

Written by Kathy
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Staff article by: [Clevelandurbannews.com](https://www.clevelandurbannews.com) and [Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com](https://www.kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Cleveland activists and Women's March Cleveland, the largest grassroots activist women's rights group in Northeast Ohio, are praising Cleveland WEWS News 5 Investigator Joe Pagonakis (pictured) after he and the news station announced earlier this week that he will retire, effective Mon., April 29, after nearly five decades in television news.

Pagonakis will sign off from WEWS News 5 for the final time Monday, ending a storied 48-year career in television, with 40 years on the air reporting in local communities and more than 30

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years at News 5, the news station reported this week.

“My sincere thanks and gratitude to Northeast Ohio viewers for turning to News 5 and trusting me to tell their stories for more than three decades,” Pagonakis said via the story. “It has been such an honor and a blessing to have the opportunity to try and help others in need in my hometown for all these years.”

Women's March Cleveland head organizer Kathy Wray Coleman, a longtime Black Cleveland organizer and community activist who also leads the Imperial Women Coalition, called Pagonakis "a Cleveland television media legend who is widely respected and intuitive on issues impacting women, Blacks, poor people, and other marginalized groups," and said that he is "irreplaceable."

Coleman said that when organizing for women's marches and rallies in the fight against violence against women and for reproductive and other rights for Cleveland and Ohio women it was sometimes exhausting trying to engage the mainstream media in event coverage due in part to political and other reasons, particularly when key organizers were Black women, but Joe Pagonakis would often step to the plate and do worthwhile stories.

"His coverage was always thorough and fair, and he was always professional, even when the women would sometimes tease him about his suave-style and good looks," said Coleman, who has led Women's March Cleveland for about six years, including helping relative to the successful passage of the Issue 1 referendum approved by voters last November that enshrined the legal right to abortion and other reproductive measures into the Ohio Constitution. It came after the U.S. Supreme Court, in June of 2022, overturned the longstanding Roe. v. Wade and gave respective states broad-ranging authority to regulate and legislate abortion.

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Coleman said that Pagonakis also covered rallies she led for the Imperial Women Coalition as to the unprecedented murders of 11 Black women on Imperial Avenue in Cleveland by the late serial killer Anthony Sowell, who died in 2021 while on death row.

His presence in sometimes covering anniversary rallies on the murders helped to minimize routine harassment, she said, from former city officials who told her that "the rallies made the city look bad because they highlighted heightened crime against Black women at a time when city leaders wanted to position the city as a great place to live and raise a family."

When her group pushed for more local, county and federal funding for the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and the Journey Center for Safety and Healing (domestic violence center) as cases of rape were increasing, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, activists could count on him to publicize the effort, Coleman said, adding that his coverage and that of News 5 on the issue was "neutral, timely, and unbiased."

"He would sometimes say Kathy I must tell both sides," the activist said, "sometimes to my annoyance, particularly regarding the fight by activists to preserve the right to abortion access for Ohio women currently, and for generations to come."

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Coleman said that her response would sometimes be that "there is only one side to equality for women and we cannot reach equality when men in power, primarily White men and some state and federal lawmakers, seek to deny Ohio women the choice to decide what to do with our bodies through draconian, anti-female policies that we view as unconstitutional in every respect."

Activists say they worry that as some seasoned television journalists respected in the Black community and other community circles like Pagonakis prepare to retire, the largely Black major American city of Cleveland and activists will be left with a void.

"As women in Cleveland, Northeast Ohio and nationwide prepare to likely take to the streets in protests before the 2024 presidential election against an anticipated and potential national ban on abortion at the federal level we hope that our mainstream media of Cleveland that Blacks and women have continually supported over the years will be on the right side and with women every step of the way."

Activist Alfred Porter Jr. of Black on Black Crime Inc, who often helped Coleman in organizing women's marches and rallies, described Joe Pagonakis as "a part of Cleveland's history and a legendary, investigative reporter who was fair to activists and the Black community."

Delores Gray, also a community activist, organizer and community advocate, also agrees that Pagonakis will be missed by activists in the trenches of Cleveland as they continue their fight for

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equal opportunity and fair play for disenfranchised Blacks, women and poor people.

Clevelandurbannews.com and Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com , the most read Black 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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