

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

FREE

The Virginia DEFENDER

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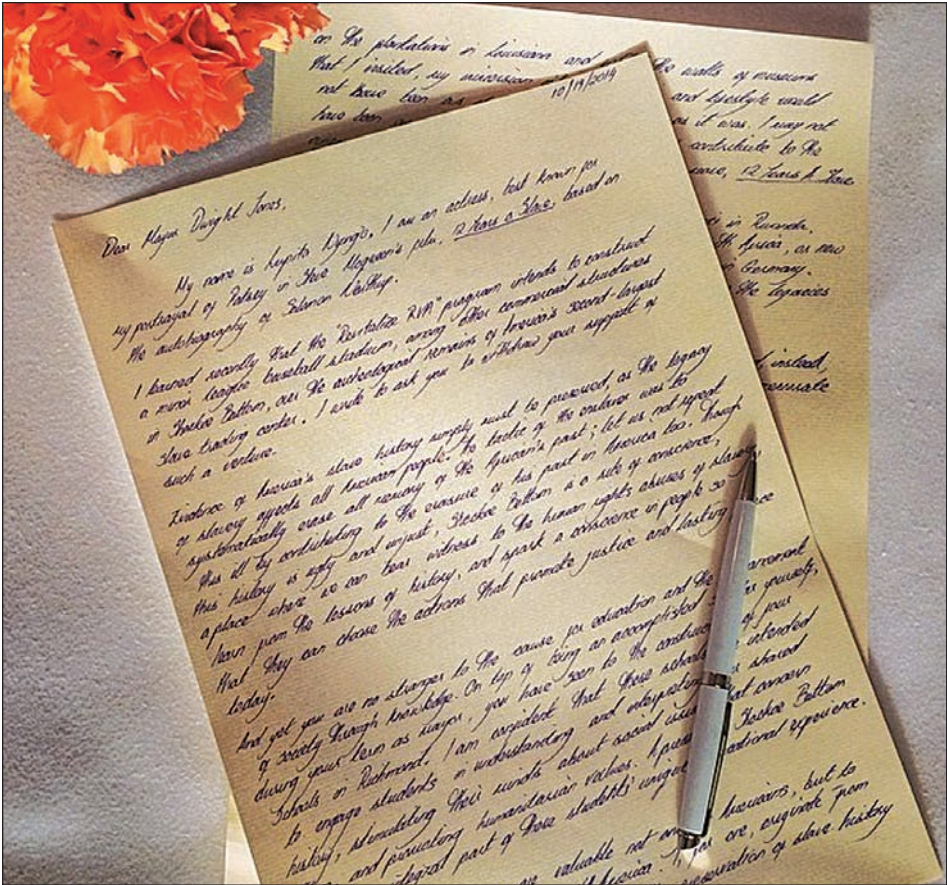
Major breakthroughs on Shockoe stadium struggle!

Squirrels to stay at Diamond for next 2-5 years
'12 Years a Slave' actress tells Mayor Jones: 'Set aside the stadium plans!'
National Trust initiates Community Conversation on Shockoe's future

Lupita Nyong'o to Mayor Dwight Jones:

"The tactic of the enslaver was to systematically erase all memory of the African's past; let us not repeat this ill by contributing to the erasure of his past in America too. ...

I urge you to set aside the baseball stadium plans and, instead, fully involve the public in determining how best to commemorate the past of slavery at Shockoe Bottom."



Academy Award-winning actress Lupita Nyong'o's handwritten letter to Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones, above, has received wide attention. The full text appears on page 7.

By Ana Edwards & Phil Wilayto

The Flying Squirrels are staying on the Boulevard, a world-famous actress is urging Richmond's mayor to stop promoting a stadium in Shockoe Bottom and a national preservation organization is following up on its selection of the Bottom as one of the most endangered historic sites in the country.

It's been quite a time in the campaign to stop a Shockoe Bottom stadium.

Richmond City Council is about to vote on a new lease that would allow the Flying Squirrels, the Eastern League Double-A affiliate of the San Francisco Giants, to keep playing baseball for the next two years at The Diamond, the 29-year-old stadium on the Boulevard.

See SHOCKOE on PAGE 6

Mayor Jones suggests Lupita Nyong'o visit RVA - page 7

The Endless Wars: What are they costing us?

By Phil Wilayto

With the new bombing campaigns in Iraq and Syria, the United States is now openly at war in at least six countries: those two, plus Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Yemen. There are also smaller military operations, with active combat troops or "advisors," throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), now "supports military-to-military relationships with 54 African nations," according to an article in the journal "Peace Economics, Peace Science, and Public Policy" (Vol. 19, issue 1, 2013; paper by Linda J. Bilmes and Michael D. Intriligator.)

In his recent book "Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield," investigative reporter Jeremy Skahill writes that "By mid-2010, the Obama administration had increased the presence of Special Operations forces from sixty countries to seventy-five countries. SOCOM had about 4,000 people

deployed around the world in countries besides Iraq and Afghanistan."

Virtually all these wars, interventions, "military actions," covert operations and advisory missions are being sold as part of a global "war on terrorism." But they also make billions of dollar in profits for the makers of warships, planes, tanks, bombs and military hardware of all kinds, as well as suppliers of food, uniforms and medical care for the troops.

Today the United States, with 5 percent of the world's population, accounts for 36.6 percent of the world's military spending — more than the next eight biggest spenders combined. (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute — 2013)

The U.S. spends more than five times as much as China, nearly nine times as much as Russia, more than 10 times as much as the United Kingdom, nearly 12 times as much as Japan — and almost 34 times as much as the Islamic Republic of Iran. (International Institute for Strategic Studies — 2013)

Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the base defense budget has ballooned from \$287 billion to \$530 billion — and that's before accounting for the costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The price tag is huge — and we, the taxpayers, are footing the bill.

And we don't even know how big the bill is.

The government tells us that the military budget takes up about a quarter of the federal tax dollar. That's a lot of money, but the figure actually is grossly misleading.

For example: An important part of the U.S. military arsenal is the stockpile of nuclear weapons. But nukes don't come under the Department of Defense. They legally belong to the Department of Energy, so their care and maintenance doesn't show up as a DoD expense.

See WAR on PAGE 9

Organizing underway for 2015 VPA

Staff Report

For the past six years, the annual **Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice** has helped build the progressive movement in Virginia.

