



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 12, 2020
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Ohio Humanities Launches ‘Perfecting Democracy’ Podcast Exploring Voting Rights in Ohio with Support from Mellon Foundation

COLUMBUS, OH—Ohio Humanities received a \$20,765 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to produce Perfecting Democracy, a series of six podcasts exploring voting rights in Ohio. “Examining the history of voting in Ohio is more important than ever in the aftermath of the contentious 2020 election season,” said Executive Director Pat Williamsen. “Perfecting Democracy will provide an important space to discuss civic and electoral participation, and we are immensely grateful to the Mellon Foundation for their support.”

In 1802, Ohioan Christopher Malbone became the first African American to vote in Ohio, in a territorial election in Marietta. More than 65 years would pass before the Constitution protected the rights of his ancestors to vote in later elections. Perfecting Democracy will interview scholars from across Ohio to explore topics about America’s participatory democracy.

Ohio Humanities’ award is part of a \$1.96 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to the Federation of State Humanities Councils’ “Why It Matters: Civic and Electoral Participation” initiative. Programs will be conducted by humanities councils in 43 states, including Ohio, through spring 2021 and will include radio programs, virtual online panels, exhibitions, story circles, town halls, and more.

The series will be produced and hosted by veteran producer Ron Bryant, whose portfolio includes over 40 years of print, radio, and television work for the Columbus Call and Post, the NAACP, the Ohio Democratic Party, and others. You can listen to the first episode, “Perfecting Democracy—Why it Matters,” which explores the history of civic engagement in the United States with Akron-based journalist and author David Giffels, at ohiohumanities.transistor.fm or in the Ohio Humanities podcast feed wherever you listen.