

The Mandel Spotlight

The Biannual Newsletter of The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®)
Volume III, Issue I Summer 2022



Congratulations to Our Mandel Scholars Academy Graduates!

This spring, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Scholars Academy celebrated its most recent graduating class at a special ceremony.

Eastern Campus President **Todd Kitchen, Ed.D.**, congratulated the scholars and their proud families, acknowledging the challenges they faced as students during a global pandemic and celebrating their resilience both individually and collectively. Each scholar received a Mandel Scholars Academy cord to wear at Tri-C's

Spring 2022 Commencement ceremony, which took place June 2 at Progressive Field.

Most of the 44 Mandel graduates are continuing their education at four-year institutions, with 17 transferring to Cleveland State University as part of the Mandel Continuing Scholars Program.

- Meet some of our recent graduates on page 5
- Check out photo highlights from AY 21-22 on page 8

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JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL
HUMANITIES CENTER

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center at Cuyahoga Community College

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Exploring Humanity's Big Questions

New Mandel Youth Humanities Academy develops college-ready thinkers, writers and citizens

This summer, the Mandel Humanities Center hosted the inaugural Mandel Youth Humanities Academy cohort. A diverse group of 25 teens from 21 Northeast Ohio high schools spent nine weeks at the center and in the community exploring some of the “Big Questions” at the core of our human experience: *What is beauty? What does it mean to be intellectually virtuous? What is the examined life? What is my role as a member, or citizen, of the communities to which I belong?*

Established with a generous grant from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, the Youth Humanities Academy creates a community of engaged citizen-scholars with a strong foundation in the humanities. High school juniors and seniors work closely with Tri-C faculty to develop their writing, math and critical thinking skills in preparation for college-level work. Participants received a stipend that allowed them to commit fully to the academy without the demands of a summer job.

Program manager **David Busch, Ph.D.**, designed a number of different academic experiences that encouraged participants to think deeply about life’s Big Questions. Students examined classic texts like Plato’s *Apology* alongside diverse forms of humanities texts within and beyond Cleveland, explored other worlds using virtual reality technology and engaged with local artists and activists.

“Our goal is to demonstrate that the content and skills associated with the humanities equip us with a unique lens to interpret, understand and relate to the world around us,” Busch explained.

Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the most powerful outcomes of the summer’s activities was the learning community developed amongst the students. “One of the unique qualities of this program — and especially the first cohort — is its geographical diversity,” Busch said. “Students have the opportunity to connect and collaborate across school districts and neighborhood boundaries.

Their diverse perspectives also facilitate deeper intellectual engagement.”

Participants in this summer experience will continue to receive support from the academy throughout the coming year. “Youth Humanities Academy students will have numerous opportunities to connect with Tri-C’s Mandel Scholars Academy during the academic year,” said **Matthew Jordan, Ph.D.**, dean of the Mandel Center. “In fact, four of our current or recently graduated Mandel Scholars served as program mentors this summer. We hope that many Youth Academy participants will choose to continue their studies as Tri-C Mandel Scholars.”



Mandel Youth Humanities Academy Scholars wrote, curated and published the first MYHA Review, a collection of student-authored essays and journal entries reflecting on the “Big Questions” they encountered over the summer. Check out the excerpts below, then view the journal in its entirety at myha-journal.com.

The Examined Life

“For me, living an examined life is about digging deeper than face value. Sometimes I feel like it’s easy to just go through the motions every day. In order to lead an examined life, we must be able to step away from what we are doing and question the world we are living in. Question the systems we live under, question the way we interact and why, question how our society has evolved to where it is today. Once we begin to question society, our eyes open. Our perceptions of reality change and grow the more we question and strive to understand.”

—Naomi Shroge

“Throughout the last three to four weeks, I’ve noticed a bigger idea that is often common between these impactful leaders. They all seemed to broaden the limits of their community in their own unique way. In turn, this leads me to realize that maybe the examined life is simply broadening the limits of yourself and the community around you. We can talk all day about what virtues are included, but we are all provided with different skillsets and thoughts. We all have different curiosities. There is beauty in this because it highlights just how far we as a people can go. I believe this curiosity and willingness to discover ourselves is needed to live ‘the examined life’.”

