

WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# 150 YEARS

SHARING OUR STORIES

NORTHEAST OHIO • AMERICA

## CLEVELAND HISTORY CENTER

of the WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For Immediate Release

Contact:  
Angie Lowrie  
Director, Cleveland History Center  
216-721-5722 ext. 1402  
alowrie@wrhs.org

### *Carl & Louis Stokes Making History*

*New permanent exhibit opening November 2, 2017 at the Cleveland History Center is capstone of 2017 Commemoration **Stokes: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future***

CLEVELAND, OH (October 31, 2017) – The 50th anniversary of Carl Stokes' election as mayor of Cleveland is commemorated in 2017 with a yearlong series of events designed to inspire a new generation of community leaders. The celebration culminates at the Cleveland History Center, headquarters of Western Reserve Historical Society, on Thursday, November 2, with the installation of a new permanent exhibition, ***Carl & Louis Stokes Making History***. Honoring Mayor Carl B. Stokes and his brother, Congressman Louis Stokes, the exhibit builds on their legacy of leadership, advocacy and action.

The stories of the political careers of Carl & Louis Stokes will illuminate and define broader issues in African-American and American urban history. While the exhibit will justifiably celebrate the achievements of Carl and Louis Stokes, it will use their experiences to reflect on and explore topics such as the Civil Rights Movement, social and economic disparity and the rise and importance of heroes and exemplars. This exhibit will build a connection between the audience and thus help visitors better understand the "worlds" of Carl and Louis Stokes and the importance of the legacies they helped create.

The lives of Louis and Carl Stokes intersect with major, critical changes in the history of Cleveland and the United States. Carl Stokes was the first African-American mayor of a major American city. As mayor, he set an agenda to meet the needs of Cleveland residents regardless of their racial and ethnic background. He won voter approval for schools, housing and numerous other city projects. Equally important, Mayor Stokes demonstrated that in addition to civil rights activism, the cause of economic and social justice could be advanced by understanding the political process. His brother, Louis Stokes, played a groundbreaking role in the legal and political life of the nation serving 15 consecutive terms (30 years) as congressman. During his tenure he was the chair of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, and a pivotal figure in the Black Democratic Caucus.

"For 150 years we have been collecting and sharing the fascinating stories of Northeast Ohio. These are stories of national pride and significance, and stories close to home and close to our hearts. These stories are meant to be shared," says Kelly Falcone-Hall, WRHS President and CEO. "The Carl and Louis Stokes story is very much woven into the fabric of this community and leaves a legacy for residents and visitors alike. Their success brings hope to a city that continues to struggle with many of the same issues and hope to the individual who realizes that anyone can make a difference with hard work, determination and vision. Together, their work was a springboard to advance social and economic equality in Cleveland and in the nation, but that work is not done."

WRHS worked with Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and other community partners in creating the exhibit, which was funded by The George Gund Foundation and PNC Financial Services Group. In addition, students in Tri-C's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center and Student Production Office helped to record oral histories from more than 40 contemporaries of the Stokes brothers. The oral histories are incorporated into the exhibit and were made possible through support from The Cleveland Foundation and Ohio Humanities.

“The accomplishments of Mayor Carl B. Stokes and Congressman Louis Stokes advanced Cleveland and the nation, and their influence continues to resonate,” says Tri-C President Alex Johnson. “Their vision serves as a guide for a vibrant and prosperous future in our city.”

###

### **About Carl & Louis Stokes Making History**

WRHS is working with Dennis and Kathy Barrie of Barrie Projects, a local consulting firm specializing in museums, exhibits, and cultural planning projects around the globe. Gallagher & Associates is subcontracted to the project for content development and exhibit design. Multimedia elements and the orientation film are produced by Northern Light Productions. Fabrication, equipment, and gallery preparation are in partnership with ExPlus, Zenith, and AECOM.

### **About the Western Reserve Historical Society and Cleveland History Center**

Founded in 1867 as an historic branch of the Cleveland Library Association on Public Square in downtown Cleveland, the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) has been here to preserve and provide access to the stories of Northeast Ohio and beyond – stories of the people, the artifacts and the archives that are the provenance for our region.

Operating six sites throughout Northeast Ohio, WRHS presents exhibitions, programs and experiences that tell the story of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio through items, documents and artifacts from a variety of collections at its headquarters, the Cleveland History Center in University Circle. Through the use of its vast and varied collections in the areas of family history, community history, entrepreneurship, and technological innovation, the Cleveland History Center provides the public with a much-needed sense of place in today’s mobile society, and a base for learning about invention and ingenuity that can be transferred into modern economic expansion.

One admission to the Cleveland History Center includes access to two historic mansions, both on the National Register of Historic Places, the Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum (with support from The Frederick C. and Kathleen S. Crawford Fund of the Cleveland Foundation), Chisholm Halle Costume Wing, Research Library, Kidzibits Playzone, Community History Galleries, and two rides on the Euclid Beach Park Grand Carousel. Cleveland Starts Here®!

WRHS is a Smithsonian Affiliate ([www.affiliations.si.edu](http://www.affiliations.si.edu)) a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational, and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. WRHS is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Sponsorships, bequests, grants, admissions, and other funding are used by WRHS to preserve and enrich the region’s artistic and cultural heritage. Charity Navigator, the nation’s most-used independent evaluator of charities and nonprofits, has given WRHS a top four-star rating. For more information, visit us at 10825 East Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44106, at [www.wrhs.org](http://www.wrhs.org) or on social media @clestartshere.

