



ReachOut e-Diversity News

An Electronic Publication of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council

This Month: Black History Month

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- 2. 6 Incredible Stories
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February 2020 Edition | Volume 15 Issue 1

Read, Pass on to Friends,
Family Members, Colleagues
& Constituents



Don't
Miss an
Issue!

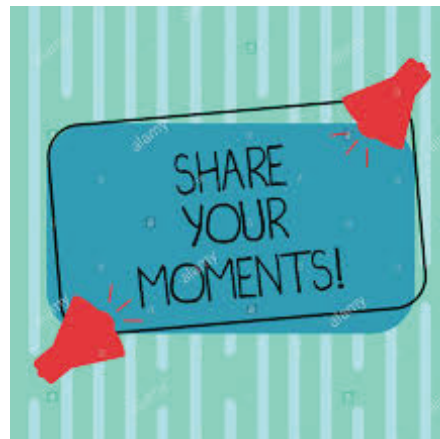
It is the policy of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council to use person-first language in items written by staff. Items reprinted or quoted exactly as they originally appear may not reflect this policy.

Celebrating Black History Month



2020's inaugural edition of Reach Out e-Diversity Newsletter joins the country in celebrating Black History Month.

In this edition, there is an overview of the history and importance of this celebration. At the end of this article you are invited to share pictures of your personal celebrations.





Stories are shared about individuals who are African Americans with disabilities that have made significant achievements that have impacted others' lives globally. These are only a few examples. You are invited to share personal stories of individuals in your communities.

The journey of learning, serving, advocating and envisioning the future is introduced through the voice of a key stakeholder in the disability community. We want to feature different stakeholders in each edition. If you want your voice to be heard, you are invited to share your contact information and the stakeholder group you represent.



Contact Us

A call to build networks that will facilitate a change movement is shared. Let's connect our networks across the state. Please, share a description of your network and contact information.



Black History Month Celebration February 1-29, 2020



Black History Month had its origins in 1915 when historian and author Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. This organization is now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (“ASALH”). Through this organization Dr. Woodson initiated the first Negro History Week in February 1926. Dr. Woodson selected the week in February that included the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two key figures in the history of African Americans.

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6 Incredible Stories of Black Advocates with Disabilities

Through the stories of these six men and women who did not let the intersectionality of their dual-marginal identities keep them from achieving greatness, be empowered to “respect the ability.”



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One Voice



The following is a summary of Dr. Patricia Hicks, Reach Out e-Diversity Newsletter Grantee, interview with Vicki Lynn Jenkins, Associate General Counsel, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and member, Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council.

Through this interview, Attorney Jenkins shares her journey learning, serving, and advocating for the unserved and underserved populations with developmental disabilities. As a vested stakeholder, her one voice has changed the quality of many lives.

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Network Building Impacts Movement Building

A common saying, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,” is also true when it comes to movement building. When a network of organizations/people work together on a complex issue, greater results are achieved than a single organization/person working alone.



Building networks that impact movement building requires focus on the following 5 key actions

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Join in the Black History Month Celebration!



Contact Us

Post contact info about your network on ODDC's social media platforms



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Black History Month Celebration February 1-29, 2020

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Overview

Black History Month in February celebrates the contributions that African Americans have made to American history in their struggles for freedom and equality and deepens the understanding of our Nation's history.

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Dr. Carter G. Woodson

In 1975, President Ford issued a Message on the Observance of Black History Week urging all Americans to "recognize the important contribution made to our nation's life and culture by black citizens." In 1976 this commemoration of black history in the United States was expanded by ASALH to Black History Month, also known as African American History Month, and President Ford issued the first Message on the Observance of Black History Month that year.

In 1986 Congress passed Public Law 99-244 (PDF, 142KB) which designated February 1986 as "National Black (Afro-American) History Month." This law noted that February 1, 1986 would "mark the beginning of the sixtieth annual public and private salute to Black History." The law further called upon the President to issue a proclamation calling

on the people of the United States to observe February 1986 as Black History Month with the appropriate ceremonies and activities. President Reagan issued Presidential Proclamation 5443 which proclaimed that "the foremost purpose of Black History Month is to make all Americans aware of this struggle for freedom and equal opportunity." This proclamation stated further that this month was a time "to celebrate the many achievements of African Americans in every field from science and the arts to politics and religion."