The VPA is a one-day conference of networking, education and strategizing. Friendships and alliances are made across the lines of race, gender, community and issues. Each year people leave more united and better prepared for the struggles ahead.

In the past, the VPA has been held on the last Saturday in January before the opening day of the General Assembly. The idea is, the rich and powerful have their General Assembly, so we have our People's Assembly. Then on the day the GA opens, there's a rally and a march to Capitol Square.

See VPA on PAGE 7

international & antiwar news



Photo by Kat McNeil

More than 200 Palestinians, Muslims and supporters rally in front of Richmond City Hall to condemn attacks by the Israeli military against the people of Gaza. The July 20 action was one of a half-dozen organized by the local Arab and Muslim communities. More protests took place in Chesapeake, Roanoke, Virginia Beach and other places in Virginia.

RVA shows solidarity with Gaza

By Kat McNeal

Richmond saw more than a dozen vigils, rallies, marches and car caravans this summer protesting the Israeli attacks on the trapped civilian population in Gaza. Attendance topped 150 on several occasions. A delegation of 40 people traveled to a national march in Washington, D.C. The efforts were led by local Palestinians and Muslims, using fliers, phone calls and social media to spread the word.

The Defenders are proud to have stood with these local leaders against the brutality

and injustice of Israeli attacks and occupation, lending them our sound system, promoting the events, helping with security and showing the documentary "Occupation 101" at our September Defenders Forum.

(The film is being shown again Oct. 23. See The Community Calendar on page 11 for details.)

For more information on how to support Palestine, see the story on the BDS Movement below. For full albums of pictures from the Richmond actions, see Active-RVA's website at: <http://goo.gl/EjNRVa>

Eyes Wide Open

The human cost of the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was graphically symbolized by hundreds of boots and shoes on display Oct. 1 in Richmond's Monroe Park. The exhibit was sponsored by the Richmond Peace Education Center "to promote somber reflection about the human cost of our recent wars to the Commonwealth of Virginia."

It included 206 pairs of boots representing U.S. military casualties from Virginia — 134 in Iraq and 72 in Afghanistan. Each pair of boots bore the name of a soldier, sailor, marine or reservist killed in the wars.

An array of shoes represented Iraqi and Afghan civilian deaths, which, according to RPEC, have been credibly estimated to range from 100,000 to more than 1 million.

Virginia's Eyes Wide Open is modeled on the American Friends Service Committee's nationally touring exhibit. That exhibit now includes more than 6,000 pair of combat boots representing U.S. military casualties, along with more than 3,000 pair of shoes memorializing a small fraction of the Iraqi and Afghan civilians who have been killed in the conflicts.

"Eyes Wide Open - Virginia" is coordinated statewide by RPEC and the Richmond Friends Meeting.

More information at: www.rpec.org.

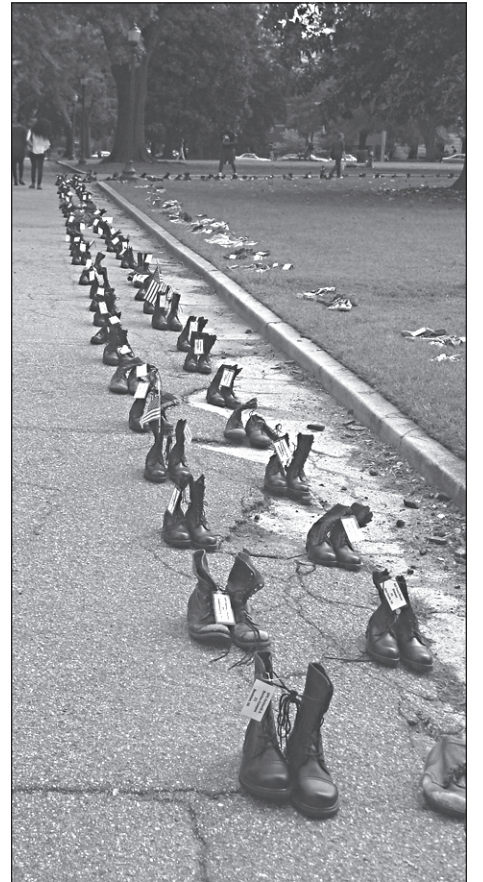


Photo by Adria Scharf

Boots and shoes represent those killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

When the revolutionary People's Republic of Angola was invaded in the mid-70s by the apartheid state of South Africa, Cuba sent thousands of volunteers who helped stem the tide. Today Cuba is sending more medical personnel to West Africa to help in the Ebola crisis than any other country. Above, more than 40 people attend a Cuba Appreciation and Awareness Day in Richmond.

'When Africa called, Cuba answered!'

More than 40 people, all but one of them of African descent, attended a Cuba Appreciation and Awareness Day Aug. 13 sponsored by the African Awareness Association. The event was held at Richmond's Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church on Mechanicsville Turnpike.

The date was the 88th birthday of former Cuban President Fidel Castro.

Among those attending were members of the African Awareness Association; Pan African Unity Movement; Nation of Gods on Earth; Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality; and the Rev. Rodney Hunter, pastor of Wesley Memorial.

The scheduled featured speaker was Alexander V. Rodriguez Salazar, Second Secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C. However, AAA spokesperson Lee Robinson explained that the secretary had called that morning to say the U.S. State Department had denied him permission to come to Richmond.

Interest Section officials generally are forbidden to travel more than 50 miles from their offices.

A highlight of the program was a video interview with a U.S. student at Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine, a major international medical school and a prominent part of the Cuban health-care system. Nearly 20,000 students attend from more than 100 countries, including the United States.

Tuition, room and board and a small stipend are all paid for by the Cuban government — on the one condition that, when they graduate, the students agree to serve in poor communities, usually in their home countries.

According to the video, 70 of the 80 U.S. students currently enrolled there are Black.

The AAA is planning a "Freedom Ride to Cuba," to take place from Dec. 18 through Jan. 4. For more information, contact the AAA at 804-549-7492 or african_awareness_association@yahoo.com.

BDS campaign builds pressure on Israel

By Kat McNeal

The brutal attacks by the Israeli military this summer against the people of Gaza left many people wondering how they could support the Palestinians and their right to self-determination. Because the U.S. government is Israel's primary political, financial and military ally, we have a special responsibility to help, as well as special access to the powers that hold up Israeli apartheid.