—Elijah Hlabangana

Listen, Like and Subscribe

More Human podcast explores what it means to live a truly human life

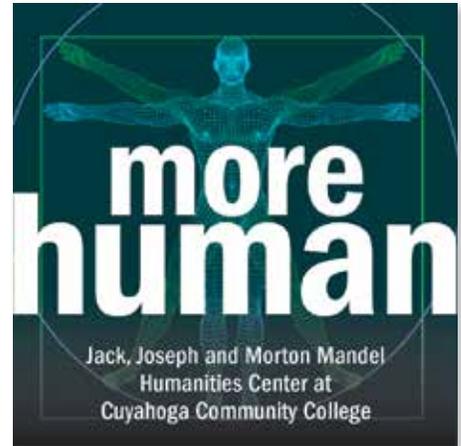
More Human is a new podcast inspired by the conviction that Socrates was right when he said “the unexamined life is not worth living.”

To live a truly human life, Socrates believed, is to cultivate our minds. We live well when we live thoughtfully — when we engage our intellects, when we challenge ourselves, when we resist the pull of the shallow and the superficial and pursue instead the true and the beautiful and the good.

The official podcast of Cuyahoga Community College’s Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center, *More Human* explores how engaging with literature, philosophy, history and art enables us to live deeper, richer, fuller and, ultimately, more human lives.

Hosted by **Matthew Jordan**, episodes of *More Human* feature conversations with students, faculty and other scholars working in the humanities at Tri-C and throughout Northeast Ohio.

More Human is available on **iTunes**, **Spotify** and other podcast platforms. Listen to some of our favorite episodes so far:



Ep. 6: What Are the Humanities, and Why Should You Care? (with Ben Vinson III, Ph.D.)

Vinson is the provost and executive vice president of Case Western Reserve University, as well as a prominent advocate for the humanities. But... what are “the humanities,” anyway, and why do they matter? Along the way to answering this question, Vinson discusses his passion for Latin American history, what college administrators do for a living, why we need to integrate rather than divide the sundry areas of human inquiry, and, of course, Venezuelan soap operas.



Ep. 7: Food Deserts, Eating Local, Human Resources and Tri-C’s Mandel Scholars

The Mandel Scholars Academy capstone course, Humanities 2020: Community Engagement Through the Humanities, pairs student teams with community partners. In this episode, scholars Aaron Hayes and Liz Ward and professor Kim Hill sit down with Jordan to discuss their work with City Fresh, an organization that creates and promotes a more healthy, vibrant and equitable food system in Northeast Ohio.

Ep. 8: Frederick Douglass, Poetry and Teens with a Purpose (with Nathan Richardson)

Richardson, a Frederick Douglass scholar and interpreter, joined Jordan for this discussion on Douglass’ significance as well as his own work as a published poet and competitive poetry reader.

Mandel Scholars Academy Graduates

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Mandel Scholars Sarah Wilkinson, Paige Ray and Luis Gonzalez Villasmil celebrate at Spring 2022 Commencement



Mandel Scholar Edith Cabrera with Tri-C President Alex Johnson



Dr. Kitchen congratulates Mandel Scholar Anthony Byrd at a pre-graduation ceremony

Mandel Scholars Amplify NAACP's Legacy With Cleveland History Center Exhibit

Credit: Western Reserve Historical Society

The Mandel Scholars Academy's culminating course, **Humanities 2020: Community Engagement Through the Humanities**, challenges students to work collaboratively on a real-world project presented by a community partner.

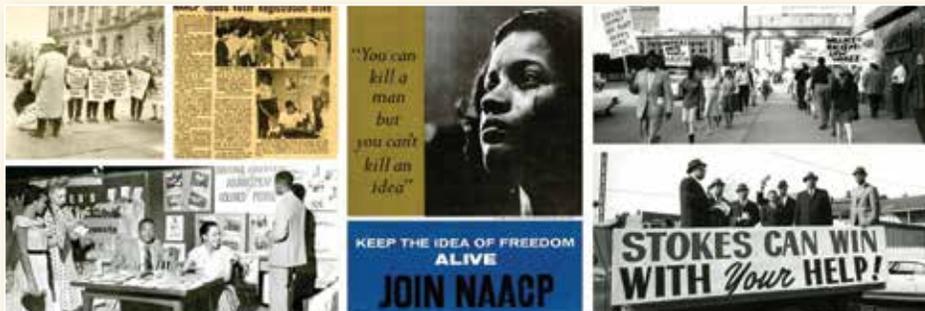
Scholars from professor **Matt Laferty's** Fall 2021 class teamed up with the **Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS)** and **NAACP Cleveland Branch** to create a special exhibit exploring the history, legacy and continuing impact of the NAACP in Cleveland. *The NAACP: A Legacy of Justice and Hope* opened at the Cleveland History Center during Black History Month and remained on display through August 2022.