In January 1996, President Clinton issued Presidential Proclamation 6863 for “National African American History Month.” The proclamation emphasized the theme for that year, the achievements of black women from Sojourner Truth to Mary McLeod Bethune and Toni Morrison. In February 1996 the Senate passed Senate Resolution 229 commemorating Black History Month and the contributions of African American U.S. Senators.

Since 1996, Presidents have issued annual proclamations for National African American History Month. On February 1, 2011 President Obama issued a Proclamation reflecting on the theme of “African Americans and the Civil War” marking the commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the beginning of the Civil War.

2020 Theme- African Americans and the Vote

The year 2020 marks the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment and the culmination of the women’s suffrage movement. The year 2020 also marks the sesquicentennial of the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) and the right of black men to the ballot after the Civil War. The theme speaks, therefore, to the ongoing struggle on the part of both black men and black women for the right to vote.

This theme has a rich and long history, which begins at the turn of the nineteenth century, i.e., in the era of the Early Republic, with the states’ passage of laws that democratized the vote for white men while disfranchising free black men. Thus, even before the Civil War, black men petitioned their legislatures and the US Congress, seeking to be recognized as voters. Tensions between abolitionists and women’s suffragists first surfaced in the aftermath of the Civil War, while black disfranchisement laws in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries undermined the guarantees in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments for the great majority of southern blacks until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The important contribution of black suffragists occurred not only within the larger women’s movement, but within the larger black voting rights movement.

Through voting-rights campaigns and legal suits from the turn of the twentieth century to the mid-1960s, African Americans made their voices heard as to the importance of the vote. Indeed, the fight for black voting rights continues in the courts today.



Did You Know?

While whites traditionally have the highest voter turnout relative to other racial groups, Blacks have higher voter turnout than Hispanics and Asians. In fact, Black voter turnout was within 1 percentage point of whites in 2008 (65.2% compared to 66.1%) and was actually higher than whites in 2012 (66.6% compared to 64.1%). In 2016, voter turnout for Blacks dipped to 59.6%. While that number was lower than whites (65.3%), it was still higher than Asians (49.3%) and Hispanics (47.6%).

Voter discrimination regarding voter identification, poll closures, and gerrymandering at state and local levels are believed to have an impact on voter turnout among Blacks. If people have to wait in lines for hours to vote, take two buses and walk miles to get to a polling place, return to a central voting location because they didn't have the proper identification, and potentially get fired for taking 5-10 minutes to vote once at the booth, they are going to normally opt for their job and time. Addressing problems institutionally embedded in the political process is necessary.

The theme of the vote should also include the rise of black elected and appointed officials at the local and national levels, campaigns for equal rights legislation, as well as the role of blacks in traditional and alternative political parties.

Did You Know?

Do You Know Ohio's Black elected State Representatives and Senators?



The following 14 Black elected State Representatives represent 14% of Ohio's elected State Representatives.

Emilia Sykes, House District 34 (Ohio House Minority Leader)

Paula Hicks-Hudson, House District 44 (Ohio House Assistant Minority Whip)

Stephanie Howse, House District 11 (President Ohio Legislative Black Caucus)

Phillip Robinson, Jr., House District 6

Janine Boyd, House District 9

Terrence Upchurch, House District 10

Juanita Brent, House District 12

Bernadine Kennedy, House District 25

Erica Crawley, House District 26

Catherine Ingram, House District 32
Sedrick Denson, House District 33
Tavia Galonski, House District 35
Fred Strahorn, House District 39
Thomas West, House District 49

The following 5 Black elected State Senators represent 15% of Ohio's elected State Senators.

Cecil Thomas, Senate District 9 (Ohio Senate Assistant Minority Leader)
Sandra Williams, Senate District 21 (Ohio Senate Assistant Minority Whip)
Tina Maharath, Senate District 3
Hearcel F. Craig, Senate District 15
Vernon Sykes, Senate District 28



Did You Know?