The current Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement began in 2005, after a call from Palestinian civic organizations. Coordinated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee, the campaign focuses on three demands: the surrender of lands Israel seized in June 1967, destruction of the apartheid wall, recognition of Arab-Palestinian citizens in Israel as full citizens entitled to equality under the law and the acknowledgment of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

The campaign uses three means of protest:

Boycotts: Pressuring Israeli and international companies that benefit from the violation of Palestinian rights by refusing to buy their products and exposing them to public scrutiny.

Divestments: Working to end institutional investment in the companies discussed above.

Sanctions: Condemning Israeli

crimes through the economic and diplomatic forums in which it participates, thereby removing the appearance of legitimacy granted by membership and making the positions of other governments explicit.

Concerted campaigns centering on these methods helped bring down South Africa's apartheid government and it can do the same with Israel.

Because there are so many companies that benefit from the plight of Palestinians, it isn't helpful to simply resolve not to purchase from any of them. Boycotts are most effective when they are part of a larger strategic campaign.

The current BDS consumer boycott campaign is focusing on Hewlett Packard products, Ahava cosmetics, Israeli fruits and vegetables, Teva Pharmaceutical products, SodaStream carbonation machines and the Caterpillar company.

To be put in touch with a local BDS group, email: info@bdsmovement.net. To learn about current campaigns, recent victories and more, see: <http://www.bdsmovement.net>. If you have news of actions or new BDS chapters opening in Virginia, contact the Defenders at (804) 644-5834 or DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

Free Palestine!



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(540) 989-0393 plowshare@plowshareva.org

www.plowshareva.org

In the event of any military attack on

IRAN

by the U.S., Israel or any other country, the **Richmond Peace Education Center** and the **Defenders** are calling for a protest to take place at 5 p.m. the following day outside the Federal Courthouse, 701 E. Broad St. in downtown Richmond.

Bring home the cost of war.

Host Eyes Wide Open-Virginia in your community. This powerful display educates about the human and economic cost of the war in Afghanistan. It includes:

- + Combat boots tagged with the name, age, hometown, and military rank of Virginians killed in Afghanistan.
- + Shoes representing civilian casualties.
- + Signs describing the human and economic cost of the Afghanistan war.

Eyes Wide Open is available for free to community groups to host in their communities. An Iraq war display is also available.

Contact rpec@rpec.org with questions or to reserve Eyes Wide Open-Virginia in 2011.

Richmond Peace Education Center



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

is published quarterly on the first Thursday of the month, starting in January. Information for the Community Calendar must be received by the Friday before the publication date. Please include the name of the event, the event sponsor, contact information, time, date, place and any admission charge. Be sure and call ahead to make sure the information listed is still current. Note: Listing of an event does not necessarily imply an endorsement by this newspaper. To place a display ad with more information, or for events with an admission charge of more than \$10, please contact our advertising department at 804-644-5834 or e-mail DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

ONGOING - RICHMOND

“TO BE SOLD: VIRGINIA AND THE AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE” – Mon., Oct. 27 - Sat., May 30. According to the Library of Virginia, this will be “the first exhibition to examine the development of the visual culture and material world of the American slave trade through art, artifacts, and documents. The exhibition will raise awareness of the scope of the domestic trade in American-born enslaved people that developed after the United States ended its participation in the international trade in 1808. ‘To Be Sold’ is centered on a series of paintings and engravings by Eyre Crowe, a British artist who witnessed the slave trade as he traveled around America in 1853. The panel exhibition and programs will feature Crowe’s surviving paintings – ‘Slaves Waiting for Sale’ and ‘After the Sale’ – which provide some of the most powerful and compelling visual evidence of the domestic slave trade in antebellum America.” Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad St. Information: <http://www.lva.virginia.gov>

BYRD HOUSE FARMERS MARKET – 3 pm-sunset Tuesdays. “The freshest and localest foods” and Richmond’s only community-center-based market. William Byrd Community House, 224 S. Cherry St. Information: (804) 643-2717; Byrd-HouseMarket@gmail.com; www.ByrdHouseMarket.blogspot.com; www.WBCH.org. **LAST 2014 MARKET DAY: OCT. 28.**

FOOD NOT BOMBS – Sundays at 4 pm. Free vegan meals served in Monroe Park, corner of Main and Belvidere streets. Volunteers welcome. (804) 303-544, a16rva@hotmail.com or www.myspace.com/richmondfnb

“SLAVE TRAIL” COMMISSION – Monthly meetings held on the first Thursday of the month. 4 pm, East District Initiative, 701 N. 25th St. Note: Meetings are often cancelled without notice.

RICHMOND CRUSADE FOR VOTERS – Membership meet-

ings on the third Tuesday of each month. 7 pm, Military Retirees Club, 2220 Chamberlayne Ave. Information: rcfv1956@gmail.com.

RICHMOND BRANCH NAACP MEETING – Membership meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month. 7 pm, Club 533, 700 N. 3rd St. Information: 804-505-0083.

ACTIVISTS EVENTS ONLINE CALENDAR – An online calendar to announce local news and opportunities for local actions: <http://active-rva.tumblr.com/calendar>

VIRGINIA

Tues., Nov. 5 – ELECTION DAY – Governor, Lt. Gov., Att. Gen., House of Delegates, some local offices. See page 8 for Defender endorsements.

CHARLOTTESVILLE

Sat., Nov. 1 — “TRANS VISIBILITY TRANS JUSTICE: A CONVERSATION ON THE LIBERATION OF TRANS WOMEN OF COLOR” WITH CECE MCDONALD — CeCe McDonald, a Black trans woman whose case became famous after she was sentenced to three years in prison for killing a racist attacker in self-defense, will speak on the struggles of Black trans women in the U.S. This event will also start a renewed effort to search for Sage Smith, a young Black trans woman who went missing from Charlottesville in 2012. 7 pm at the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, 233 4th St NW. Childcare available.