Founded in 1909 to combat discrimination against African Americans, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots civil rights organization. The Cleveland Branch has championed social, political, educational and economic justice for Northeast Ohio's Black residents since 1912.

"We are grateful to the students and staff who brought this exhibit together," said NAACP Cleveland president, **Danielle Sydnor**. "As an organization that has been around for more than 100 years, maintaining, preserving and sharing our history is a vital part of respecting our past while giving us the energy to keep fighting forward."

Mandel Scholars worked with WRHS African American History archivist, **Patrice Hamiter**, and curator **Eric Rivet** to develop the exhibit using items from WRHS' recent acquisition of NAACP Cleveland Branch materials as well as previously cataloged materials.

"This type of project is what the Mandel Scholars Academy is all about. Students were able to work with primary source documents,



seeing firsthand the powerful and transformative legacy of the NAACP Cleveland Branch," explained Laferty. "Museum staff made the archive come to life and allowed the students to understand the stakes of presenting the archive to the public. The students watched history pour out of old documents and gained a deeper understanding of the work of the NAACP and its importance to all of us."

Scholar **Brooklyn Beard** found the experience transformative: "The opportunity to work with the Cleveland History Center was an experience I never would have gotten anywhere else! I was able to work hands-on with the archives and museum experts to create something real, meaningful and relevant. To see it all come together was just incredible, and I felt so accomplished."

Scholars who participated in this project include:

- Gwendolyn Baker
- Tyler Monastra
- Brooklyn Beard
- Michael Staats
- Alexis Januszewski
- Renee Thomas
- Isabel Juhasz
- Bit Vaught
- Michelle Malick

Other partners who engaged with Mandel Scholars to complete Humanities 2020: Community Engagement Through the Humanities community projects in AY 21-22 include:

Fall 2021

- Cleveland Leadership Center
- *The Buckeye Flame*
- Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center

Spring 2022

- Baseball Heritage Museum
- City Fresh
- Neighborhood Media Foundation



Professor Matt Laferty at the opening of *The NAACP: A Legacy of Justice and Hope* exhibit at WRHS



Mandel Scholars with Professor Pat Stansberry and Ricardo Rodriguez, museum director of the Baseball Heritage Museum



Mandel Scholar Brooklyn Beard with Crystal Bryant, Executive Director of NAACP Cleveland

Exit Interview: Checking in With Recent Mandel Scholars Academy Graduates



**Aaron
Hayes**

■ What did you study at Tri-C, and why did you choose that field?

I started at Tri-C undecided on a major. After a year and several informational interviews, exploring everything from private investigation to nutrition and dietetics, I decided on social work for a major. I chose social work in hopes of helping youth find their passion in life and make their dreams come true.

■ Describe an experience you had as a Mandel Scholar that made an impression on you.

The experience that will stay with me is meeting the weavers from Weave: The Social Fabric Project. It was empowering to see regular people make a positive difference in others' lives. [Read more about Weave on page 6.](#)

■ What advice would you give to incoming Mandel Scholars?

Take advantage of every opportunity presented to you. Do as many CLEadership activities as you can. You will learn and experience things you never would have imagined. These activities can be part of your resume and college applications. Also, engage and get to know all Mandel Scholars, including those before, during and after your cohort. We are the kind of gang you want to join. Enjoy the ride!

■ What's next for you?

I just completed the summer seminar at Cleveland State University as a Mandel Continuing Scholar. I will start this fall at CSU, studying social work to attain a Bachelor of Arts. I plan to get licensed as a social worker after earning my bachelor's degree. Then I will attend Case Western Reserve University for my Master of Arts. I plan to work with youth to help them achieve their goals, and later, I hope to work with veterans.