Ohio's U.S. House of Representatives?

The following 2 Black U.S. House of Representatives represent 12% of Ohio's elected U.S. House of Representatives

Joyce Beatty, District 3
Marcia Fudge, District 11

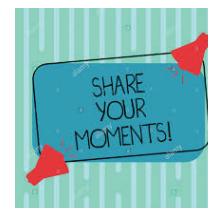
Join in the Black History Month Celebration!

Host or Participate in a local or statewide celebration

Post a picture on ODDC's social media platforms



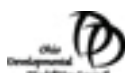
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6 Incredible Stories of Black Advocates with Disabilities

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First African American musician to officially perform in the White House

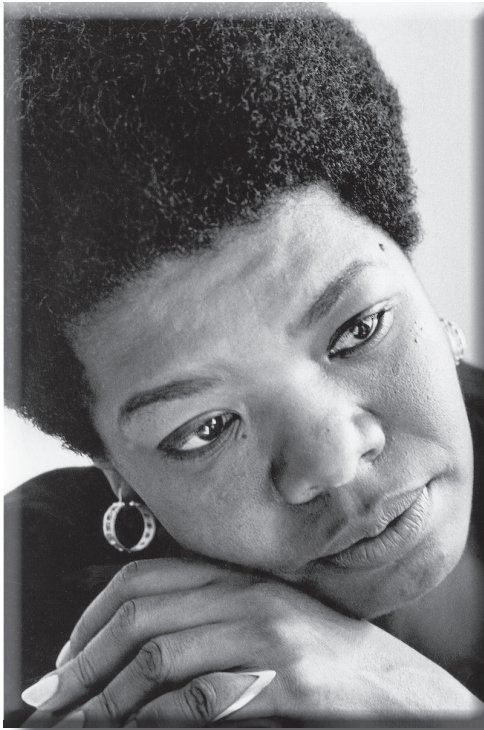
Thomas Wiggins, also known as Blind Tom, was born into slavery in 1849. He lived on a plantation in Georgia along with his parents. Wiggins was blind and believed to be an autistic savant. He had an affinity to noise and could mimic any noise he heard. He could repeat



conversations up to 10 minutes along, but could not communicate his wants and needs and would resort to whining and grunting, according to **A Tribute to Blind Tom**. Wiggins discovered the piano at the age of four and began playing what he would hear the plantation owner’s daughter play. It wasn’t long before he became a piano prodigy, repeating any composition he heard no matter the difficulty. At the age of six, he was performing sold out shows in Georgia. Wiggins toured the South throughout his teen years and was eventually invited to the White House by

President James Buchanan. He was the first African American musician to officially perform in the White House. Wiggins later toured the rest of the United States and Europe, dying at the age of sixty from a stroke.

Received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest award given by the United States President Barack Obama



As a child, Maya Angelou was sexually abused and raped by her mother's boyfriend. She became mute for almost five years; diagnosed with selective mutism, an anxiety disorder that causes a child to not speak due to physical and psychological trauma they endured. Maya Angelou went on to become an award-winning author, poet, civil rights activist, college professor and screen writer. Some of her most notable poems include *Phenomenal Woman* and *Caged Bird*. One of her most popular books, "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*," details her own life experiences of growing up in America during segregation and Jim Crow. She has taught many, specifically women, that confidence and being comfortable in your own skin, no matter what your background is, can take you far. She was truly a remarkably phenomenal woman herself. Her works remain legendary and uniquely relatable to the everyday lives of men, women and children across the globe.

First known African American woman diagnosed as deaf to earn a law degree

At the age of 8 living in rural Jamaica, Claudia Gordon began to experience severe pain in her middle ears. Without medical help nearby, Gordon went deaf and her life changed overnight. According to deafpeople.com, she "was pulled out of school, lost her friends, stayed home, and became an object of ridicule". She moved to the United States at age eleven, where she graduated valedictorian from her high school. Gordon studied law and *earned a degree in disability-rights law and policy* at American University's Washington College of Law, becoming the first known African American woman diagnosed as deaf to earn a law degree. She was appointed by the Obama Administration as Special Assistant to the Director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in the Department of Labor.