NORFOLK

DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED – HAMPTON ROADS MEETING WITH THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER – Updates on the campaigns to free Jermaine Doss and prevent a baseball stadium from being built in Richmond’s historic Shockoe Bottom and plans for the 2015 Virginia Peoples Assembly. Also, volunteers needed to help distribute the Defender in Hampton Roads. 4-6 pm, House of Consciousness, 600 W. 35th St. Information: (804) 644-5834 or DefendersFJE@hotmail.com

RICHMOND EVENTS

Thurs., Oct. 23 – DEFENDERS MONTHLY FORUM: “OCCUPATION 101” – This award-winning documentary explores the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A must-see for anyone trying to understand this critical issue. 6:30 pm, William Byrd Community House, 224 So. Cherry St. Free, donations welcome. Light refreshments; child care available; wheelchair accessible. Presented by the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. Information: 804-644-5834 or DefendersFJE@hotmail.com

Mon., Oct. 27 – RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL MEETING – 5 pm: Informal meeting. 6 pm: Regular meeting. Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St.

Tues., Oct. 28 – 7th ANNUAL RePHRAME COMMUNITY FORUM: “Teaching Transparency, Protecting Community” – 5:30 - 8:30 pm at Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, 14 W Duval St. Sponsored by Residents of Public Housing in Richmond Against Mass Evictions (RePHRAME). Information: <http://rephrame.blogspot.com>

Thurs., Oct. 30 – “THE WRITER SPEAKS OF FREEDOM” – “Creative writers Yao Glover, Glynis Boyd Hughes, Tiffany Austin, and Christopher Allen come together to share their creative work and to discuss freedom as self-actualization in their lives and creative work, as the practice of defying personal and professional censorship, and as a responsibility to the larger communities to which one belongs (African-American, female, LGBTQ, etc.)” 6 pm at the Virginia Union University Wilder Library. Presented by the VUU Department of Languages and Literature as part of the celebration of the university’s 150th anniversary. On Facebook at: “The Writer Speaks of Freedom: A Writers’ Roundtable”

Thurs., Oct. 30 – 3rd ANNUAL DAY OF THE DEAD

FESTIVAL – “The 17th Street Farmers’ Market welcomes the La Plaza Farmers Market to Shockoe Bottom for an authentic celebration of this beloved Mexican holiday. Enjoy traditional Mexican dishes like tamales, empanadas and tacos along with dazzling live performances from traditional Aztec musicians and dancers.” Free; food and beverage available for purchase. 5-9 pm at the 17th Street Farmer’s Market, No. 17th & E. Main streets. Information: 804-646-0954.

Fri., Oct. 31 – A FUNERAL MARCH FOR GRACE ST. AND OTHER GRACES – The annual Oregon Hill Halloween Parade. Witness the official marriage between Corporate American and VCU and other amazing sights. 7 pm at Monroe Park. On Facebook at: “A Funeral March for Grace St. and Other Graces”

Sat., Nov. 1 – 14th ANNUAL BRUNSWICK STEW FESTIVAL – “Stew masters from across the mid-Atlantic region come together at the 17th Farmers’ Market for this annual event. Stew is available by the sample and you can purchase quarts to take home. Try them all and then vote for your favorite in the ‘Best Stew master’ competition. In addition to delicious stew, festival attendees can enjoy great live music, ice-cold brew, children’s area with petting zoo, and an expanded craft marketplace featuring dozens of vendors with locally-made goods from across the state. Make sure you get there early before the quarts run out! The event is free to attend. Food and beverage are available for purchase.” 11 am - 4 pm, 17th Street Farmer’s Market, No. 17th & E. Main streets. Information: 804-646-0954.

Sun., Nov. 2 – ASSATA SHAKUR LIBERATION DAY – 5-7 pm, William Byrd Community House, 224 So. Cherry St. Hosted by Richmond Jericho. “We are also asking a donation of \$5-\$25 for the William Byrd House and the new chapter of Richmond Jericho, however NO ONE will be turned away for lack of funds.” On Facebook at: “Assata Shakur Liberation Day!”

Mon., Nov. 3 – “TALK TO THE EDITOR” – Live call-in monthly radio talk show with Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto. 2-3 pm on WCLM, 1450 AM or online at: www.wclmradioonline.com. Join the conversation at: 804-231-7685. On Facebook at: “Talk to the Editor”

Thurs., Nov. 6 – MONTHLY MEETING OF RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL’S “SLAVE TRAIL” COMMISSION – The commission is the official City Council committee charged with preserving the city’s slavery-related history. 4-5:30 pm at the Richmond East District Initiative building, 701 N. 25th St. WARNING: These meetings are often cancelled, postponed or moved without notice to the public or even all commission members. The October meeting was cancelled just hours before it was to begin, with no public notice.

Thurs., Nov. 6 – FILM SHOWING: “THE ABOLITIONISTS” – “For almost a century following the American Revolution, abolitionists fought to end both slavery and racial injustice. The Abolitionists tells the story of several generations of men and women who led [sic] the battle to end slavery. Through innovative use of reenactments, this documentary puts a face on the anti-slavery movement.” 6-9 pm at the Virginia Historical Society, 428 No. Boulevard. Free and open to the public. Information: 804-342-9651.

Mon., Nov. 10 – RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL MEETING – 5 pm: Informal meeting. 6 pm: Regular meeting. Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St.

Sun., Nov. 16 – QUEER MATTER – “Three RVA bands with LGBTQ members come together from different music scenes to throw one awesome, strange, toxic, furious, and soon to be famous party to benefit ROSMY.” Doors open at 7:30 pm at Strange Matter, 929 W. Grace St. \$10 suggested donation. 18+. Information: Rosmy.org and Strangematterrva.com

Mon., Nov. 17 – RICHMOND TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE – An annual observance that honors the memory of those whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. 7 pm, Byrd Theater, 2908 W. Carty St. On Facebook: “Richmond Transgender Day of Remembrance 2014 Memorial Service”

Mon., Dec. 1 – “TALK TO THE EDITOR” – Live call-in monthly radio talk show with Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto. 2-3 pm on WCLM, 1450 AM or online at: www.wclmradioonline.com. Join the conversation at: 804-231-7685. On Facebook at: “Talk to the Editor”

Mon., Dec. 8 – RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL MEETING - 5 pm: Informal meeting. 6 pm: Regular meeting. Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St.