**Francieli
Vogel**

■ What did you study at Tri-C, and why did you choose that field?

I decided to study international business because my dream is to work for a nonprofit organization, helping wherever I'm needed in the world.

■ What is a favorite memory from your time as a Mandel Scholar?

I loved our "graduation extravaganza" experience at the end of the program. I got to exchange experiences with a lot of the Mandel Scholars. We cried, laughed and agreed that being part of the Mandel Scholars Academy helped us on our journey. We are really lucky!

■ How did your thinking about the academy's three pillars — Humanities, Leadership and Civic Engagement — evolve over time?

Honestly, I already knew how important these pillars were before getting into the program. It's part of what attracted me to it. But with all of the activities and classes, I got to see other perspectives that I did not see before. I appreciated the opportunity to get involved in the community while investing in and improving my skills at the same time. Being part of the Mandel Scholars Academy reassured me that I am on the right path.

■ What's next for you?

I am in the Mandel Continuing Scholars program, so I will earn a degree in international business in two years at **Cleveland State University**. After that, I want to study social work.

Leading With Love and Weaving a Better Community

Tri-C's Mandel Scholars are thinkers, learners and leaders. And after an engaging workshop with **Weave: The Social Fabric Project**, many discovered that they are weavers, too.

On March 29, the Mandel Humanities Center hosted the Aspen Institute's Weave Project for a special event in which weavers from across the country shared stories of creating positive social connections in their own communities.

Weavers give, inspire and spread trust by being open and showing up for others. They are ready to see strengths, make commitments, invest in relationships and work together to make their communities stronger.

Weaver **Ashley Esposito** explained **Village of Violetville Inc.**, a neighborhood wellness association she founded in Southwest Baltimore for neighbors who previously felt isolated and unwelcome. Weaver **Amy Schenkel** of Grand Rapids, Michigan, shared the wisdom of starting small and simple to build a sense of belonging, as she did when she began hosting barbecues in her front yard.

Esposito and Schenkel were joined by weavers **Darius Baxter** (Washington, D.C.) and **Jedy Mom** (Compton, California), who also used their stories to encourage second-year Mandel Scholars to consider how they, too, can show up for others and lead with love.

The event's timing and audience were intentional, with a message designed specifically for scholars in the second half of the second semester of their second year in the program. "Most of you will be graduating from Tri-C soon," Dean **Matthew Jordan** told attendees, "and we hope you've gained something valuable that you can take into your future as leaders."

Fred Riley, executive director of Weave, was particularly excited to introduce the concept to Mandel Scholars. "Sadly, this generation of college students has a reputation for being disconnected, selfish and untrusting. But I saw a very different narrative here at the Mandel Center," he said. "Weavers work to make everyone feel at home in a community, and it's clear that the Mandel Scholars Academy has become a 'home' for these students and that they are already weaving within this learning community."

The event left a lasting impression on Mandel Scholar **Christopher Oley**. "This experience was really amazing. I realized that everyone, despite our individual circumstances, has a past ... and also a future. All of the weavers we met started out with just an idea or a dream for something better. This inspires me to invest in my own ideas and future, and it makes me think I can make a difference, too."

The weavers presented each scholar with a special Weave pin to remind them that they can continue to build connections and weave the rich social fabric of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio.



Dean Matthew Jordan with guests from Weave: The Social Fabric Project and second-year Mandel Scholars



Mandel Scholars share a meal and conversation with weaver Amy Schenkel



Fred Riley, executive director of Weave: The Social Fabric Project, meets with Mandel Scholars about community-building



Learning to Lead

Mandel Scholars have numerous opportunities to meet and engage with local and national leaders through the **My Path to Leadership** series. This past semester, scholars interviewed three fascinating people about their leadership journeys:

- **Arman Saldirdak** and **Oluwasegun Ogunlade** interviewed Tri-C President **Alex Johnson, Ph.D.** Johnson spoke candidly about leading in times of crisis, including during a global pandemic and after a major weather event (Hurricane Katrina

hit during his time as president of Delgado Community College in New Orleans). He also reflected on his legacy at Tri-C and his hopes for the College's future as he approached retirement.

