

In the Spirit of  
Gabriel & Nan,  
Nat Turner,  
Solomon Northup,  
Madison Washington,  
John Brown,  
Mary Bowser,  
Elizabeth Van Lew,  
John Mitchell Jr.,  
Barbara Johns,  
Oliver Hill & all who  
struggle for Justice

# The Virginia DEFENDER

FREE

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SPECIAL ISSUE 2014

## WHO'S BEHIND THE PUSH FOR A SHOCKOE BOTTOM STADIUM? *And who's paying for the message?*



Members of the African Ancestral Chamber, Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality and Collective X hold a vigil at the Exxon gas station at 17th and East Broad streets in Richmond's Shockoe Bottom, site of the Omohundro Slave Jail. This was one of many anti-stadium protests held by Black activists and their allies.

Photo by Phil Wilayto

Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones wants to build a multi-million dollar baseball stadium for the Flying Squirrels in Shockoe Bottom.

It's part of his **Revitalize RVA** plan that includes a Slavery and Emancipation Heritage site, along with economic development in the Bottom and on the Boulevard.

He says his plan is the **ONLY** way the city's important slavery history will ever be honored.

And that it will mean lots of contracts for Black businesses.

And jobs for Black workers.

And more money for City schools.

A majority of City Council opposes his plan, which is now stalled.

So a new Public Relations campaign has been started to try and convince the Black community to support this plan.

Which is strange, since all

three Black members of City Council already support it.

This PR campaign is being paid for by the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and Venture Richmond, two organizations that represent the richest, white-owned banks, corporations and developers in Richmond.

Meanwhile, the majority of Richmonders of all races say they want to keep baseball on the Boulevard, where it's been

played for 60 years.

And while Mayor Jones is making a lot of promises, the truth is that there is not one dime in his proposal for a heritage site and absolutely no guarantees that any Black businesses or workers would get a single contract or job.

So who would **really** benefit from Revitalize RVA?

And why are they spending tens of thousands of dollars to try and get it passed?

"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict," -- The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.





## A very special little meeting

Richmond Mayor **Dwight Jones**, at left in the light-colored short-sleeved shirt, listens intently as Venture Richmond Executive Director **Jack Berry**, center right with hands raised, explains to an audience of about 70 people how to promote Revitalize RVA.

The meeting was held July 7 at the private Fan District home of **Andy Stefanovich**, a nationally known marketing guru who runs a local business with banker and former supermarket chain owner **Jim Ukrop**, another stadium promoter.

Seated to the mayor's left is KISS FM personality "Ms. Community" **Clovie Lawrence**, who since this meeting has been actively promoting the stadium in the Black community.

Also attending the private affair were **James "Jay Jay" Minor**, a City development employee, son of "Slave Trail" Commission Chair

Delores McQuinn and head of the Richmond Democratic Party Committee; and **Rob Jones** of the Alliance Group, which is paid by Venture Richmond to run Loving RVA, the pro-stadium PR project.

This photo was sent out by Twitter from a participant at the meeting and then reported on by the Times-Dispatch.

# The lies behind the mayor's plan

By Ana Edwards & Phil Wilayto

On July 16, we opened up the Richmond Times-Dispatch to find a full-page ad promoting a stadium in Shockoe Bottom.

According to a later RTD story, the ad cost "roughly \$4,300" and was paid for by the Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce). It was placed by Loving RVA, the public relations campaign coordinated by the Alliance Group, which was hired by Venture Richmond to promote the mayor's development plan. (See "Players" on page 3.)

The next day the same ad was published in the Richmond Free Press. A full-page Free Press ad also costs several thousand dollars.

The RTD's president and publisher, Tom Silvestri, is a member of Venture Richmond's executive committee.

Jean Boone, president and publisher of the Free Press, is a member of Venture Richmond's board of directors.

The ad is deceptive in many ways.

Here are just a few:

The ad states that the Revitalize RVA proposal is "the only plan that assures that the slavery and freedom heritage site will be built."

The truth? There is no money in Revitalize RVA for a heritage site. None.

Richmond City Council has pledged \$5 million for that effort and the Virginia General Assembly another \$2 to \$11 million. Both bodies have made it plain that those commitments are not dependent on a stadium.

Another \$13 million mentioned by the mayor would come from a private fund-raising effort that has yet to be launched.

As for Mayor Jones, the firm he hired to research the history of Shockoe Bottom, Dutton + Associates[sic], has told City Council there are no plans to continue the research unless the mayor gets a stadium.