Thurs., Dec. 11 – MONTHLY MEETING OF RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL’S “SLAVE TRAIL” COMMISSION - The commission is the official City Council committee charged with preserving the city’s slavery-related history. 4-5:30 pm at the Richmond East District Initiative building, 701 N. 25th St. WARNING: These meetings are often cancelled, postponed or moved without notice to the public or even all commission members.


Sat., Jan. 3 – 7th ANNUAL VIRGINIA PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY FOR JOBS, PEACE & JUSTICE – Stay tuned for details.

Wed., Jan. 7 – VIRGINIA PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY RALLY & MARCH ON THE STATE CAPITOL – Stay tuned for details.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Sat., Nov. 1 - Sat., Nov. 7 – PEOPLE TAKING ACTION TO RETIRE FOSSIL FUELS – A week of actions including a march and disruptions of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Lodging for \$5 per night is available all week. Organized by Beyond Extreme Energy. Information: <http://goo.gl/80chvJ>

Just Say No to Dance!



Sen. Henry Marsh, Petersburg’s former Mayor Annie Mickens, and former Hopewell Mayor Brenda Pelham all said Dance must go. Del. Joe Morrissey said in an interview, “For 8 years Rosalyn Dance has masqueraded as a Democrat who then turned around and voted Republican. Dance has refused to stand with Democrats on many issues.”

Now Del. Dance wants the Democratic Party to be loyal to her, but she has not been loyal to the Democratic Party.

**NOV. 4, 2014
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Preston Brown

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- Brown will fight for a reduction of extra fees on our light bills
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Must We Say More?

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- Public Agency Director, Manager, and Supervisor
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- Courts Services, Applications, and Law Resources
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- Inspired, Prompt, Accurate - Impartial

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The Outgoing Court Clerks
Choose Your Next Clerks?

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Mobilization Against War & Occupation ~ MAWO VANCOUVER, CANADA

Mobilization Against War and Occupation is a coalition of over 50 endorsing organizations and individual members, most of which are working class organizations, student groups, grassroots organizations, and ethnic communities. This includes Indigenous activists and groups from the third world as well as women, youth and elder fighters for social justice and against war and occupation. We are the people in struggle because we are people that suffer at the hands of imperialism. We have the energy, drive and will for change because it is in our interest to make this change in order to create a better world for all of humanity!



Congratulations to THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER for 10 years of publishing an important tool in the struggle for peace and social justice!



Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)



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www.mawovanancouver.org

THE DEFENDERS

for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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Email: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com
Web: www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com

The Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality is an organization of Virginia residents working for the survival of our communities through education and social justice projects.

We started out in June 2002. Many of us had relatives in the Richmond City Jail or state prisons and were concerned about the physical conditions of these institutions.

As we worked around these issues, we learned more and more about the connections between jails, jobs, poverty, racism, sexism, class, war and political representation. We began to organize around these issues as well.

We now have a quarterly, statewide newspaper, a monthly radio program and a website. Our members meet monthly to discuss issues and plan actions. We are affiliated with the Virginia People's Assembly, the Virginia Immigrant Peoples Coalition and the National United Antiwar Coalition.

If you agree with the principles below and want to work to make these ideals a reality, we invite you to join us.

Together, we can make a real difference in the life of our communities.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe in Freedom

We believe that all people must be free to develop to their full potential as human beings. We must be free from hunger, from preventable diseases, from homelessness, from ignorance. We must be free to work and to provide for ourselves and our families. We must be free to pursue our education and to develop ourselves culturally and spiritually. We must be free from fear of the arbitrary use of police power and from the physical and cultural attacks of white-supremacist organizations. Women must be free from physical, cultural and emotional oppression. Children must be free from dangers like lead poisoning, asthma and sexual exploitation. Our youths must be free both from police harassment and the mindless violence of the streets. We must all be free from unjust wars fought in the interest of the wealthy few at the expense of the struggling many.

We believe in Justice

We believe that every human being has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And we believe that these rights are meaningless unless we also have the right to a job at a living wage, to decent housing, to adequate health care, to a meaningful education. We believe that all people have the right to stand equally before the law, to equal and fair treatment by the police, by the court system and in jails and prisons. And we believe that the death penalty is the ultimate exercise in injustice.

We believe in Equality

We live in the richest country in the world. But it's a country that owes its tremendous wealth to the barbaric oppression of Black labor on a historic scale, as well as the theft of American Indian and Mexican lands, the cruel exploitation of Asian labor and the labor of waves of poor European immigrants.

This country does not belong to the wealthy few who have claimed it for their own. As human beings, we all have an equal right to its resources. As descendants of those whose blood, sweat and tears paid cruelly for its development, we have a right to collective reparations. And as people who struggle every day with ongoing inequality, we have the right to affirmative action.

We believe that for any one of us to be free, we must all be free. We believe that for any one of us to have justice, we must all have justice. We believe that equality for anyone is impossible without equality for everyone.

As members of The Defenders, we pledge ourselves to defend our community, its men, its women and especially its children, from all forms of oppression.

We pledge to fight for a world where all people can live in dignity, freedom and peace.

regional & national news

Eyewitness Report: National protests in Ferguson, Missouri

By Devon Lee

"Indict! Convict! Send that killer cop to jail! The whole damn system is guilty as hell!"

That was the signature chant as we marched from the Canfield Green Apartment Complex to the Ferguson Police Department on Sunday, Oct. 11. As we marched, representing the Blacksburg Coalition for Justice, we conjured the spirits of the more than 500 unarmed Black men and women and children gunned down, snuffed by law enforcement within the last two years.

As we marched on, we were constantly reminded about why we were here: Mike Brown was not an isolated event.

Marching forward down a dimly lit Paul Avenue, chants are soon drowned out by "Changes" by Tupac: "Cops give a damn about a Negro? Pull the trigger, kill a n----, he's a hero." We are reminded of the "I am Darren Wilson" wristbands that police were wearing in solidarity with a man who just killed a Black teenager.

The march brings solidarity not only between Blacks and allies of social justice, but also converges a past and present filled with the devaluation of Black life. Our walk began from the site of Mike Brown's murder, where the lifeless body of a teenager with limitless potential laid for four hours and 32 minutes before being picked up in an unmarked SUV. Our march began at a site akin to a lynching where dead bodies were used to control live ones by making the symbolic statement "n----, if you step out of line, I will kill you."

