

## **International Women's Day rally and march in Cleveland draw nearly 400, and are led by activist Kathy W**

Written by Kathy

Saturday, 11 March 2017 01:01 - Last Updated Wednesday, 15 March 2017 18:46

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**Pictured are journalist and activist Kathy**

**Wray Coleman, activist**

**Genevieve Mitchell**

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**(wearing red scarf),**

**and activist**

**the Rev Pamela**

**Pinkney-Butts**

**(wearing White hat)**

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**By Kathy Wray Coleman, editor-in-chief**

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**CLEVELAND URBAN NEWS.COM, CLEVELAND, Ohio-** Nearly 400 people participated in a rally and march in downtown Cleveland, Ohio on Wednesday, March 8 to celebrate International Women's Day, an event spearheaded by local activists and led by Cleveland activist and Black journalist Kathy Wray Coleman, head of the Imperial Women Coalition and editor at [ClevelandUrbanNews.Com](http://ClevelandUrbanNews.Com)

and the

[KathyWrayColemanOnlineNnewsBlog.Com](http://KathyWrayColemanOnlineNnewsBlog.Com)

, the two sponsoring groups along with Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice.

**(Editor's note:**

**Coleman is the one who thought of the March 8 rally and march and organized others, even paying a political organizer \$300 to help her, partly because she wanted issues impacting Black women that were not addressed during the Jan 21, 2017 Cleveland rally for women that mirrored the national rally to be addressed. The organizers in were Black women and grassroots activists).**

**[CLICK HERE TO GO TO THE FACEBOOK PAGE OF CLEVELAND 19 ACTION NEWS FOR THE VIDEO OF SPEECHES AT THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN DAY CLEVELAND RALLY LED BY BLACK WOMEN WITH A BLACK WOMAN AS THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER](#)**

And Black women activists of Cleveland gave the opening prayer (the Rev Pamela Pinkney Butts,) at the rally, and delivered the keynote address (Genevieve Mitchell).

The key organizer for the rally and march, Coleman gave a history of International Women's Day and highlighted violence against women internationally and in greater Cleveland, from the

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Imperial Avenue Murders by serial killer and death row inmate Anthony Sowell, to the still at-large serial killer who murdered four women a long a mile strip on East 93rd street on the largely Black east side of the majority Black major American city.

Also mentioned were the Seymour Avenue three rape and kidnapping victims of Ariel Castro, all of whom experienced heinous violence over a decade-long period at his home on the city's largely White west side, and until they escaped his wrath in 2013.

Coleman said that if women were truly organized the country would have already elected a woman president.

Some 15 speakers took to the podium at the Free Stamp at Willard Park at Cleveland City Hall before Coleman led participants in a march around the city that ended at the Old Stone Church at Public Square.

Cleveland Ward 2 Councilman Zack Reed spoke briefly and activists there, mainly grassroots activist of greater Cleveland who had helped with the organizing, recognized renowned constitutional attorney Avery Friedman of greater Cleveland, also a CNN political analyst who was in attendance in support of the women.

Cleveland followed the lead of national organizers of International Women's Day whose thrust followed the women's marches nationally of Jan 21, a week after the inauguration of President Donald Trump.

Organizers nationally and locally urged women to strike from work that day, to wear red in protest, and to refrain, also on March 8, from buying goods and products.

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But unlike most women's day rallies held on March 8 around the world Cleveland added a twist.

A few men, three in fact, spoke at the rally too, though women ran the gathering and were the leading organizers.

During the march activists chanted "This is what Democracy looks like," "This is what a feminist looks like," "My body. My choice," "Women united will never be divided," "No justice No Peace," and "No Trump. No KKK. No fascist USA."

Susan Schnur, also an organizer for the Cleveland event and an activist from Worker's World, spoke out against LGBT harassment and discrimination worldwide, and the repeal by Trump of President Barack Obama's support -initiatives for the LGBT community.

The march participants, some simply community members, held feminist and other signs with police on hand and on bicycles and horses for security.