Meanwhile, the Defenders have proposed the creation of a **Sacred Ground Memorial Park** (see back page) that would allow all the Shockoe Bottom development outlined in Revitalize RVA, except for the stadium.

As the park is developed into a heritage tourism site, it would attract overnight tourists from far and wide, as opposed to a ballpark that only draws day visitors from the immediate area. This would benefit many more businesses — motels, hotels, restaurants, cab companies, other attractions — than a minor-league ballpark that only draws from the city and its immediate suburbs.

The ad describes all its 17 signers as "com-

munity organizations." In fact, 12 are businesses or business groups.

Of the three African-American organizations or institutions listed, the leaders of two are Venture Richmond board members, as is the head of another endorser, the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Another signer is Del. Delores L. McQuinn, identified as Chairwoman of the Richmond "Slave Trail" Commission.

If Del. McQuinn wishes to take a stand on this issue as an elected official, that's her right. But the commission made a collective decision not to take a position, so it's deceptive to include its name here.

Finally, the ad states that Revitalize RVA includes "goals of 40 percent minority participation in construction and 20 percent minority ownership in the residential development."

The same construction goal applied to the new City Jail and the D.C. football team training camp. Was it met in those projects?

And how can anyone promise that 20 percent of residential owners will be "minority"?

Do the developers intend to turn away potential buyers based on race?

Further, under Virginia law, the term "minority" does not mean African-American. It means any business owned by women, any person of color or one that employs fewer than 500 workers — a definition that includes 90 percent of businesses in the state.

The truth is that Revitalize RVA includes no guarantees of a proper memorialization of the slavery-related history of Shockoe Bottom or any jobs for Black workers or contracts for Black-owned businesses.

What it does guarantee is that a small group of rich white developers would receive a taxpayer-subsidized baseball stadium to anchor a for-profit Shockoe Bottom development scheme that, by the mayor's own admission, would result in absolutely no increase in tax revenue. All new revenue would come from development on the Boulevard — about which there has been no information.

One more thing: If City Council approves this huge developer giveaway, construction of the new stadium would take place on the site of what was once the hub of the U.S. domestic slave trade during the 150th commemoration of the Liberation of Richmond and the ending of more than 150 years of slavery in the city.

Is this really how we want to tell the world the former Capital of the Confederacy celebrated the end of the Civil War?

**GREAT CITIES DO GREAT THINGS**

Richmond is a city steeped in culture and history. The construction of a Slavery Heritage Site will be a cornerstone for economic empowerment.

**FACT**

- ★ To be built at the location of Lumpkin's Jail, birthplace of Virginia Union University. All other commercial and residential development will take place over **100 yards away**.

**This new Heritage District will....**

- ★ Allow us to **properly commemorate** the history of enslaved Africans and acknowledge a critical chapter in the history of our City and Country.
- ★ Serve as a **permanent memorial** that utilizes vacant land and gritty, crumbling parking lots now covering the site.
- ★ Drive increased tourism and visitors to Richmond to explore, learn and honor **all of our history**.
- ★ **Move the City forward.**

**SHOW SUPPORT!**

If you're in favor of unlocking Richmond's full potential, like the Loving RVA page on Facebook and support in any of the following ways:

- ★ Email [CityCouncil@LovingRVA.com](mailto:CityCouncil@LovingRVA.com) stating your support of the Revitalize RVA Plan
- ★ Sign our petition at [LovingRVA.com](http://LovingRVA.com)
- ★ Speak at a City Council meeting

**Join the Movement!**

## And then there's that flier

Copies of the flier to the left have been appearing around town lately. They've been left on cars outside Black churches on Sunday mornings and distributed at a recent Plunky and Oneness concert.

The flier is not signed. We understand that both Venture Richmond and Loving RVA say they had nothing to do with it — even though it refers people to the Loving RVA website.

Like the newspaper ad, it's full of deceptions. For example:

"The construction of a Slavery Heritage Site will be a cornerstone for economic development."

Really? Since when? The mayor has argued that the stadium would anchor development in the Bottom. How would the small heritage site he's been promoting do that?

The flier says the heritage site would be built over the foundation of Lumpkin's Jail and that "All other commercial and residential development will take place over 100 yards away."

Yes, away from the site of Lumpkin's jail — but right on top of William Goodwin's Jail, where "Twelve Years a Slave" author Solomon Northup was held in 1841 while on his forced journey to New Orleans.