At the center of the 1999 lawsuit that cited a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

While she was growing up, **Lois Curtis** was diagnosed with intellectual and mental disabilities. As a result, she would get into trouble constantly – at home and at school. The police were called several times and they would take her to jail or to a mental hospital. However, at 11-years-old she was sent to live at Georgia Regional Hospital, a mental institution for people with disabilities. She would remain there until she was 29 years old.

It would not be until May 11, 1995 that Curtis' situation began to change when Sue Jamieson, an Atlanta-based legal aid attorney took Curtis' case challenging Tommy Olmstead, the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Human Resources, whose decision kept Curtis in the hospital. Wilson was added later as a plaintiff in the case.

A decision would be reached more than two years later in May 1997 when Judge Marvin Shoob said that the Georgia Department of Human Resources and Regional Hospital failed to place Curtis and Wilson in adequate housing.

Because of Shoob's ruling, the Department of Human Resources and Regional Hospital appealed on December 14, 1998, and one year later on June 22, 1999, Supreme Court judge Ruth Bader-Ginsburg decided that it was unconstitutional for Curtis and Wilson to be forced to stay in the mental institution when they could live in the community.

Since the Olmstead Decision went into effect in 1999, Curtis has been able to live in an apartment she shares with a woman who helps her with activities of daily living. She takes art classes at the local hobby shop and sells her drawings for profit to buy more art supplies. She is very friendly and has no trouble making friends. She's proactive in her life, attending monthly meetings with people who care about her to plan the next month in her life. Curtis is living life on her own terms doing what she loves to do every day.

People with intellectual and mental disabilities can thank Lois Curtis for paving the way for them to live in the community receiving the services they need.



First African American athlete to win gold in the all-around

At a young age, **Simone Biles** was diagnosed with ADHD, but she has never let her diagnosis get in the way. At the age of 10, Biles was already competing as a level 8 gymnast. She went on to win a gold at the World Championships at the age of 16, becoming the first female African American athlete to win gold in the all-around, as reported by **biography.com**. She secured her spot on the U.S women's gymnastics team at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, where she won four gold medals. She is the most decorated American gymnast in history with a total of 30 Olympic and World Championship medals.

When controversy arose about her use of Ritalin at the Rio Olympics, both a treatment for ADHD and a restricted medication, Biles opened up about having ADHD and criticized the stigma around mental illnesses.



A multimillionaire, entrepreneur, and a shark on The Shark Tank

Growing up, **Daymond John** struggled in elementary school, where he was diagnosed with a general “learning disability” without being provided many resources or support. His math and science skills were exceptional, but his reading and writing grades were below average. After co-founding FUBU, a casual clothing line, in 1992, John realized his highly visual mind was an advantage in the business world. While he struggled with reading and writing, he could map business plans in his head. John was anxious about his difficulty reading and writing until 1999, when he finally saw a medical professional who diagnosed him as dyslexic. Since then, John has been transparent about his reading and writing difficulties with his colleagues, at speaking engagements, in interviews and via social media.



“I’m dyslexic too and look at where we’re at. You can do it too. #SharkTank,” John tweeted

Note: These stories were selected from the American Autism Association (2017) and RespectAbility organization (2018) Black History Month highlights. The contributors are:

Catalina Delgado is a Community Outreach and Fundraising intern at the American Autism Association. She studies biology at Florida International University, and enjoys getting involved with the community and being of service to those in need.

Lauren Appelbaum is the Vice President, Communications, of RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for and with people with disabilities, and managing editor of The RespectAbility Report, a publication of the intersection of disabilities and politics.

Join in the Black History Month Celebration!



Share a story of an African American in your community or in the state who has been an advocate for people with disabilities

Post your story on ODDC social media platforms



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One Voice

“One voice can change a room.” Barack Obama

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Vicki Lynn Jenkins



How did you learn about the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and what are your work responsibilities?



