

# Blacks lose their grip on the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party in Cleveland as new party chair David B

Written by Kathy

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New Cuyahoga County Democratic Party Chairman David Brock and 11th Congressional District Congresswoman Shontel M. Brown (D-OH), a Warrensville Heights Democrat and the former chair of the county Democratic party, its first woman and first Black party chair

By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor-in-chief

CLEVELAND URBAN NEWS.COM- EUCLID, Ohio- Executive committee members of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party chose Cleveland west side organizer David Brock during a meeting on Saturday to lead the county Democratic party as the midterm elections near, an election for party chair that saw Blacks lose their grip on the powerful party once led by 11th Congressional District Congressman Shontel M. Brown

A former county councilwoman, Brown succeeded Marcia L Fudge in Congress, Fudge her political mentor and a 12-year congresswoman who vacated her congressional seat in March of 2021 to serve as secretary of housing and urban development with President Joe Biden's administration.

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Brown, 46, announced in late January that she would step down in June to dedicate more time to congressional work, though her dual role as congresswoman and party chair caused a degree of friction among party insiders and drew the ire of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Ohio's largest newspaper.

Brown and Fudge are both Black, Brown making history when she was first elected county party chair in 2017, its first Black and first female party chair. When she won the post some five years ago, she succeeded attorney Stuart Garson, who had quit the unpaid job, Garson stepping in initially after Jimmy Dimora, the imprisoned former party chair and county commissioner who preceded Garson for the post, ran afoul of the FBI and federal prosecutors.

Brock is White and won for party chair Saturday over four other candidates, namely state Rep Kent Smith of Euclid, state Rep Juanita Brent of Cleveland, former Shaker Hts councilman Rob Zimmerman, and community activist Ernie Harris, the former president of the activist group Black on Black Crime and a retired Cleveland schools programs support employee.

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Harris and Brent are Black, Brent the daughter of the late and former state representative Vermel Whalen.

Brock told his fellow Democrats after being voted in as party chair that "It's about how hard you work, how hard you work together."

Sources say his strongest asset in winning the confidence of executive committee members to snag the leadership role to lead the county's Democrats is community organizing, and hopefully the ability to raise monies and get Democrats elected and reelected.

Smith was ahead during the first round of voting but after Brent, Zimmerman and Harris

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dropped out before a second vote could be taken and backed Brock, Smith ultimately lost with Brock winning 55 percent of the vote to his 45 percent.

A community activist-turned-state representative, Brent was later chosen at Saturday's meeting as party vice chair, replacing Kevin Kelley, who lost a nonpartisan election last year for mayor as the then city council president to newcomer Justin Bibb, the city's fourth Black mayor, and its second youngest mayor.

Interim county party chair Blaine Griffin, now president of Cleveland City Council and who stepped in temporarily for Brown, chaired Saturday's voting session, Griffin a Black east side councilman who leads Ward 6 and a former community relations board director under former Mayor Bibbs' predecessor.

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A county of some 1.2 million people, Cuyahoga County includes Cleveland, and is the second largest of 88 counties statewide, behind Franklin County, which includes the capital city of Columbus.. A Democratic stronghold that is roughly 29 percent Black, former president Barack Obama won the county in 2008, and again in 2012.

The county Dems continue to recover from a long term public corruption and FBI probe that brought some 61 guilty pleas or convictions since 2008, mainly White businessmen associated with the county Democratic party, and including two former Democratic common pleas judges that served federal prison sentences.

Jimmy Dimora, a former county party chairperson serving a reduced 28-year federal prison sentence for racketeering and public corruption, and Dimora's sidekick and once a powerful county Democratic party operative, former county auditor Frank Russo, who took a plea deal for a 22-year prison sentence and died earlier this year following early release due to the COVID-19 scare, were the main targets of the sting that Democrats say was politically motivated. At the time Dimora was also chair of the county Democratic party.

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A delayed primary for Ohio lawmakers that followed a dispute between Republicans and Democrats over state legislative redistricting maps, will finally go forward on Aug. 2 and the November general election is sure to bring more attention to Ohio for that reason, and others.

Gov Mike DeWine, a GOP incumbent, faces Democrat and former Dayton mayor Nan Whaley for an all out showdown for governor in November, an election in which Ohio's U.S. Senate race is also being closely watched nationwide.

Also at issue, among statewide, congressional and other offices also on the ballot, is the fight to replace retiring Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, as well as elections for two other seats on the court that Republicans hold. Currently, Republicans hold all of the statewide offices, other than three seats on the Supreme Court that the Democrats occupy. Whether this will change via this election cycle remains to be seen.

**By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor. Coleman is a seasoned Black Cleveland journalist who trained at the Call and Post Newspaper for 17 years and an experienced investigative and political reporter. She is the most read independent journalist in Ohio per Alexa.com**

[Clevelandurbannews.com](http://Clevelandurbannews.com) and [Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com](http://Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com) , the most read Black

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digital newspaper and Black blog in Ohio and in the Midwest. Tel: (216) 659-0473. Email: editor@clevelandurbannews.com. We interviewed former president Barack Obama one-on-one when he was campaigning for president. As to the Obama interview

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