In fact, Richmond historian Elizabeth Kambourian has identified 11 slavery-related sites within the area targeted for development, including four within the stadium footprint.

The flier does get one thing right. It states that a site memorializing Richmond's slave-trading past would "Drive increased tourism and visitors to Richmond."

That's a very good argument for dropping the stadium and concentrating on a history site. For that plan, please see the back page.

## The Virginia Defender

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# The money behind the mayor's plan

This is at least the fourth time developers have pushed for a baseball stadium in Shoickoe Bottom.

This latest effort began in August 2012 when Jack Berry, Executive Director of the pro-business organization Venture Richmond, and Kim Scheeler, President and CEO of the Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce), co-wrote an opinion piece for the Richmond Times-Dispatch arguing that Shockoe was the best place to build a new stadium.

They never once mentioned the issue of slavery.

Two weeks later, Ana Edwards, Chair of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project; King

Salim Khalfani, at that time Executive Director of the Virginia State Conference NAACP; Dr. Shawn Utsey, then-Chair of VCU's African American Studies Department; and Phil Wilayto, Editor of The Virginia Defender, answered Berry and Scheeler in another RTD opinion piece.

They explained the history of Shockoe Bottom as the hub of the internal U.S. slave trade, vowed there would be no stadium on this Sacred Ground and the fight was on.

Mayor Jones himself has never shown any real interest in Richmond's role in the slave trade. He has only recently been bringing it up because community activists succeeded in making it an issue.

Now he's arguing that ONLY the stadium proposal can make a slavery memorial possible.

The truth is, there isn't one dime in the Revitalize RVA plan for a "slavery and emancipation heritage site." The \$30 million for this project Jones talks about would all come from City Council and the General Assembly, plus an as-yet-to-be launched private fund-raising effort.

The whole purpose of putting a stadium in Shockoe Bottom is to address just enough of the flood plain issue so developers can build a supermarket, hotel, 500 apartments and a parking deck there.

All the new tax revenue from those

projects would go to pay off the public debt we would take on to build the stadium.

Any new tax revenue would come from new development on the Boulevard — which the mayor refuses to talk about.

So what Revitalize RVA boils down to is this: a giant giveaway of our tax dollars to a small group of developers, who just happen to be rich white guys.

And to put this scheme over, Venture Richmond and the Greater Richmond Chamber are funding a new PR campaign to convince the Black community that this is all a really good deal.

What utter hypocrisy.

And shame on those who help them.

## Meet the players



**Jack Berry**  
Executive Director

### Venture Richmond

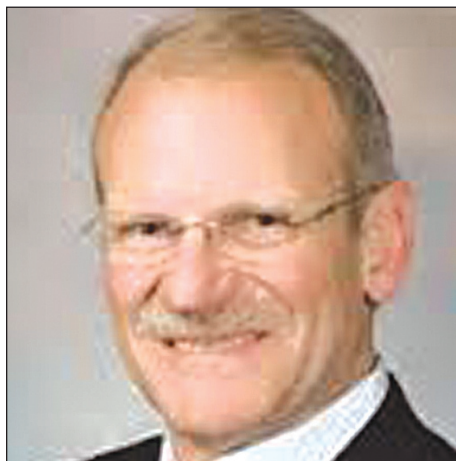
One of the most powerful organizations around, Venture Richmond has steadily increased its influence over how the city is run.

It's an alliance of the most powerful bankers, corporate heads, high-power attorneys, university presidents and media chiefs, along with top elected officials and a few selected members of the Black elite.

Mayor Jones is the group's president.

For a detailed investigation into the origins, membership and purpose of Venture Richmond, see the Summer edition of The Virginia Defender. Available online at:

[www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com](http://www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com)



**Kim Scheeler**  
President & CEO

### Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce)

An organization representing the interests of Richmond-area businesses.

After the opposing Opinion piece came out in the RTD, Berry and Scheeler asked to meet with the authors. That meeting was held with Khalfani and Wilayto.

Responding to a suggestion that a heritage site could bring large numbers of tourists to Richmond, Scheeler asked, "But who would go to a slavery museum?"

Charleston, S.C., is now launching a \$75 million fund-raising drive to build a museum about its role in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.



**Mayor Dwight Jones**  
President, Venture Richmond

Mayor Jones unveiled Revitalize RVA on Nov. 11, 2013, while standing on Shockoe Bottom property owned by H. Louis Salomonsky, the developer who stands to make a ton of money from a Shockoe stadium.

