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# The African American Experience in Cleveland: Oral History and Digital Exhibition

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# **The African American Experience in Cleveland: Oral History and Digital Exhibition**

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## **Abstract**

Our project examines themes in African American history from the 1910s to 1970s through the lens of Cleveland, drawing upon the voices of more than 60 Clevelanders interviewed by our team. After collecting more than 60 hours of digital sound using oral history best practices, we produced minute-by-minute logs to aid researchers, created a selection of short story clips for the *Cleveland Voices* website, and curated new sites for the *Cleveland Historical* mobile app. Among our interviewees are the oldest living eyewitness of the 1920 Matewan Massacre in the coalfields of West Virginia, the first African American licensed pilot, and the first black architecture firm owner in Ohio. Many of our interviewees were participants in the Great Migration or Second Great Migration. Some have firsthand experience of sharecropping in the South in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and their local experience covers Cedar-Central, Glenville, Mt. Pleasant, and the Heights. Topical strengths within this new oral history series—part of the 900+ interview Cleveland Regional Oral History Collection—also include black music, leisure, and recreation venues, black suburbanization, school desegregation, housing discrimination (including hate crimes), fair housing activism, and urban riots.