ways she assists Clevelanders in achieving their goals.

Prior to being named Chief of Government Affairs to the Jackson Administration, Ms. McCall served as Cleveland City Council's youngest City Clerk, Clerk of Council in the City's history. Ms. McCall brought energy and structure to the offices of Cleveland City Council. Sworn in to the office in May 2002, Ms. McCall streamlined the processing of legislation, installed an effective management team and reorganized the day-to-day operations of the office to maximize efficiency. As Clerk of Council, Ms. McCall was the chief administrative officer for the Office of Cleveland City Council. Her duties included supervising the recording and retention of all official reports, communications and transcripts delivered to Council and the certification of all legislation.

Prior to becoming the Clerk of Council, Ms. McCall served as the City of Cleveland's Director of the Empowerment Zone, where she was responsible for a \$200 million budget. As Director, she supervised the distribution of funds for job training and placement programs, as well as direct lending programs that assisted businesses in four targeted neighborhoods.

Ms. McCall is member of the "Best Leadership Cleveland Class Ever" of 2007. She was honored as the Woman of Color Foundation's "STAR" Professional Woman of the Year. She was presented with the International Service Award from the Rotary Club of Cleveland; in addition, her achievements earned her the prestigious Cleveland State University's 2003 Alumni Emerging Leadership Award. Ms. McCall was also recognized by Ebony Magazine as a 2002-2003 Young Leader of the Future, was featured as one of Crain's Cleveland Business' 40 under 40 and elected to Kaleidoscope Magazine's 40/40 Club in 2002. Ms. McCall is the Host of an Advocacy show titled, "Government Affairs: A Closer Look" in which she interviews local officials on issues critical to the citizens of Cleveland. Ms. McCall served as Chairwoman of Mayor Jackson's 2006 Inaugural Committee, where she oversaw all planning aspects of the Inaugural Activities and Swearing in Ceremony.

A native Clevelander, Ms. McCall grew up in the Glenville neighborhood and graduated from Martin Luther King Law & Public Services Magnet High School. A former licensed social worker, she has a bachelor's degree in social work from Cleveland State University and a master's degree in public administration from Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs. In addition, Ms. McCall's was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Public Service Degree honoris causa (with all Rights, Privileges and Honors pertaining thereto) by Cleveland State University.

Ms. McCall is a member of The Word Church, with Pastor R.A. Vernon and resides in the beautiful City of Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

Randell McShepard

Randell McShepard was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. After graduating from John F. Kennedy High School he attended Baldwin-Wallace College, where he received Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Psychology and Communications. Mr. McShepard also attended Cleveland State University and received a Master of Science Degree in Urban Studies with a concentration in Organizational Leadership from the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs.

Mr. McShepard is currently employed as the Vice President of Public Affairs for RPM International Inc., a \$4 billion dollar chemical coatings/paint company headquartered in Medina, Ohio. In this post, he is responsible for managing external and government affairs for the company. His duties also include leading the corporate philanthropy program and facilitating corporate purchasing initiatives with over 15 of RPM's subsidiary business units. Prior to joining RPM, Randell worked for 15 years in nonprofit management positions focused on workforce development, economic development, government affairs and community service.

An active community and corporate leader, Mr. McShepard is currently serving on several boards in Northeast Ohio including Baldwin-Wallace University, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, The John Hay School of Science and Medicine, The George Gund Foundation and Taylor Oswald LLC. He is also a Co-Founder and Chairman of PolicyBridge, a public policy think tank serving the Northeast Ohio region. Mr. McShepard's previous community/civic leadership roles have included Past Chairman of the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Investment Board, Past Chairman of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, Past Vice Chairman of the Fund for Our Economic Future and Past Vice Chairman of Business Volunteers Unlimited. He also served on the Executive Committee for the Cuyahoga County Government Reform transition in 2010.

Among his many honors, Mr. McShepard was inducted into the John F. Kennedy High School Hall of Fame and was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus of Cleveland State University. He also received the 2011 "Black Professional of the Year" Award from the Black Professional Association Charitable Foundation and is a graduate of Leadership Cleveland.

Mr. McShepard is currently serving as a member of the Public Affairs Committee of the National Association of Manufacturers, and as the Cleveland representative for the Transatlantic Cities Network, which brings together 25 European and American cities annually to share best practices for urban revitalization and growth. He is also active in his church, St. James AME in Cleveland, where he serves on the Steward Board.

Randell and his wife Gail reside in Beachwood, Ohio with their three children – Anthony, Madison and Avery.