As protesters wave signs that say "65 Days No Indictment," the end of the chant that ends with "The whole damn system is guilty as hell!" is put into context. The underlying impact of racism caused all of us to hit the streets and protest injustice.

As Black blood flows through the streets, we are confronted with the question of what



Photo by Margaret Breslau

Community members and religious leaders are arrested in Ferguson, Mo., while protesting police shootings there and across the country. Marches, rallies and civil disobedience were part of a national weekend on actions in mid-October.

is racism today? Racism is the way white supremacy blames the victims of racism for their oppression with no accountability for its existence. Racism is the way whites have historically benefited from the oppression of Black, Brown, Yellow and Red people. The system has historically been guilty of minimizing the lives of people of color for the desires and advances of non-people of color, a duality that brought us all to Ferguson.

With no indictment of Darren Wilson, the ruling of Eric Garner's (1) death as a homicide brings some hope. However that is undermined by the last words of John Crawford (2): "It's not real."

While the oppressed have historically called for an end to their oppression, they have also called on white allies to make a stand against racism by identifying as anti-racists. Marchers in Ferguson have put their lives at stake, have endured tear gas, mace and incarceration as a response to the exercise of the First Amendment right to protest against injustice.

For those of us who advocate for social justice, we must ask ourselves, "What are we willing to risk for justice?" and make a commitment to do just that.

In solidarity, organize – because "you have nothing to lose but your chains."

Devon Lee is a Ph.D. student in sociology at Virginia Tech and president of the Black Graduate Student Organization. He and Margaret Breslau of the Blacksburg Coalition for Justice travelled to Ferguson, Mo., for the mid-October "Weekend of Resistance" protests.

(1) Eric Garner, a 43-year-old asthmatic father of six, was confronted July 17 by New York City police officers for allegedly selling untaxed cigarettes. He died after being put him in a chokehold — a tactic banned by the department since 1993.

(2) John Crawford died Aug. 5 inside a Walmart in Beavercreek, Ohio. While talking on his cell phone, he had picked up a BB gun from a store shelf. The Walmart sells BB guns. Someone called 911. Police arrived and fatally shot Crawford in the chest.



Marissa Alexander wins new trial

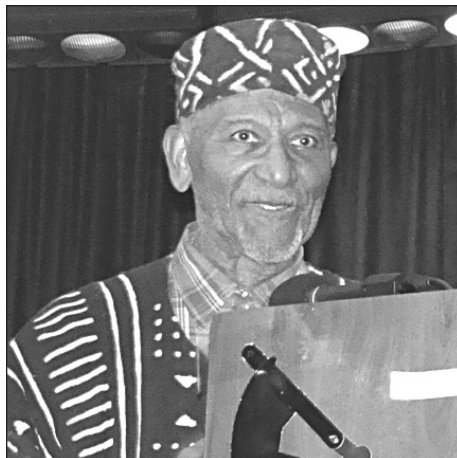
Marissa Alexander, the South Florida woman who was sentenced to 20 years in prison after defending herself from an abusive husband, has had her conviction overturned by an appeals court. A new trial has been scheduled for Dec. 1.

The mother of three was convicted in 2010 of aggravated assault after she fired a shot in her home. She later said she was trying to scare off her estranged husband, Rico Grey, Sr., who she says was beating her. Grey has a history of abusing women.

Alexander has tried to base her defense on Florida's Stand Your Ground" law, the same law that George Zimmerman successfully cited in his trial for the death of Black teenager Trayvon Martin. The same prosecutors who tried Zimmerman are now trying Alexander.

If convicted at her new trial, Alexander now faces up to 60 years in prison.

For more information: <http://justiceformarissa.blogspot.com>.



'Baba' Ferguson – Presente!

On the day lifelong international activist "Baba" Herman Ferguson made his transition, there was not one, but two rainbows in the sky over Brooklyn.

It was Sept 25. The much-admired political leader was 93.

"This is the sign we needed," commented activist Divine Allah. "It means he is ascending – and the ancestors are pleased."

Ferguson led a storied life: a seaman in the Merchant Marine, then an influential member Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), teacher and assistant principal in New York City's public school system – and a target of the FBI's infamous COINTELPRO.

Convicted by an all-white-male jury of plotting to kill civil rights leaders in hope of revolutionizing the Black agenda, he fled to Guyana, where he served in the Ministry of Education and established the Guyanese National Service, retiring as a Lt. Colonel in the Guyana Defense Force.

Voluntarily returning to the United States in 1989, Ferguson was immediately arrested



The Defender gets around

Merrie Felder of the National Black United Front holds up a copy of The Virginia Defender at the 26th Annual GarveyFest, held Aug. 16 in Milwaukee, Wis. At left is Dr. Ahmed Mbalia of the Pan African Revolutionary Socialist Party, the sponsor of the festival that honors Marcus Garvey, founder of the UNIA-ACL. [Photo courtesy Workers World.]

at New York's JFK airport. He spent several years in prison, after which he devoted himself to working to free dozens of political prisoners, including Mumia Abu Jamal, Sekou Odinga and Mutulu Shakur.

"Baba" Ferguson's memorial was held Oct 4 in Raleigh, N.C.

Information from New York's Amsterdam News.

community news

OCTOBER 29: Global Pink Hijab Day

Global Pink Hijab Day is a global movement, with many participants, including men as well. Participants can wear scarfs, shirts, pants, pins, bracelets or ribbons, anything PINK, to promote breast cancer awareness.

THIS EVENT IS FOR EVERYONE, regardless of religion, race, gender or background. It's an event to help those affected by the deadly disease.

The purpose of Pink Hijab Day is threefold:

Hijab – To encourage those who are curious about Muslim women and about hijab to ask Muslim women about what their hijab means.

Society – To encourage Muslim women to participate in various community improvement projects, because we are a valuable part of the fabric of the societies we live in. One of these projects is the effort to find a cure for breast cancer.

Health – To raise funds for cancer research and to encourage all people to maintain their health by getting regular screenings and to increase knowledge about preventative methods.

The Pink Hijab Day team encourages everyone to renew their intentions before wearing pink on October 29, 2014. Wearing pink is not the most important part of this day—it's just a very, very small part. Be sure to take part by donating to a cancer foundation, helping others understand Muslim women, getting screened and participating in projects that make your community better. This day isn't meant to be a fashion statement, but a symbolic pledge to take action.

