Carl Burton Stokes
History & Legacy Project

PRESENTED BY
RLR III & Associates

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
Lake View Cemetery,
Western Reserve Historical Society/Cleveland History Center,
Karamu House
Dear Friends:

As you know, Cleveland holds in its clutches some of history’s finest moments and the history makers who have made those moments last forever. Among those are the Stokes brothers – two kids from the projects who followed their passion for law and politics. As a result, Carl Burton Stokes went onto become elected the 51st mayor of Cleveland but more importantly, the first Black mayor of a major American city on Nov. 7, 1967.

The following year, Carl’s older brother Louis Stokes was elected as a Democrat to the United States House of Representatives, serving the 21st District of Ohio. He was the first African-American congressional representative from Ohio, where he remained in office for 15 terms. Louis was also a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The Stokes Brother’s professional careers were exemplary in so many ways. Prior to becoming Mayor of Cleveland, Carl was elected as the first Black Democrat to the Ohio House of Representatives in 1962 where he served for three terms. In 1970, the National League of Cities elected him its first Black president. After completing two terms as Mayor of the City of Cleveland, in 1972 he became the first Black anchorman in New York City when he took the job with television station WNBC where he won an Emmy Award for his broadcasting work. He returned to Cleveland in 1980 and began serving as general counsel for the United Auto Workers Union.

From 1983 to 1994, he served as a Municipal Court Judge in Cleveland. In 1994, President William Jefferson Clinton appointed him Ambassador to the Republic of Seychelles. He was awarded 12 honorary degrees, numerous civic awards, and represented the United States on numerous goodwill trips abroad at the request of the White House.

Carl was an amateur boxer, an author, a lecturer, a billiards aficionado, and a civil rights and human rights activist, making him one of a kind in American History. Carl B. Stokes passed away on April 3, 1996, and was buried at the historic Lake View Cemetery (LVC).

Yet, with all of these accolades, Carl’s gravesite does not grab the attention of passersby in this beautiful, historic cemetery like it should… like his brother Louis’ does. The goal is to let it be known that “here lies” a great man that accomplished so many things and heralded so many firsts.

Last fall, Carl’s son, Cordell Stokes, met with RLR III Associates at LVC to discuss the mutual desire to have a memorial monument erected there that would complement the existing burial site of his father. With input from the Senior Staff, a site has been identified approximately 100 to 150 feet from the current gravesite.
Within one week after the meeting, Cordell and his cousin Louis “Chuck” Stokes, gave their approval to RLR III & Associates, (Barbara Brown, Kevin “Chill” Heard and Vicki Dansby) to launch The Stokes History & Legacy Project. This project will consist of several elements. First, to raise the funds to secure the plots necessary to build the memorial monument. Second, to secure funding to complete the processing of Carl’s papers at the Western Reserve Historical Society/Cleveland History Museum and to have them digitized. Finally, to financially support the Karamu House initiative to completely upgrade and modernize the Stokes Room, which houses the photos, awards and trophy collection of Carl Burton Stokes. The Western Reserve Historical Society has agreed to serve as the project fiscal agent for the entire project.

Presently, RLR III & Associates is in the process of seeking Honorary Co-Chairs, General Co-Chairs and various persons who will agree to serve as general members of the planning committee for this exciting project and related events. Specifically, these roles and duties will be as follows:

**Honorary Co-Chairs**

The Honorary Co-Chairs lend their names to the project and will be asked to sign public documents such as letters of support and a welcome letter in the program book. They will also attend the dedication/unveiling of the CBS Memorial and preceding important events.

**General Chair/Co-Chairs**

The General Chair/Co-Chairs will assist with recruitment, motivate and lead a committee of volunteers, work with development staff to secure financial and in-kind project support, serve as project spokespersons and hold committee members accountable for their tasks and the overall goals of the event. The General Co-Chairs will also make a financial commitment to the project.

**Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee will be comprised of the General Chair, Sub-Committee Chairs, and interested organizational and community members. They will be responsible for working with RLR members to create a comprehensive project plan including goals and desired outcomes. They will approve all sub-committee decisions and assist in the overall planning of the events.

Because of your high level of expertise, your knowledge and networks, you are being called upon to volunteer to serve in one of the above-mentioned categories. Upon receipt of this letter, you will receive a call from a member of RLR III & Associates or from Cordell. You will be asked to serve on the committee and to answer any questions that may arise.

Once the funds have been raised, there will be a series of celebratory events held at the Karamu House, the Western Reserve Historical Society and an unveiling at the Lake View Cemetery. Thank you in advance for your time, consideration and support of this unique and historical project!

Respectfully yours,

R.L. “Bob” Render III
President, CEO
Dear Mr. Render,

Please accept this Letter of Support for the Stokes History & Legacy Project on behalf of my father, Carl B. Stokes.

