

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussion groups or library programs.

Meet architect and author Robert P. Madison, who was born in Cleveland and opened the first Black-owned architectural firm in Ohio, and coauthor Carlo Wolff, who lives in suburban Cleveland.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Designing Victory*.

Discover websites, informational texts, and primary sources to explore topics and themes in depth.

Designing Victory: A Memoir

The Architect Who Dared, Dreamed, and Achieved International Acclaim
By Robert P. Madison with Carlo Wolff

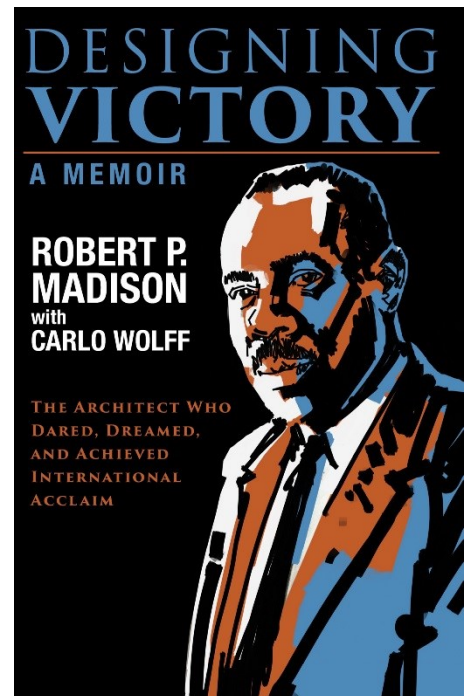


About the Book

As a decorated member of the historic Buffalo Soldiers, Second Lieutenant Robert P. Madison decided to enroll in the architecture program at Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, only to be summarily denied access based on his race. He returned in full dress uniform, with his Purple Heart from an injury sustained in Italy, and declared they could not keep him out of college. Under duress, he was admitted, but told by the administrators that he would never work as an architect.

How wrong they were. Madison opened the first African-American architectural firm in Ohio in 1954, and only the 10th in the country. This was only the beginning of his many accomplishments and contributions to American society.

Designing Victory is the remarkable memoir of a man who has always lived by Theodore Roosevelt's words: "Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure."



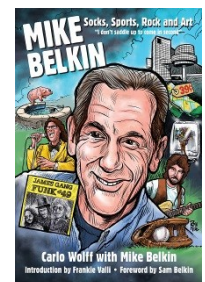
Permission to use book jacket image and book description granted by Robert P. Madison, FAIR, and Act 3 LLC.

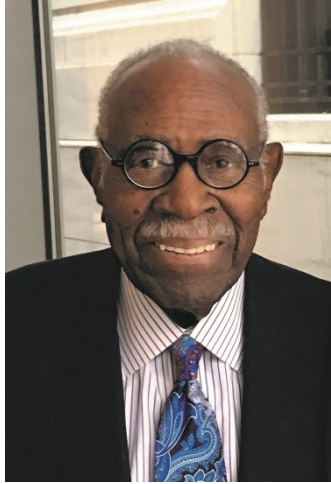
Book Details

Designing Victory: A Memoir: The Architect Who Dared, Dreamed, and Achieved International Acclaim by Robert P. Madison with Carlo Wolff.
Act 3, 2019. ISBN 9780578437453. 288 pages.
www.act3creative.com/designingvictory

Available as an audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:
ohiodigitallibrary.com

Coauthor Carlo Wolff is a Cleveland-based journalist and author. He is a regular contributor to the jazz magazine *DownBeat*. His other books include *Mike Belkin: Socks, Sports, Rock and Art*, published by Act 3.





Permission to use author photo and biographical information granted by Robert P. Madison, FAIR, and Act 3 LLC.

“Aspire to be great because you can do it no matter who says you can’t. That’s the advice I’d give young people today.”

About the Author

Robert P. Madison, FAIA, is an architect, entrepreneur, and civic leader. Born in Cleveland in 1923, he studied architecture at Howard University before serving in Italy in World War II. Madison earned a B.A. in architecture from Western Reserve University, an M.A. in architecture from Harvard University, and completed additional studies as a Fulbright Scholar at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1954, Madison opened the first African-American architectural firm in Ohio. Major projects include the U.S. Embassy in Senegal, the Engineering & Nuclear Facility at Tuskegee Institute, the Stokes and Main Library renovation in Cleveland, and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. Madison lives in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Author Resources

A Flair for Life

shaker.life/people/brilliant-careers/robert-madison-a-flair-for-life/

2019 profile of Robert P. Madison in *Shaker Life* magazine, published by the city of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Crain's Cleveland Business: Robert P. Madison

www.crainscleveland.com/article/20160716/EIGHT/160719861

2016 profile of Madison and his role in the history of architecture.

The HistoryMakers: Robert P. Madison

www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/robert-p-madison-38

2004 biography and extensive oral history from The HistoryMakers, a nonprofit research and educational institution that preserves and makes accessible the personal stories of well-known and unsung African Americans.

Robert P. Madison: 2020 Cleveland Public Library Drum Major for Change

www.facebook.com/watch/?v=457123344956141

In this brief video, Madison discusses receiving the honor of Drum Major for Change from the Cleveland Public Library.

Cleveland Arts Prize 2000 Special Citation for Distinguished Service to the Arts: Robert P. Madison

clevelandartsprize.org/awardees/robert_madison.html

This brief video documents Madison's accomplishments as a recipient of a special citation for distinguished service to the arts.