For more information, contact Omnia Elgoodah at: globalpinkhijabday@gmail.com.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Richmond City Council greets delegation from African Sister City — Government officials from the Republic of Mali pose with members of Richmond City Council after being officially welcomed to Richmond. Richmond has a Sister City relationship with the Malian city of Segou. Not shown are Mayor Dwight Jones and 9th District Councilwoman Michelle Mosby, who did not attend the meeting. For more coverage of the delegation's visit, see story on page 5 and letter on page 8.

Growing Virginia campaign challenges natural gas pipeline projects

Staff Report

Despite growing public anxiety about hydraulic fracturing and natural gas pipelines, two separate pipeline projects are going forward in Virginia.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is being constructed by Dominion Resources and its partners to support the new Cove Point export station, a facility in Maryland for shipping natural gas to international markets. The line will run 550 miles from West Virginia through Virginia to North Carolina.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline, owned by Mountain Valley Pipeline LLC, will be a 300-mile project running from West Virginia to Virginia.

Both pipelines have been endorsed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a move that elicited surprise and strong condemnation from environmental groups and residents along the proposed routes, though the projects align with the "pro-business" platform he ran on.

Sure enough, the governor's primary motivation for supporting the plans is the hope that the construction projects will stimulate the economy.

There is little real evidence for this. At the center of Dominion's claims

about the Atlantic Coast Pipeline's economic impact is a report by Chmura Economics, the firm responsible for the rosy predictions for the Washington D.C. football team's training camp in Richmond. That venture failed to live up to the report's projections.

A possible failure to provide economic stimulus, however, is the least of the problems with the pipelines.

Their construction will expand the use of hydraulic fracturing, a method of drilling for gas that contaminates groundwater and can cause earthquakes. Also, the construction itself will be disruptive. There are also serious concerns from landowners along the routes,



Photo by David Martin

Protesters Sept. 30 outside the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, where Gov. Terry McAuliffe was unveiling his "all of the above" energy plan. "All of the above" includes the pipelines.

as seizures of private land under eminent domain is possible.

The most effective opposition to the pipelines so far has come at the local level, with strong resistance from groups in

Nelson and Floyd counties, among others, as well as statewide coalitions now forming. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline already has been forced to change its route because of resistance in Floyd County.

As of late October, ground had not been broken on either project.

Is your land threatened? Send us news of your community's fight against the pipelines. Call 804-644-5834 or email: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

VCU students say 'NO' to campus Walmart — VCU students and supporters protest plans to open a Walmart store on West Grace Street in the VCU campus area. The protest was held Oct. 8 at the Compass space on campus. Walmart has recently been targeting universities for expansion. The giant company has become synonymous with part-time, low-wage jobs with few if any benefits, as well as running smaller stores out of business.

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"The National Institutes of Health on Wednesday unveiled the largest independent study to investigate the impact of fracking on nearby residents. America's mixed views on fracking aside, the survey of residents of southern Pennsylvania found that people with ground-fed water wells living near hydraulic fracturing sites are twice as likely to report skin and respiratory problems."

The Washington Post — published Sept. 13, 2014, in the Cape Cod Times

cops, courts & prisons

Virginians hold Ferguson protests

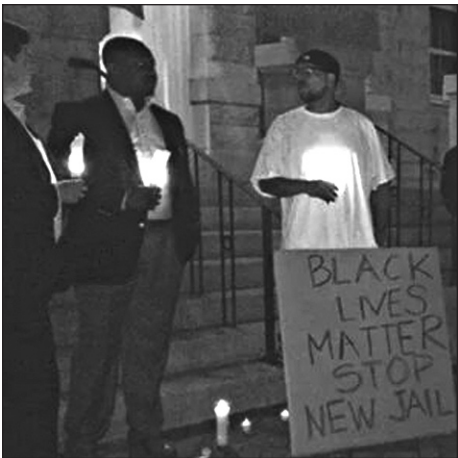


Photo by Hermelinda Cortez

Youth in Harrisonburg hold an evening vigil to protest the fatal police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

Hopewell man fatally shot by police

A Hopewell man was shot and killed by police the morning of Oct. 20 after he made “threatening gestures,” authorities said. Whether the man was armed or was threatening suicide was under investigation, according to State Police spokesman Sgt. Steve Vick. The man’s identity has not been released. Police said the man was driving along the railroad tracks near the Hopewell Moose Lodge, then stopped when three officers arrived, but refused to leave the vehicle. Police said the officers negotiated with the man for more than an hour before he made the “gestures.” As is customary in shooting cases, all three officers have been placed on temporary administrative leave. At the request of Hopewell police Chief John Keohane, the shooting is being investigated by the Virginia State Police. State Police investigating the shooting later found the man’s wife dead at an extended-stay motel where they had both been living. No information about how she died has been reported.

Staff Report

When news circulated that a white police officer in Ferguson, Mo., had shot and killed an unarmed Black teenager, anger erupted in that predominantly Black suburb of St. Louis, as well as in cities and town across the country. In Virginia, there were protests in Hampton Roads, Harrisonburg and Richmond, among other cities. In many places, protesters linked the Ferguson shooting with local issues. In Harrisonburg, the city’s plans to build a new jail were targeted. In Richmond, local Democratic Party officilas tried to get out ahead of the issue, holding a vigil that drew about a dozen people. An independently led rally a few days later attracted more than 100. Eighteen-year-old Michael Brown died after being shot Aug. 9 by Officer Darren Wilson. Accounts of the shooting given by the officer and eyewitnesses differ sharply. A grand jury considering charges against the officer is expected to announce its decision sometime in November.

Editor speaks at Buckingham prison

Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto was the featured speaker Aug. 1 at a Black August event held at the Buckingham Correctional Center, a Security Level 3 prison just outside the town of Dillwyn, about 65 miles west of Richmond. The event was sponsored by an organization of Rastafarians. Wilayto’s topic was the history of Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom, the U.S. domestic slave trade and the relationship between that trade and the building of the U.S. economy. About 40 inmates attended. Black August is a commemoration and celebration of struggles against Black oppression, in prisons and beyond.

A night in Richmond’s new jail

Editor's Note: The writer of this story recently spent a night in the new Richmond City Jail. His name is withheld by request.