I am an Ohio native. I left my hometown, Dayton, (OH) to come to Columbus for the purpose of attending The Ohio State University where I received both my bachelor’s and juris doctorate degrees. After graduation, from law school, I was hired an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney and subsequently made Columbus my home. Through a friend of a colleague in the Prosecutor’s Office, I learned about the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), her employer at the time. She assisted me in identifying potential job opportunities that required my skills.



Ohio
Department of
Developmental
Disabilities

I have been employed at DODD for over twenty years. At present, I serve as the attorney for the Major Unusual Incident Unit, the Capital Program, DODD’s background check statuses. I handle guardianship questions, issues related to criminal justice and a host of other issues.



How have you been involved with the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council (ODDC)?



My initial involvement with the ODDC was through a project, Ohio Partners in Justice, which was funded by the Council through its Community Living Committee, led by Mary Lou Tucker, Council Member and staff liaison, Fatica Ayers. This initiative provided training on the criminal justice system throughout the state of Ohio to stakeholders in the developmental disabilities system, including state agencies involved in criminal justice, representatives of county boards of developmental disabilities, and provider agencies. The training focused on improving services delivered to individuals with intellectual disabilities involved in the criminal justice system. Although no longer funded by the Council and its membership is smaller, Ohio Partners in Justice continues providing this valuable training.

I have been a member of Council for four years. Currently, I serve as Vice-Chair, Community Living committee, and a member of the Outreach, Public Policy, and Employment committees.



Why are you invested in work to ensure unserved and underserved populations with disabilities receive the services that they need?



In my former life as a Prosecutor, I had some experience prosecuting cases involving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. At times I found myself wondering why more services were not provided to them. Once I began working with the Partners in Justice project, talking to others in the State and throughout the country, I began to see that there was an enormous need for training, not only in the criminal justice system, but also in the developmental disability system to ensure that these individuals, who were unserved and underserved, received the services that they needed.

As a member of my local bar association, the Columbus Bar Association, I worked for years in a program that was designed to provide summer internships to high school juniors in a large urban school district in Columbus, Ohio. This program, the Summer Leadership Intern Program (SLIP) placed high school juniors in some of the largest law firms in Columbus, Ohio as well as government agencies. Many of the students were persons of color, some from immigrant backgrounds. In addition to their internship responsibilities, they toured a federal court, and were engaged in a (1) mock legislative hearing involving a bill currently before the General Assembly in the State House (state legislators volunteered to be on the committee) and (2) a mock trial –which required mock trial practice sessions. This program produced students who went on to become lawyers and pursue other professional careers. I am especially proud of one of the early interns, Tykiah Wright, who I reconnected with decades later as the Founder and Executive Director of the Wright Choice Intern Program, an organization that provided internship opportunities to unserved and underserved persons with and without disabilities. Her organization was funded by a grant from the Council's Outreach Committee.

This work is important to me because I recognize the direct impact it has on improving the quality of life for so many individuals with developmental disabilities throughout the state that are unserved and underserved. Additionally, this work provides individuals with developmental disabilities who are unserved and underserved opportunities to continue themselves paying forward.



How have you advocated for these populations outside of Council?



Outside of Council responsibilities, I have advocated for the unserved and underserved populations with disabilities by supporting efforts to increase awareness about their needs and educating others about how to better meet these needs. For example, as a member of the conference planning committee for a criminal justice organization, I assisted with securing speakers on Autism Spectrum Disorder and Trauma Informed Care. Personally, I have teamed with individuals from the Ohio Partners in Justice and OCALI in providing training to defense attorneys about the needs of individuals across the Autism Spectrum Disorder. More of them are becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

Finally, as a member of the Ohio Family Violence Center Advisory Council, I have provided guidance, evaluated and informed policies that promote systematic collaborative action to prevent and respond to family and intimate partner violence. I bring the perspective of ensuring that policies and collaboration include the needs of unserved and underserved persons with developmental disabilities. For example, at one of the meetings, the speaker was an Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council grantee that provided information on the challenges and barriers women of color with developmental disabilities face in reporting domestic violence and/or intimate partner violence. The speaker was able to enlighten the group about the concerns women had regarding disclosing their disability in fear that the police office would no longer believe them.