Robert P. Madison Collection at the American Folklife Center

memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.48858

Audio interview about Madison's service in World War II; part of Experiencing War: Stories from the Veterans' Memory Project at the Library of Congress.

Robert P. Madison International, Inc.

www.rpmadison.com

Website of the architecture firm founded by Robert P. Madison.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact James O'Hare, Act 3 LLC, james@act3creative.com, 216-325-7777.

Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing **Designing Victory**.

- How familiar were you with Robert P. Madison and the scope of architectural projects executed by Robert P. Madison International, Inc. locally, nationally, and internationally before reading **Designing Victory**? What did you learn about them? What most impressed you?
- Madison fought in WWII in Italy as a member of the Buffalo Soldiers. Wounded in combat, Second Lieutenant Madison received a Purple Heart. When he returned to civilian life in 1946, eager to resume his education at Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve) in Cleveland, his application was denied simply because he was black. While administrators grudgingly admitted him under duress, what racial barriers and discrimination did he encounter? How did he overcome them?
- Madison credits his mother as the real anchor in his family's life. What formative lessons did he glean from her during difficult times as a child growing up in Washington DC during the Great Depression? When he moved back to Cleveland and attended East Technical High School?
- Direct racism served as a roadblock many times in Robert Madison's life, but sometimes all it took was the anticipation of discrimination. How did his short romantic relationship with Coretta Scott King exemplify this?
- When Madison left his academic appointment at Howard University in 1954, he returned to Cleveland to launch, with his family, the first black-owned architectural firm in the State of Ohio, as no white architects would work with him. Discuss the ways he trained his staff that crossed all racial and gender lines.
- In 1960, Madison and his family moved from the overcrowded Glenville neighborhood to Cleveland Heights, where they experienced more discrimination. They dealt with the initial threats and racial violence, continuing to live on that street for forty years. Describe some of these threats. What was the Madisons' response?

Go Further

Ideas for extending the experience of reading **Designing Victory**.

Robert P. Madison's career and legacy as an architect spanned six decades. His challenges and victories parallel the significant achievements in civil rights for African Americans during his lifetime. Despite his pioneering efforts, diversity has yet to make inroads in architecture. The University of Cincinnati's *Directory of African American Architects* places the number at 2,270. Of those, 66 are in Ohio and 22 in Cleveland. Most, if not all of them, can trace their careers back to Robert P. Madison. Read more about the Ohio Association of Minority Architects, which Madison founded in 1982, and the Robert P. Madison Scholarship in Architecture for African Americans in cooperation with the Cleveland Foundation: www.clevelandfoundation.org/scholarship/robert-p-madison-scholarship-in-architecture/

On March 18, 2016, Sandra Madison, AIA, NCARB, after 26 years with Robert P Madison International, Inc., became Majority Owner and the firm's new CEO & Chairperson. Today the firm is the largest black female owned architecture firm in the State of Ohio. See how Robert P. Madison International, Inc. is continuing its community commitment under this new generation of leadership: www.rpmadison.com/about-us

Explore More

Additional ideas and resources to use with *Designing Victory*.

Cleveland Architect Robert Madison's Memoir Shows How He Designed Victory Over Racism

www.ideastream.org/news/cleveland-architect-robert-madisons-memoir-shows-how-he-designed-victory-over-racism

This 2019 Ideastream audio interview by David C. Barnett features author Robert P. Madison and co-writer Carlo Wolff, sharing highlights of Madison's life story and incomparable career as an architect.

Deeds Not Words: Conversations with Robert P. Madison

vimeo.com/ondemand/dnw

A 2018 documentary film chronicling the American success story of Robert P. Madison, preeminent architect, orator and patron of the arts, produced and directed by Derek E. Morton and narrated by Christopher Mann.

National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)

www.noma.net

Learn more about this professional organization whose mission is to champion diversity within the design professions by promoting the excellence, community engagement, and professional development of its members.

AIA Cleveland – American Institute of Architects

www.aiacleveland.com

As a national organization, the American Institute of Architects is the voice of the architectural profession and a resource to its members in service to society.

“Barrier-Breaking African American Architects We Should Be Celebrating”

www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/barrier-breaking-african-american-architects

From the February 21, 2019 issue of *Architectural Digest* comes this story by Elizabeth Fazzare and Carly Olson featuring the historic trailblazers who paved the way for future creatives of color—and improved the practice of architecture for everyone.

“10 Pioneering African American Architects and the Legacy Buildings They Designed”

www.interiordesign.net/articles/17613-10-pioneering-african-american-architects-and-the-legacy-buildings-they-designed/

In the June 1, 2020 issue of *Interior Design*, writer Jesse Torres looks at 10 pioneering men and women—from the accomplished architects of campus buildings at Duke University and the Tuskegee Institute to the designer of mid-century Hollywood homes of the stars—each among the first in their field.

Wellington, Paul. *Black Built: History and Architecture in the Black Community*. 2019.

This book explores over forty works by Black architects and their impact in the Black community. A wide variety of projects are featured, from residences of affluent African Americans, to historic churches, to memorials and museums of Black culture and history. Each work, through brief examination of its history and architecture, exhibits the magnificent work of Black architects from past to present, and provides inspiration to architects of current and future generations.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro.

This toolkit revised
January 2021.