Mayor Jones also heads the Democratic Party of Virginia and is senior pastor at the First Baptist Church of South Richmond.

His second term as mayor ends in 2016.

He is now building a new mega-church — not in majority Black Richmond, but in majority-white Chesterfield County.



**Clovia Lawrence**  
Shockoe Stadium Promoter

The KISS FM radio personality known as "Miss Community" attended the private July 7 orientation on promoting a Shockoe Bottom stadium. (See the top of page 2.)

Shortly after, she wrote two "news" reports for KISS. The first claimed the mayor's plan would result in 800 new jobs. The second boosted that number to 1,000.

The mayor says it would be 400.

She also stated that Jones had already raised \$30 million for a slavery site.

The mayor has not raised anything.



**H. Louis Salomonski**  
Partner

[No photo seems to be available.]

### Historic Housing LLC

Revitalize RVA calls for some 500 high-rent apartments to be built around the Shockoe stadium. The builder would be H. Louis Salomonsky, downtown's biggest residential developer.

Salomonsky and his longtime business partner, David White, own the holding company Historic Housing LLC, which includes SWA Architects and SWA Construction. They also are part owners of Main Street Realty, a management and leasing company.

A multimillionaire architect, Salomonski was sent to federal prison in 2003 for attempted bribery of then-City Councilwoman Gwen Hedgepeth in connection with a development issue.

At the time, he was serving as vice chairman of the City Council-appointed Industrial Development Authority.

While Salomonsky was only convicted in this one case, it's well known that he was also very generous to several other members of City Council. He has long been a close associate of former Richmond Mayor L. Douglas Wilder.

This is Salomonsky's view of what is wrong with Richmond, as told to Chris Dovi in an interview on WRIR's Open Source radio program:

"Right now we have a ghetto [sic] of people making between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year and we have a dearth [shortage] of people making from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year. ..."

He went on to predict that with a "metamorphosis of minorities [sic] moving to the counties for better schools, the empty nesters, both older and younger, moving into the city, with no children and the decline [downsizing] of the school system, you will eventually see the city's tax rate below that of the counties.

"And on that day the city will be, let's say 25 to 40 years from now, infinitely wealthier than the counties, but we — it's still a foot race to get there."

This is the guy who stands to make the most out of a Shockoe Bottom stadium — and the guy Mayor Jones seems to be fighting so hard to please.



### The Alliance Group

A public relations outfit hired by Venture Richmond to build support for Revitalize RVA. This is from its website:

Is there anything better than seeing people all fired up over an issue they feel passionately about? Well sure, if it's YOUR issue.

We have point people on our team who are great at identifying opinion leaders and recruiting them for a cause. Whether it be organizing volunteers, helping draft letters to the editor or op-eds, or coordinating letter writing campaigns, we will activate the grassroots to get your message out.

People enjoy being part of an effort and we harness that enthusiasm to work for you.

One correction:

That's "Astroturf," not "grassroots."