Russ Mitchell

Russ Mitchell, former anchor of the CBS Evening News weekend editions and The Early Show on Saturday, and national correspondent for CBS News Sunday Morning, the CBS Evening News, and The Early Show joined the staff of WKYC as Managing Editor Evening News and lead anchor of the 6pm and 11pm newscasts on January 16, 2012.

Mitchell was born in St. Louis and accepted his first television job at age 17 as a nighttime switchboard operator at KTVI-TV. He graduated from the University of Missouri, and began his professional career at KMBC in Kansas City. Larger markets and bigger stations soon followed, then a move to New York as the co-anchor of the overnight CBS News broadcast, Up to the Minute. In 1993 he was named a correspondent for Eye-to-Eye with Connie Chung. In 1995, Mitchell was assigned to the CBS Washington bureau. In July of 1997, Mitchell was named co-anchor of CBS News Saturday Morning and traveled extensively as a reporter for the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather and 48 Hours. He covered the war in Bosnia, went to the Democratic Republic of Congo and interviewed then President Laurent Kabila, reported from Cuba, India, Indonesia and The Marshall Islands.

Mr. Mitchell was on the anchor desk with Dan Rather on September 11, 2001 and reported from Ground Zero and other parts of Manhattan on the days and weeks that followed. Most recently, he anchored the live CBS Special Report coverage of the capture and death of Osama Bin Laden on May 1, 2011.

Russ has been honored with multiple local and national Emmys Awards. He has received the National Association of Black Journalists Award, the Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi Award for his coverage of the Elian Gonzales story, the New York Association of Black Journalists Award for Best Documentary, and the Press Club of St. Louis 18th Annual Media Person of the Year Award.

Perhaps not as well-known, but equally important to Mitchell is the 2007 Missouri Honor Medal. He received it for Distinguished Service in Journalism from The University of Missouri School of Journalism, his alma mater. He also returns there every summer to help with a journalism workshop for high school students, a workshop he attended in 1977.

Marsha A. Mockabee

In February 2011, Marsha A. Mockabee was unanimously elected president and chief executive officer of the Urban League of Greater Cleveland by the Transition Board of Trustees. She is the first female to hold this position at the Cleveland affiliate. Mockabee served the League in an interim leadership capacity from August, 2009 until her permanent appointment in 2011. In this role, Mockabee leads an agenda empowering African-Americans to develop and exercise their potential on par with all other Americans through education, research, advocacy and provision of services. During her 24 year tenure at the League, Mockabee spent 17 years developing effective programs for youth, parents and community members; several of which have served as national best practice models. In addition to a portfolio of credible service delivery strategies, Mockabee has also provided leadership as a Community Convener for many collaborative efforts focused on economic and educational parity.

Mockabee's accomplishments have been recognized locally and nationally. Since 2010, Mockabee has served on the National Urban League's Education and Jobs Task Forces. In February of 2013, she was selected to lead an Equity and Excellence in Education initiative for the State of Ohio. Along with her CEO colleagues from Cincinnati and Columbus, Mockabee is helping to engage in statewide advocacy and policy issues affecting education in urban communities. In February 2012, she completed an African-American Leadership mission to Beijing, China. She was featured in the 7th Edition of Who's Who In Black Cleveland as "Woman of Excellence" and honored by Crain's as one of Cleveland's "2012 Business Women of Note." Additional honors include: "Nguza Saba Award" Ashbury Senior Community Center (December 2013); "Professional Woman of the Year" Women of Color Foundation (November 2013); "Woman of Vision" National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. Greater Cleveland Chapter (March 2013); "Woman of the Year" National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women's Club (2012); and National Urban League "Outstanding Newcomer CEO" (July, 2011). Most recently, Mockabee was recognized as a "2014 Woman of Power and Influence at the 2014 National Urban League Conference. She is known amongst her national Urban League colleagues as the "turnaround strategist."

Mockabee serves on many committees and community efforts: Workforce Investment Board for City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County; Executive Committee Member of the Construction Diversity and Inclusion effort for Community Benefits in Construction; Global Cleveland Board Member and Chair of its African American Initiative; Co-Chair of the Citizens for Cuyahoga Community College Committee; Chair - Stephanie Tubbs Jones Gospelfest; 2012-2014 MS Dinner of Champions Committee Member. She is also a member of the Leadership Cleveland Class of 2013.

Mockabee has more than 27 years of nonprofit leadership experience, as well as educational credentials that include a Bachelor's degree from Concordia University (cum laude), a CNM from Case Western Reserve University, and MBM from Indiana Wesleyan. Mockabee and her husband, James, reside in Cleveland, Ohio. They have two married daughters, one grandson and two granddaughters.