Your organization’s vision to digitize my father’s historical papers include an educational component assisting students into future generations and the complimentary enhancement of one of this city’s greatest community assets... The Karamu!!

You have my support to approve your organization, RLR III & Associates, to manage the fundraising required for implementation inclusive of your company’s fees. You have my approval to manage, in consultation with me, the development of required participants (hosts, etc.). You have my approval to use my father’s family photos, in consultation.

In closing, Bob, your vision humbles me!! Your work ethic has been proven!! You have a great team that I look forward to working with through the fruition of this project!! God bless!!

Sincerely,
Cordell E. Stokes, son of Carl B. Stokes
Why Lake View Cemetery

There is only one Lake View Cemetery in Ohio and resting among its 285 acres over the past 153 years are people who changed the world and had a firm role in shaping the might and future of the great city of Cleveland. Also resting there are ordinary, everyday folks who are lesser known but nonetheless had a lasting impact on this community and their families.

As the city’s first “rural garden” cemetery, Lake View was an escape from the pollution and congestion of a swiftly urbanizing Cleveland. Today, Lake View is no longer an isolated rural retreat, but a culturally significant garden cemetery. Hundreds of thousands of visitors enjoy the spectacular landscapes, impressive sculptures and significant architecture of its rolling acres. Pass through the stately gates and you will see at once its inviting winding roads, rolling hills and tended parkland. Lake View’s sweeping grounds, ponds, streams and natural geological formations are located in Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, and East Cleveland.

Much an active cemetery, Lake View remains open to people of all races, religions, and walks of life. Throughout the grounds, memorials and monuments are dedicated to notable Cleveland figures, including John D. Rockefeller, Eliot Ness, Garrett Morgan, Frances Payne Bolton, Carl and Louis Stokes, Anthony Edward Smith, Jane Edna Harris Hunter, and Bishop Edward Thomas Demby. Members of President Lincoln’s cabinet, Civil War generals, Revolutionary War soldiers, and twenty-two Cleveland mayors are buried here too.

The James A. Garfield Memorial, situated at the highest point in the Cemetery is the final resting place for President James A. Garfield, 20th President of the United States. This monument does much to enhance the Cemetery’s local, regional, and national reputation. Although Garfield died early in his Presidency, he had an ever-lasting impact as President and as a groundbreaking progressive congressman who introduced many human rights reforms – including the abolishment of slavery – to the Federal Government and the nation. The presence of his monument at Lake View Cemetery is a significant marker for Lake View Cemetery’s identity as a historic resting place.

Lake View Cemetery is honored to participate in the Stokes History and Legacy Project. The cemetery has had ongoing partnerships with RLR III & Associates, Western Reserve Historical Society, Karamu House, and the Stokes family, especially Cordell Stokes. This project is, no doubt, the perfect time in history to commemorate the importance of this legacy. Our experienced staff, Katharine Goss, President and CEO, Andrew Bales, Vice President of Family Service, and Russell Smith, Memorial Advisor have 35 years combined experience in creating historically significant monumentation on our campus.
The Cemetery is always engaged with the local community and offers opportunity for a variety of lectures, tours and special events. We enjoy hundreds of thousands of visitors every year and expect the Stokes memorial would be one of our top five destinations, ensuring the story of Carl B. Stokes is learned in perpetuity. www.lakeviewcemetery.com

Stately entrance gates welcome visitors to Lake View Cemetery

Carl B. Stokes is buried in a single grave along the banks of this pond

The humble headstone of Carl B. Stokes

The future site of the Stokes History and Legacy Project
Lake View Cemetery

“Stokes” Estate
Cleveland, Ohio

Height: 12'-0"
Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), founded in 1867, is Cleveland’s oldest cultural institution and one of the largest and most diversified historical societies in the United States. WRHS is pleased to partner with the Stokes Family, RLR III & Associates, Lakeview Cemetery, Karamu House and Frederick Burton Design on The Carl B. Stokes History and Legacy Project. WRHS is pleased to serve as the fiscal agent for this project.

At WRHS, we provide exhibits, programming, preservation, and access to the history of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio through collections and experiences that elevate and amplify stories of African Americans and social justice. It is our mission to inspire people to discover the American experience in all its diversity through the tangible history of Northeast Ohio. We are making history every day, and WRHS makes every effort to use its resources and available evidence to share stories that are truthful, balanced, and representative of the people and region we serve.

In addition to serving as the fiscal agent, WRHS will participate on the planning committee and provide access to its significant archival and museum collections and resources. Additionally, WRHS venues are available for meetings and activities that advance The Carl B. Stokes History and Legacy Project goals and objectives.