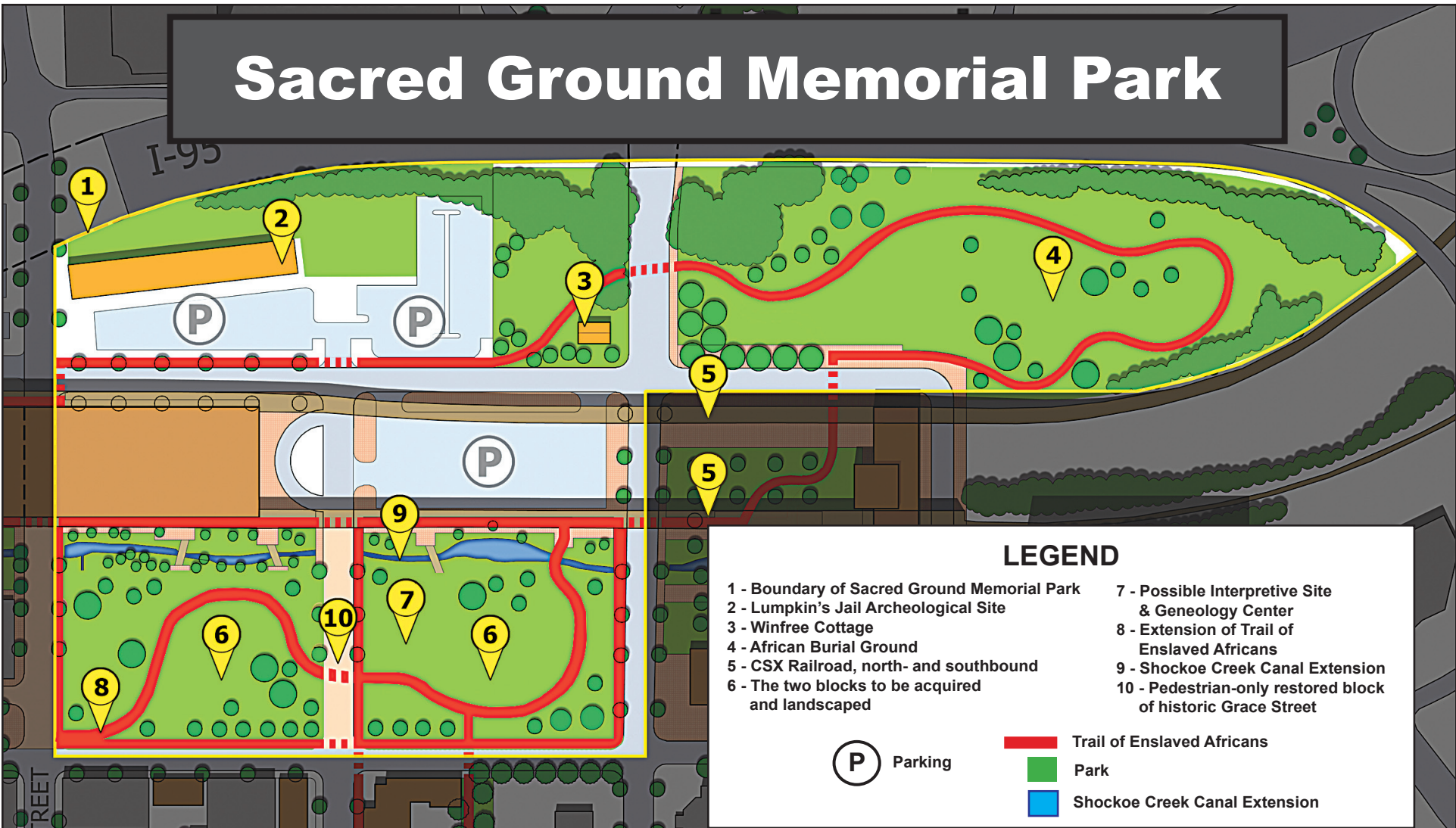
### Loving RVA

A public relations campaign set up by the Alliance Group and funded by Venture Richmond to promote Revitalize RVA and especially a Shockoe Bottom stadium, with a particular emphasis on reaching Young Urban Professionals — Yuppies.

The campaign sponsors pro-stadium billboards, yard signs, buttons, stickers and events such as "bar crawls."

It also paid people to go door-to-door to collect signatures on a pro-Revitalize RVA petition — that never mentioned the stadium.





# AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN FOR SHOCKOE BOTTOM - that would benefit far more people than Revitalize RVA

### A brief history lesson

In the three decades before the ending of slavery in 1865, some 300,000 to 350,000 people of African descent were sold out of Virginia to the cotton, sugar cane and rice plantations of the Deep South.

**Richmond's Shockoe Bottom district increasingly became the center of this trade and the second-largest slave-trading market north of New Orleans.**

The most important slave trade-related sites discovered – to date – are the Manchester Docks, Trail of Enslaved Africans ("Slave Trail"), Lumpkin's Jail at 15th and East Grace streets, the African Burial Ground above East Broad Street, Omohundro Jail by the Exxon gas station and the Goodwin Jail along 17th between Broad and Grace, where "Twelve Years a Slave" author Solomon Northup was held in 1841.

However, the whole area from the James River north to Marshall Street and from several blocks west of today's Interstate 95 to about 20th Street to the east was one integrated commercial district in which the many businesses servicing the trade were concentrated.

Only by memorializing a significant section of this area can the true scope of the slave-trading enterprise be understood, thereby properly honoring it while enhancing its value as a destination for historic tourism, especially but not exclusively relating to the African-American community.

### The potential for tourism

The majority of Black Americans today could trace some ancestry to Shockoe Bottom. And African-American tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry, a trend reflected in the fact that there are now more than 150 Black Heritage museums operating in 37 states.

Virtually every other city once associated with slavery and the slave trade has

developed a museum dedicated to that history. Only Richmond, which arguably has the greatest claim to this history, has neglected this critical part of its past.

