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Business | C5

## Social investor says you can, too

### Entrepreneur Ephren Taylor is Black History Month speaker

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*Plain Dealer Reporter*

Ephren Taylor, the youngest African-American chief executive of a publicly traded company, is in Cleveland working to inspire locals to do their part to improve the community.

The serial entrepreneur, who made his first million at 17 with a technology startup, became chief executive of City Capital Corp. in 2006. The Tennessee-based investment firm specializes in renovating and reselling distressed properties.

Taylor has spread the word about empowerment and self-sufficiency at events across the country.

He practices what he preaches by focusing his company on socially conscious investing and de-



Taylor

velopment.

On Wednesday, he visited one of his latest investment properties: a 44,000-square-foot building on Cleveland's East Side known as the historic Hodge School, which is used for artist residences and studios. City Capital bought the property at 1075 East 74th St. last month.

Taylor said he met with artists who live and work in the building and brainstormed about what they would like to see happen in the community. He has a vision for taking the creative power that lives at the Hodge and infusing it into the community. The building would become a community center, featuring youth art programs.

He said he sees a lot of potential in Cleveland. The Hodge

school, a \$1.2 million asset, is his biggest holding here.

"It's one of the first, but it won't be the last," he said. "Now that we're here, we might as well see what else there is to do. There's a lot of work that can be done."

Taylor made the trip to Cleveland at the request of John Carroll University, which hosted him at a Black History Month event Wednesday night.

"He's someone who's been very successful in business and is also very committed to giving back to the community and is very socially conscious," said Janetta Hammock, director of JCU's office of multicultural affairs. "He shows that you can be successful without being cutthroat in business."

Taylor said he planned to give students the "reality smack-down" and explain to them how

the world works.

"I can't promise to teach them how to become wealthy," he said. "It really takes some personal sacrifice and conviction."

But he hoped to inspire them through his personal stories and his encouragement to take responsibility for their lives.

"You don't have to wait until you have tens of millions of dollars to make a difference," he said. "What are you doing with the dollar you have now?"

*Ephren Taylor will be making another local appearance today at Cuyahoga Community College's Eastern Campus in Highland Hills. The event, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., is free and public. Call 216-987-4772 or 216-987-2045.*

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### Making a difference

Ephren Taylor, the youngest African-American chief executive of a publicly traded company, spreads the word about empowerment.



Details, C3

### Court OKs pension suits

Workers can sue over mismanagement of their 401(k) retirement accounts.

Details, C2

### Ships may bottom out

Commercial shipping said threatened by lack of dredging in the Great Lakes.

Details, C5