WRHS Collections

Established in 1970, the WRHS African-American Archives’ purpose is to collect, preserve, and make accessible historic documents, photographs, memorabilia, art, and artifacts pertaining to African American life, history, and culture in Northeast Ohio. The collection includes manuscripts, photographs, microfilm, and newspaper collections. Museum artifacts are specific to the African American experience and cover a wide range of topics and categories of primary importance to the body of Black history. In order to help our archives progress, we welcome input to help us identify social justice resources that may be added to this growing collection.

Included in the WRHS’s African American Archives and collections are the Carl Stokes Papers (MS 4800). The collection consists of speeches, correspondence, datebooks, lectures, and other materials that document his life, work, and significant contributions to the city, region and nation. The Carl Stokes Photograph Collection (PG 429) includes portraits, photographs of the Stokes Family and friends, city, regional and political figures, celebrities, and individual citizens.

In 1992, WRHS sponsored the 25th Anniversary Celebration of Carl's election as Mayor of the City of Cleveland at the newly open Marriott Hotel in Downtown Cleveland. Former Vice President Walter
Mondale was selected as the Keynote Speaker, and was delighted to be asked, but he was scheduled to be in Japan during the time of the celebration. Fortunately, Louis was able to reach out to Julian Bond, who agreed to stand in for Mondale and gave an outstanding firsthand account about the work of the Civil Rights movement leading up to Carl's election. Additionally, the proceeds from that event provided the seed money that established the Endowment Fund for the WRHS’s African American Archives, which was later changed to the Dr. Booker T. Tall Endowment Fund in his honor.

WRHS Exhibits

In 2017, to mark the 50th anniversary of Carl Stokes’ election as the first Black mayor of a major American city in 1967, WRHS was one of more than 60 community partners led by Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) to participate in a year-long anniversary celebration. The anniversary year culminated at the WRHS Cleveland History Center with the grand opening of a permanent exhibit, *Carl & Louis Stokes Making History*. This exhibit examines the stories of the political careers of Carl & Louis Stokes, illuminates and defines broader issues in African-American and American urban history.

While the exhibit celebrates the achievements of Carl and Louis Stokes, it also uses their experiences to reflect on and explore topics such as the Civil Rights Movement, social and economic disparity among African-Americans, and the rise and importance of heroes and exemplars. The stories of Carl and Louis Stokes are woven into the fabric of this community. Together, their work was a springboard to advance social and economic equality in Cleveland and in the nation.

Thank You

Thank you for giving WRHS the opportunity to partner with individuals and organizations committed to creating a permanent memorial to Carl B. Stokes.
The Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) founded in 1867 is the oldest cultural institution in Northeast Ohio, and the region’s largest American history research center. The mission of the Western Reserve Historical Society is “to inspire people to discover the American experience in all its diversity by exploring the tangible history of Northeast Ohio.” As such, this is accomplished by collecting, preserving and presenting the history of all people of the Western Reserve, Cleveland, and Northeast Ohio.

Through its archival collections, WRHS has been collecting documents and artifacts of people and organizations involved in social change in Northeast Ohio since the mid-1960s; and has accumulated one of the most impressive and valuable collections related to African American history in the country. The historical records of numerous individuals, neighborhood centers, newspapers, organizations, and personal papers of African Americans have been collected and housed at the historical society.

Throughout his political career and beyond, Carl B. Stokes has played a key role in the advancement of Cleveland and the nation as the city’s first African American mayor. So it is important for Clevelanders, Black Americans, historians, and educators alike to have access to Carl Stokes’ rich archival records. The material in these collections is highly relevant to a variety of important historical moments, including the Civil Rights Movement, one of the most pivotal periods for African Americans in American history.

The work of Carl Stokes represented in WRHS’ archival collections has been received with great public and scholarly interest over the years. And while WRHS has a number of Carl Stokes collections that have already been cataloged and are available for public research, there are still papers and audiovisual materials that have yet to be processed and therefore are unavailable to the public.

We believe that by fully processing his archival materials, we will provide new research opportunities for those interested in African Americans’ role in political history, Black History, and the history of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio.

At present, there are approximately 125 linear feet of manuscript materials that have been processed and cataloged, and 12 linear feet of materials that remain unprocessed. There are also over 380 audio visual materials that are currently in unprocessed condition. Digitizing these materials will help to eliminate cost and location barriers for researchers to access materials in these valuable collections.

With our current staff and resources processing and digitization of these collections would take a number of years. Funding will allow us to hire professionals who are dedicated to processing these materials, significantly cutting down the time to process and make them available. By processing these collections and others like them, more historical evidence about Cleveland’s Black community and heritage can be shared with scholars and researchers, contributing to the national, regional, and local narratives about the Black experience in America.