- Cuyahoga County voters will elect a new county executive this November, and Mandel Scholars had the chance to hear from two leading candidates: **Lee Weingart** and **Chris Ronayne**. Interviewed by **Austin Keller** and **Kevin Wieder**, Weingart and Ronayne shared their perspectives on public service, advice on getting involved in civic life, and visions for a stronger Cuyahoga County.

View videos of these discussions at tri-c.edu/mandelpastevents.

Meet the Mandel Humanities Center Team



Matthew C. Jordan, Ph.D.

Dean and Chair, Humanities

Quote to live by: “You want the inside of your head to be an interesting place to spend the rest of your life.”

—Judith Shapiro

Recommended listening:

More Human, the official podcast of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center



Marianna Nesterenko

Coordinator

Quote to live by:

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” —Seneca

Favorite part of my job:

I really enjoy working on events and conferences for students and seeing the positive effect these experiences have on their lives and learning.



Ra'Shawn Brown

Coordinator

Favorite part of my job: I enjoy helping students solve problems. They often avoid asking questions because they've had negative experiences in the past, but all they need is someone to assist them. I may not know all things, but I'm more than willing to set aside my current task to prioritize any student's needs.

Recommended reading:

The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. by Peniel E. Joseph and *On the Side of My People: A Religious Life of Malcolm X* by Louis A. DeCaro Jr.



Summer Paris

Community Liaison

Recommended listening:

Dolly Parton's America with Jad Abumrad. Or, if you only have 30 minutes, check out the “Something Large and Wild” episode of *This Is Love* with Phoebe Judge or John Green's review of “Air Conditioning and Sycamore Trees” on *The Anthropocene Reviewed*.

Recommended reading:

I am currently reading two Cleveland authors: *Sleepwalk* by Dan Chaon and *Honor* by Thrity Umrigar.



David Busch, Ph.D.

Program Manager, Mandel Youth Humanities Academy

Recommended listening:

Yascha Mounk's podcast, *The Good Fight*

Recommended reading:

This summer, I read *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard. I was attracted to the book for its discussion on theodicy and the cruelty of the natural world, but it's about so much more. And Dillard is a beautiful writer!



Emily Quayle

Student Liaison, Mandel Continuing Scholars Program

Quote to live by:

“Nothing would be the same if you did not exist. Every place you have been and everyone you have ever spoken to would be different without you. We are all connected, and we are all affected by the decisions — and even the existence — of those around us.” —David Niven

Recommended reading:

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith, *Just One Day* by Gayle Forman and *The Seamstress* by Sara Tuvel Bernstein



Rebecca Stolzman

Collegewide Director, Honors and Scholars Programs

Quotes to live by: “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent” and “It is not fair to ask others what you are not willing to do yourself”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Recommended reading: *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie

Think Well and Change the World: 2021-2022 Highlights



▲ History of Cleveland tour with Teaching Cleveland at the Mayor Tom Johnson memorial on Public Square



▲ Scholars Alma Rodriguez and Abriella Minotti with journalist David Pogue, author of Preparing for Climate Change



▲ Dean Matthew Jordan with representatives from three Mandel cohorts (left to right): Kevin Jones (Spring '19), Theresa Sowul (current), Blair Austin (Fall '18), Luis Gonzalez Villasmil (Spring '22)



▲ Scholar Judy Nwoguh at Pebble Ledge Ranch for a Mandel Scholars leadership retreat



▲ Scholar Jess Hogan shows a piece of Cleveland pride handcrafted from reused materials at Upcycle Parts Shop



▲ Mandel Scholars on "The Roots of Social Justice: Alabama Civil Rights Trip" at the Civil Rights Memorial Center in Montgomery



▲ Mandel Scholars with Tri-C Professor of Photography Daniel Levin (center) and Mandel Humanities Center National Advisory Board member Cantor Sarah Sager (right) at an exhibition of Levin's work, *Violins and Hope: From the Holocaust to Symphony Hall at Temple Tifereth-Israel*



▲ Scholars exploring the Cleveland Museum of Art with Dr. Christine Wolken, art history professor



▲ Mandel Scholars at the City Club of Cleveland



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