Marlin Page

Marlin Page is Head of the Office of Diversity at FCA US LLC, based in Auburn Hills, Mich. She is responsible for the overall design, development and deployment of FCA US corporate diversity strategies. This includes facilitating short and long term strategies for implementing cultural change in all aspects of how the company leverages diversity for competitive advantage throughout its entire business enterprise.

Prior to joining FCA US, Marlin was the owner of her own company, Knowledge Brokers, where she provided consulting services including diversity staffing and recruiting. She also was in charge of diversity at Compuware where she initiated, designed and launched the first diversity initiative for the company. She also was a former Deputy Chief Information Officer for the City of Detroit, where she and her team successfully developed the City's first e-government initiative. She also led collaboration across ten unique agencies to support the technology and infrastructure required for Super Bowl XL.

Marlin is a recognized speaker, thought leader on bridging the gender and racial gap in technology. She is also a frequent media contributor and author advocating the need to empower girls, women and underserved communities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

She is a previous board member of Detroit Urban League, the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan, and Schools of the Future. She is an author of her own book, Always Believe Movement for Girls, and has spoken at various events on empowering women and girls in STEM.

Christopher Ronayne

Christopher Ronayne was named President of University Circle Inc (UCI) in 2005. UCI is the non-profit community service corporation responsible for the development, service, and advocacy of University Circle as a world-class center of innovation in health care, education, and arts & culture and premier urban district. Since becoming UCI's seventh president, Ronayne developed a dynamic and aggressive agenda to leverage the institutional assets of the Circle's anchor "Eds, Meds, and Arts" organizations and transform it into a vibrant mixed-use district.

Chris Ronayne and his staff partner with more than 40 member institutions to oversee the growth and direction of Ohio's fastest growing employment district, with UCI providing community planning, development, education, marketing, police, and other shared services.

Before joining UCI, Ronayne served the City of Cleveland as the City's Planning Director, Chief Development Officer, and Chief of Staff. He was the chief architect of the City's Waterfront District Plan, an ambitious effort to reconnect the people of Cleveland to Lake Erie.

In addition to his role with UCI, Ronayne is Chairman of the Port of Cleveland Board of Trustees, Chairman of the Holden Parks Trust, a member of CEOs for Cities, the American Planning Association, and numerous local boards and foundations. Ronayne is a frequent speaker and lecturer at urban development seminars and forums across the United States and internationally. Ronayne holds a Masters degree in Urban Planning, Design, and Development from Cleveland State University and a Bachelors degree in Business from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Chris is married to Natalie Ronayne, Executive Vice President of the Cleveland Botanical Garden and The Holden Arboretum. They live in the City of Cleveland with their two children.

Troy Smith

Entertainment Reporter for Northeast Ohio Media Group
@troylsmith

Troy Smith is an entertainment reporter for the Northeast Ohio Media Group. Before moving to Cleveland, the St. Bonaventure graduate worked as a reporter for the Democrat and Chronicle for four years, and two years with the Rochester Business Journal both in New York. In 2010, the Bivings Report ranked Smith as one of the Top 30 Journalists on Twitter. Smith was also a featured panelist at the 2010 Rochester Institute of Technology's Social Media Symposium.

Walter Smith-Randolph

Walter Smith-Randolph is currently a Reporter for WWMT-Newschannel 3, the CBS affiliate for Grand Rapids & Kalamazoo, Michigan. The New York City native has also worked as a reporter and substitute anchor for WEYI/NBC25 in Flint & Saginaw, Michigan and WENY/ABC36 in Elmira & Ithaca, New York.

A "NABJ baby," Walter was a participant in 2010 NABJ Short Course at Florida A&M University. He is also a recipient of the NABJ/NBC News Fellowship which allowed him to work as a production assistant at MSNBC in New York City. Walter also served as President of the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism student chapter of The National Association of Black Journalists. Walter holds a B.A. in Communication from Villanova University and a M.A. in Journalism from the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism

Chuck Stokes

Chuck Stokes is the editorial/public affairs director for WXYZ-TV/Channel 7. Additionally, he serves as moderator and producer of **Spotlight on the News**, Michigan's longest-running weekly news and public affairs show.

Before he became Channel 7's editorial/public affairs director, Stokes worked as the station's executive producer of special projects in news. And prior to joining WXYZ-TV, Stokes was employed at WTVF-TV in Nashville, Tennessee, as a producer and on-air reporter. He has also been a sports writer for the Washington Post.

In 2001, Stokes received the "The Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Detroit Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. He is a past president of both the National Conference of Editorial Writers and its Foundation. In 2011, Stokes was inducted into the Michigan Association of Broadcaster's Hall of Fame and in 2012 he received the "Life Membership Award" from the Association of Opinion Journalists (formerly called the National Conference of Editorial Writers). He is the immediate past president of the Michigan Association of Broadcasters Foundation.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Chuck is the son of the late Congressman Louis Stokes and the nephew of the late Mayor Carl Stokes. He is married and has two daughters.