WRHS is proud to be a partner in Carl B. Stokes History and Legacy Project. This is in line with our mission and our commitment of preserving and providing access to the history, culture and development of Cleveland and northeast Ohio. The project presents a wonderful opportunity to make the entirety of these rich holdings available.
WRHS will arrange, describe, and catalog the papers of Carl Stokes according to professional standards of archival processing as dictated by the Society of American Archivists. As part of the final stages to establish intellectual control over the collection, we will create bibliographic descriptions of the collections, listing important individuals and subjects referred to in the records. They will be entered into WRHS’ online catalog, as well as the OhioLink Finding Aid Repository. When fully cataloged, the collection will be available for research.

WRHS will take on the responsibility and the cost of preserving the papers in perpetuity. The collections will be rehoused in acid-free archival folders and containers, and final storage of the collection will be in the library, which is equipped with a fire suppression system and environmental controls to assure that the temperature and relative humidity are maintained at the proper levels for the long-term preservation.

WRHS will also undertake increasing access to the collection through digitization and metadata creation. By digitizing these collections and having online access, WRHS is broadening the visual record of these very valuable historical records while also preserving their original condition. WRHS will oversee the digitizing of the Carl Stokes collections. This includes uploading the digitized collections to the institution’s digital portal or another digital platform, as well as managing the storage and digital preservation needs of the digitized records. The digitization of the materials will be provided by an independent vendor. Quality control procedures will be implemented by WRHS to ensure that the digitized materials meet archival standards.

This project will result in the complete manuscript processing and digitizing of all or selected materials, which will provide improved physical and intellectual control over the collections. Once complete, a visual record of these materials will be made available online. WRHS will be responsible for stewarding the collections that can be integrated into programming, research, community engagement and help foster long standing relationships with other organizations in the community.
Karamu House is humbled and honored to participate in the Stokes History and Legacy Project. In partnership with our longtime friends and collaborators RLR III & Associates, Western Reserve Historical Society, Lake View Cemetery and Cordell Stokes and the Stokes family, Karamu is excited to lend its creativity and vision to the continued commemoration of the Stokes family legacy and the celebration of Carl B. Stokes.

**CENTERED IN MISSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Karamu House, a place of joyful gathering (the meaning of ‘Karamu’ in Swahili), was founded in 1915 as a space where people from different races, religions, and economic backgrounds could come together. Karamu centered artistic excellence and community. It is now recognized as the oldest, producing African American theatre in the nation and continually cited as one of Cleveland’s top four treasures, featured in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture and listed on the U. S. National Register of Historic Places. Karamu’s mission is to produce professional theatre, provide arts education, and present community programs for all people while honoring the Black experience. At Karamu, we believe in the arts as a vehicle on the road to social justice equity.

Karamu’s social justice roots begin with its founders, Russell and Rowena Jelliffe and their revolutionary act of creating a safe, integrated arts community which continues to stand tall through decades of the 20th century. While other arts organizations serving persons of color succumbed to racism and a lack of resources and community support, Karamu defied expectations, corrected historically propagated racial stereotypes, and provided a cultural home to Cleveland’s Black community. Today, Karamu is an anchor institution responsive to the needs of the community, a cultural home for African American artists, and a repository for culture. Karamu extends its legacy of service to the Black community using the arts as a mighty platform to celebrate, educate, and activate. It is a pillar for Black theatre, Cleveland history and American theatre history. Legendary artists including Ruby Dee, Robert Guillaume, Ron O’Neal, Bill Cobbs, James Pickens, Jr., Vanessa Bell Calloway and Harlem Renaissance playwright, Langston Hughes are connected to this 107-year-old institution.

**ARCHIVES**

Karamu House is honored to house the Carl Burton Stokes Collection. In 1994 Carl B. Stokes personal collection of extraordinary life and career memorabilia was entrusted to Karamu House by the Western Reserve Historical Society’s African American Archives. The entire collection contains 338 items including photographs, plaques and articles. As an arts and culture institution centered in social justice and providing socially and culturally relevant experiences, Mayor Stokes Collection at Karamu is a testament to Karamu’s profound history as a convener and gathering space during the height of the civil rights movement and beyond.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

Since receiving the gift of the Stokes Collection, Karamu’s Stokes Room is a dedicated space that showcases pieces of the collection. This room serves as a gathering space, educational space and important stop on Karamu tours that allows for a meaningful and historic celebration of Cleveland’s legacy. While Karamu is currently in a phase of master planning for the facility, its vision is a living museum with rotating collections that illuminate Cleveland history, Black theatre history and American theatre history. Karamu hopes to renovate the current Stokes room, creating a 21st century gathering space that is both accessible to the community and a continued and integral part of Karamu programming.
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