Our proposal represents an alternative plan with the potential to raise a significant amount of new tax revenue from commercial and residential development, in addition to new revenue from increased tourism, while allowing the City to avoid the embarrassment of desecrating a site increasingly recognized as completely inappropriate for a ballpark.

### Sacred Ground Memorial Park

The **Sacred Ground Memorial Park** proposal has three elements:

- **Keep baseball on the Boulevard**, with a new stadium or renovated Diamond and new economic development;
- **Allow development in Shockoe Bottom**, as described in the mayor's plan, but without a stadium.
- **Reclaim a section of Shockoe Bottom as a Sacred Ground Memorial Park** – large enough to convey a sense of the enormity of the slave trade practiced there but still allowing development of surrounding areas. The exact name of this park would be selected after a thorough community conversation.

As with the mayor's plan, this park would include the Lumpkin's Jail site and Winfree Cottage, the African Burial Ground, the Execution of Gabriel state historical marker and a section of the Trail of Enslaved Africans, which passes the Reconciliation Statue.

**In addition, our proposal adds two square blocks**, bounded by Broad Street to the north, 17th to the east, Franklin to the south and the CSX railroad tracks to the west. This excludes the Exxon gas station and all existing businesses between Grace and Franklin streets.

The Memorial Park itself would form a coherent whole, symbolizing the fact that at one time Shockoe Bottom was an inte-

grated commercial district serving the slave trade, while at the same time providing vital public park/green space for this dense urban area.

One new element in this plan could be a **Shockoe Creek Canal Extension**. This waterway would run along the east side of the present-day railroad tracks. In addition to being an attractive new feature to the Bottom and illustrating the historic connection between Shockoe Creek, the Kanawha-Haxall canals and the James River, this feature would satisfy the EPA and Chesapeake Bay Act mandate to separate storm water and sewer management. (This element was first suggested by other advocates working around this issue.)

The physical development of the Sacred Ground Memorial Park could proceed in stages, as follows:

- **Purchase the unused, privately owned parcels of land** within the two-block area described above. These parcels are currently assessed at about \$2.5 million.
- **Remove the concrete and sod the park**, as was done with the Burial Ground.
- **Landscape the park** with trees and shrubbery.
- **Extend the Trail of Enslaved Africans** to provide a walking path through the park.
- **Erect signage** along the path explaining the various slavery-related sites, as well as the history and significance of the area as a whole, including that of American Indians, Quakers, Masons, the Jewish community and the founding of Richmond.
- Set up an attractive and compelling **website** to explain the history of the area and promote it as a tourism destination.
- Develop an **online walking tour** that can be accessed by smart phones and other personal devices.
- Develop a printed **brochure** that describes the district and its history.

At this point there would be a historic district that would attract tourism, producing tax revenue and income for the city.

### Finances

Richmond City Council has already committed to putting up \$5 million for a heritage site. The General Assembly has promised another \$2 million, plus up to \$11 million more to match a private fund-raising effort. The first \$7 million would be enough to purchase the privately owned parcels and landscape the park, extend the Trail and erect signage.

A serious **community conversation**, first of all within the Black community, would then inform us all how to further develop the park.

### A timeline

**April 3, 2015**, should be seen as the date by which substantial work is completed on the Memorial Park so it can host the city's activities marking the 150th Anniversary of the end of Confederate rule in Richmond and the day when more than 150 years of slavery in the city was ended.

Note: If the mayor's plan is accepted, the new stadium would be under construction at the very time that these memorial activities are taking place, which would be an international embarrassment for Richmond.

## SIGN THE PETITION

Please go online today and sign the petition to Mayor Jones and Richmond City Council. Tell them you don't want a baseball stadium in historic Shockoe Bottom.

And check back often for updates on this fight to stop the desecration of our Sacred Ground.

WWW.  
shockoebottom.  
blogspot.com

This special, 4-page issue of the Defender cost \$615.00 to print. It was paid for entirely with voluntary contributions by individuals opposed to the desecration of Shockoe Bottom. No corporate money was involved.

## the right of self-determination

The reason the Defenders say the Black community has the first right to say what should happen to Shockoe Bottom is that people of African descent have been and still are oppressed by this racist system and so have the right to define themselves as a nation and determine their own destiny.

The same is true for the people of Palestine. We join with our Arab and Muslim sisters and brothers in the Richmond area to say:

**STOP THE ATTACKS ON GAZA! STOP ALL U.S. AID TO ISRAEL! PALESTINE WILL BE FREE!**