Issues included violence against women and children, education, reproductive rights, mass incarceration, a broken legal system, equal pay, police brutality, medicaid and medicare, healthcare, immigrants, racism, sexism, Muslims, children, and the LGBT community

Genevieve Mitchell, a local Black activist and a member of the Carl Stokes Brigade, was the keynote speaker at the rally and, among a host of other issues, she spoke on mass incarceration of Black people, the impact of the vestiges of slavery, voting rights, women's rights, Civil Rights, education, and economics,

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And she recognized a score of Black female legends and sheroes, including former first lady Michelle Obama, Ida B Wells, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Barbara Jordan, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Winnie Mandella. And from greater Cleveland, 11th Congressional District Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge, whose largely Black congressional district includes Cleveland, retired Ohio 8th District Court of Appeals Judge Sara J. Harper, and activist and journalist Kathy Wray Coleman.

"Genocide is rampant," said Mitchell, who also called for the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) to stay intact as congressional Republicans are bickering over Trump's proposal that seeks to eliminate the universal healthcare law adopted by congress and replaces it with a new law, a proposal that has met some congressional opposition across partisan lines.

And Mitchell addressed the nation's broken and racist legal system and Blacks being targeted with excessive bail bonds, malicious prosecutions, and heightened sentences.

She also called out Cleveland police as to killings of Black women by police in recent years, including 30-year-old Malissa Williams in 2012, who was gunned down with Timothy Russell, 43, by 13-non-Black Cleveland cops slinging 137 bullets, and Tanisha Anderson, killed at her home by Cleveland police on the city's east side in 2014.

Julia Shearson, a Harvard University graduate and a Muslim who is executive director of CAIR-Cleveland, spoke on the travel ban enacted per a recent executive order from President Trump that precludes travel to and from six Muslim countries.

The president's previous Muslim ban was struck down by an appeals court as unconstitutional and activists at Wednesday's rally in Cleveland deemed both the previous and current travel bans racist, unconstitutional, and discriminatory also from a religious basis.

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Olga Rosada, an immigrant representing the greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network, which is led by activist Don Bryant, who was one of two male organizers of the event along with political organizer Marty Krebs, blasted the Trump administration as to its anti- immigration policies

James Sullivan of Refuse Fascism.org called Trump and his anti-Democratic policies a disgrace, and demanded that Trump supporter Steve Loomis, president of the Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association, resign as the elected union head.

Activists said people should resist Trump and his regime.

Other speakers included the Rev Pamela Pinkney-Butts, who opened with prayer followed by a women's rights speech, and Larry Bresler of the Northeast Ohio Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and Organize Ohio, who spoke on poverty and medicaid and medicare attacks by Republican congressional leaders and the president.

Educator and activist Melissa Svivelj Smith, a public school teacher, blasted the president on public education agendas he is pushing, including heightened standardized testing, and school vouchers, the latter a Republican pushed initiative that has some Black support due to its school choice options, though data show that voucher schools fair no better than public schools academically.

Patrice Brown ( [Patrice-Brown.com](http://Patrice-Brown.com) ), an Obama supporter and women's rights activist who announced her early entrance into the race next year for the Ohio 12th legislative district seat

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vacated by the term-limited John Barns Jr of Cleveland, spoke, as did Alfred Porter Jr. of Black on Black Crime Inc., who read off the names of several greater Cleveland women, who were victims of rape or murder, including the 11 Black women murdered on Imperial Avenue by Anthony Sowell, and the Ariel Castro Seymour Avenue rape and kidnapping victims.

Princess Dicie Moore spoke on the rape and murder of Black children, including 14-year-old Alianna DeFreeze. And she called for local and state policy makers and Cleveland's public and other schools to devise more effective transportation systems, poor children that reside in Cleveland like Alianna of whom are often forced to ride the Regional Transit Authority buses to charter and public schools.

Rose Driscoll of the Democratic Socialist of America Cleveland Chapter was also among the 15 or so rally speakers, as were activist and minister Gwendolyn Pitts, and Nina McClellan on behalf of Cleveland Peace Action and Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice.

Also there, though not organizers of the event, were members of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Women's Caucus, which is led by attorney Cindy Dempsey.

Cuyahoga County includes the city of Cleveland and is a Democratic stronghold. It is the largest of 88 counties statewide, and is roughly 29 percent Black.

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