Vickie Thomas

Vickie Thomas is the City Beat Reporter for WWJ Newsradio 950, a CBS owned and operated all news radio station.

In 1991, Thomas joined WWJ Newsradio 950. Throughout her radio career she has earned awards from the Detroit Press Foundation, the Michigan Association of Broadcasters, the Michigan Associated Press and the National Association of Black Journalists. Thomas was honored with a first place in Individual Reporting during the 1998 Associated Press Michigan Broadcast Awards Contest. She also has received the national "Gabriel Award" from UNDA-USA for the WWJ black history month series "The African-American Church: The Heart and Soul of Metro Detroit's Black Community."

Thomas is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists and was elected to the national board in August of 2013 to serve as Region IV Director. She won re-election in 2015 to serve as Director of the expanded Region II. She served as President of the Detroit chapter of NABJ for two terms, from 2010 to 2013. Thomas started a scholarship and internship program for college students interested in the field of broadcast news, while

serving as Vice President of the Detroit chapter. Under her leadership, Detroit won “Professional Chapter of the Year” and was nominated again the following year.

Thomas discovered her passion for writing when she was in high school. She won quite a few awards for speaking and writing as a student at Henry Ford High School in Detroit and decided that journalism was the best profession for her. Thomas attended Michigan State University and graduated from Wayne State University, cum laude with an honors degree in broadcast journalism. The highlight of her academic career was as an intern in Congressman Louis Stokes’ office on Capitol Hill where she was instrumental in getting commemorative legislation passed honoring Olympic Gold Medalist Jesse Owens.

Chief Calvin D. Williams

Chief Calvin D. Williams is the 40th Chief of the Cleveland Division of Police. He was appointed as Chief on February 10, 2014.

Chief Williams began his career with the Cleveland Division of Police on February 24, 1986. Upon graduation from the Cleveland Police Academy, he spent time on basic patrol before being assigned to the city’s SWAT Unit where he spent time both as a patrol officer and a supervisor. He also supervised the Fourth District Vice Unit.

In 2005, Chief Williams became the Cleveland Division of Police Liaison to the US Marshal’s Fugitive Task Force. He was promoted to Commander of the Third District in March of 2006, overseeing a bustling downtown and east-side neighborhoods such as Fairfax and Little Italy. In September of 2011, Chief Williams was promoted to Deputy Chief of Field Operations where he was responsible for the entire basic patrol section, the Bureau of Community Policing, the Bureau of Traffic and special events for the Cleveland Division of Police.

The Chief is a lifelong resident of the city of Cleveland. He is a graduate of Cleveland State University, holding a Bachelor’s Degree in Public Safety Management. He grew up in Cleveland’s Glenville neighborhood and continues to reside nearby with his family in the Hough neighborhood. Chief Williams is an avid sports fan and attends Cavs and Browns games when able. In addition, he coaches football for the Cleveland Mundy League Sims Raiders with children ranging in ages 6-14. He enjoys golfing in his free time.

Dr. Rhonda Y. Williams

Dr. Rhonda Y. Williams is an associate professor and the first black person ever tenured in the History Department at CWRU. She is the founder and director of the Social Justice Institute at CWRU, and the founder and director of CWRU’s Postdoctoral Fellowship in African American Studies. Appointed by CWRU President Barbara Snyder, Dr. Rhonda chaired the search committee that hired the university’s inaugural Vice President of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity. In April 2009, she was awarded CWRU’s inaugural Inclusion and Diversity Achievement Award.

Working under the mentorship of Dr. Mary Frances Berry, the former chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Dr. Rhonda earned her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. She is an accomplished author of two single-authored books: *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (2015) and the award-winning *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles against Urban Inequality* (2004).

The co-editor of the Justice, Power, and Politics book series with University of North Carolina Press, Dr. Rhonda is also the author of numerous articles and book chapters. She served as co-editor of *Women, Transnationalism, and Human Rights*, a Special Issue of the *Radical History Review* (2008) and *Teaching the American Civil Rights Movement* (2002).

As a former journalist, educator, and researcher, Williams has worked to broker understanding of issues regarding marginalization, inequalities, and activism. She has delivered community presentations to the Congressional

Emerson Hunger Fellows on the history of institutional racism and given numerous lectures, including at the Smithsonian Institution and the Woodrow Wilson Center in D.C.

She also has been engaged in local community efforts including as a member of the Collaborative for a Safe, Fair, and Just Cleveland, and the "Cleveland 8."