2020 marks the beginning of a new year and an opportunity for the Council to plan for a new decade. What would you like to see realized at the end of this decade?



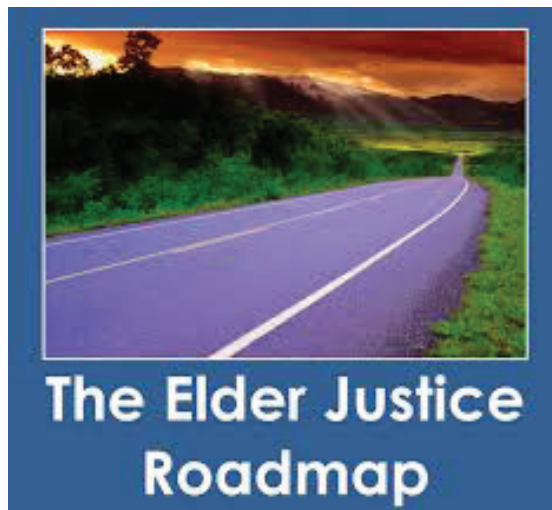
More systems, whether it is mental health system, criminal justice system or adult protective services, recognizing the necessity to better serve the unserved and underserved populations in society who come within their purview. They are open to and focused on providing inclusive services. I would like to see the Outreach Committee's model being used as a guide for other systems with regards to what to do, how to be effective at what they do, and how to sustain the work. I envision the members of the Committee and its staff serving as a "go to " resource to other organizations.

I would like to see the Outreach Committee continue to be at the forefront of evaluating impact, conducting research, examining other systems' effectiveness, benchmarking best practices. For example, at a recent meeting I attended on

elder abuse prevention and awareness, an Elder Justice Road Map had been developed by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to combat elder abuse. The Road Map notes the importance of elder justice practitioners having cultural capacity—knowing how to identify and respond to the unique attributes of elder abuse as they relate to family structure, religion, socioeconomic statuses, language, gender, age, incapacity, national origin, ethnicity.

The Road Map when discussing underrepresented and unserved populations states:

“The experience and context of elder abuse may differ based on the identities cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, religious, sexual orientation, etc. of both victim and abuser and awareness and respect for these diverse identities must be integrated into all aspects of elder abuse work.”



For me, this statement reflects my vision of the Outreach Committee’s work over this decade... bringing awareness and respect for diverse identities and ensuring integration into the system of services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities.

Join in the Black History Month Celebration!



Let others hear your views about the issues and needs in serving unserved and underserved populations with disabilities

Post your story on ODDC social media platforms



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Building networks that impact movement building requires focus on the following 5 key actions

#1 Mindset and cultural shift. The organizations need to be open to new ways of behaving to include seeking trust over control, breaking down or bridging internal and external boundaries, and focusing on shared values more than ideological differences.



#2 Let go of control and hierarchy, focusing instead on building trusted relationships. Interactions between organizations become less “transactional” (using one organization to fulfill its own agenda) and more “transformational” (working as partners to explore emerging opportunities for true collaboration)



#3 Identify an individual who will serve as the Network Facilitator. This individual focuses primarily on connecting networks across issues, geographies, race, ethnicities so that they can work collectively for change that benefits all.

#4 Champion the notion of creating backbone organizations, or hubs for networks where common resources can be centralized and shared. Thinking is outside the traditional organizational box—and focuses instead on identifying needs and leveraging (or creating) shared assets. This frees up activists' time to focus on what is most important: the social justice work.



#5 Start with small collaborations and build on them. By starting small, risks and complexity are relatively low, learning together evolves, and the capacity to collectively collaborate emerges through creating trust, understanding, and a relational foundation on which to build.

Determined people working together can do anything.
Jim Casey

Join in the Black History Month Celebration!



Talk about your network

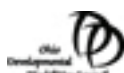
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