I never thought I would see the inside of the new modern-day slave ship that is Richmond’s new city jail. Like the old jail, it’s located on Fairfield Way, across the street from the Oliver Hill Courts Building. That’s Richmond’s Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, where citizens do not have a right to a trial by a jury, but are still subject to going to jail for non-violent crimes, similar to the peonage laws that incarcerated thousands for many years after the 13th Amendment was passed. The majority of the inmates inside both these buildings are descendants of African people who were once enslaved while creating an abundance of wealth for this country and for those who had access to capital during the early years of the making of the United States of America. Richmond now has a state-of-the-art facility with a state-approved “rated capacity” of 1,032 beds, not counting 114 special-purpose beds, officials said. These extra beds exist for special cases, such as for inmates placed in isolation or those with medical problems. With the city’s chronically overcrowded existing facility that hovers around a popula-

tion of 1,350 inmates on average and exceeds 1,400 on some days, it looks like inmates will still be packed like sardines in a can, similar to how our ancestors were bought here in slave ships. (The first of those ships was called “Jesus of Lubeck,” also known as “The Good Ship Jesus.”) The new jail is cleaner and more human than the old jail. One can keep a sense of dignity by not having to strip and spread one’s butt cheeks in front of other inmates. But it is very cold inside and inmates are not given enough to wear to stay warm. One inmate told me the next morning when we were waiting to go to our bond hearings that he didn’t even get a blanket to sleep with that night. I only spent one night there because I turned myself in after missing a court date. I was housed on the 6th floor, the educational floor, where inmates are given classes to help prepare for when they are released. I am not sure of the types of classes offered, but I was able to sit in on a life skills class conducted in the pod the one day I was there. The new jail has limited inmate movement. The food is bought to the inmates’ pod and taken away by other inmates called trustees. There is no more going to court for bond hearings. It is all done by closed circuit TV. And visitors can no longer see inmates in person. That is also done by closed circuit TV.

The Mobile Justice Tour is Back!

The Mobile Justice Tour (MJT) is embarking on its 3rd 15-city tour, “fighting to reverse the trend of Mass Incarceration” in Virginia. At each stop, members of the coalition will discuss and share proposed legislation and activities to end discriminatory sentencing practices, revisit parole, support Ban-the-Box Campaigns and fairer employment application process, promote the restoration of civil and voting rights legislative and offer on-site direct assistance for people with a felony records. Join Resource Information Help for the Disadvantaged (RIHD) and its partners, Prisoner & Families for Equal Rights & Justice (PAFERJ), Bridging the Gap in Virginia and local moderators when we stop in your city, county or town. For schedule and information email Brenda (BJ) at: BrendajRIHD@gmail.com or visit our website: www.rihd.org Telephone: 804-426-4426 Moderator: Lillie Branch-Kennedy, RIHD, Inc.. Email: lillie@rihd.org

Join us when we visit / revisit your area

- Hampton
Tues., Oct. 28 , 5 - 8 pm
Main Library
4207 Victory Blvd.
- Richmond
Thurs., Oct. 30, 6 - 8 pm
Trinity Family Life Center
3601 Dill Road
- Richmond
Tues., Nov. 18, 6 - 8 pm
Wesley Memorial United Methodist
1720 Mechanicsville Turnpike
- Virginia Beach
Tues., Dec. 2, 2:30 - 5 pm
Meyera E. Oberndoft Central Library
4100 Virginia Beach Blvd.
- Crewe
Thurs., Dec 4, 5 - 8 pm
Crewe Town Library
400 Tyler St.

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sacred ground



Photo by John Moser

Segou Mayor Ousman Simaga holds a torch during the Gabriel Gathering

Malian delegation joins annual Gabriel Gathering

A delegation of government officials from the Republic of Mali in West Africa joined Richmonders for this year's annual commemoration of the execution of the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel at Richmond's African Burial Ground, once the site of the city's gallows.

The four officials included Thierno Bouba-

car Cisse, governor of the Province of Segou; Ousman Simaga, mayor of the city of Segou, which has an official Sister City relationship with Richmond. (See related story on page 3.) Gov. Cisse and Mayor Simaga shared their thoughts about standing on the very ground where many of their own ancestors are likely buried.

Also speaking were Omowale Deane, president of the African Ancestral Chamber; Weluna Queen Earth of the Nation of Gods and Earths; and Phil Wilayto, editor of The Virginia Defender. Janine Bell of the Elegba Folklore Society performed a traditional African libation ceremony. Drummer Ram Bhagat opened the ceremony, which included an open mic so that all attending could express their thoughts and feelings on the historic day. The gathering was led by Ana Edwards, chair of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project.

Gabriel, a 24-year-old enslaved blacksmith and brilliant revolutionary organizer, was executed on Oct. 10, 1800. Each year since 2003 the Defenders have held a ceremony on that date at the African Burial Ground.

"Gabriel was the last of more than two dozen revolutionaries who gave their all in a bold attempt to end slavery in Virginia," said Edwards. "It's likely that in his final moments he was surrounded only by jeering militiamen and racists. We stand with him each Oct. 10 and rededicate ourselves to the struggle for justice and freedom."

Universities confront legacies of slavery

By Ana Edwards

Scholars from Emory University, Brown University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Alabama, Sweet Briar College and College of William & Mary gathered at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville Oct. 16-17 for a symposium titled "Universities Confronting the Legacy of Slavery."

The event, hosted by the UVA President's Commission on Slavery and the University, opened with a dedication service at First Baptist Church and a graveside ceremony at the University Cemetery to honor enslaved and free Africans buried in the recently rediscovered and refurbished plot.

The symposium was the culmination of work initiated by UVA students in 2006 to get the school to acknowledge and apologize for its historic role in slavery.

A series of panel presentations covered the histories and issues that have been raised as these schools face the details of their origins in a slave-holding society. In the first panel, representatives from the six universities examined their own schools' histories.

The second panel focused on UVA's own history. The school's library archivist, Dr. Ervin Jordan, pointed out that, 150 years af-

our working lives



Photo by courtesy Raise Up

Henrico County police officers prepare to arrest a group of Richmond-area fast-food workers who blocked traffic to dramatize their demand for a \$15-an-hour wage.

'Raise Up' our wages!

It was noon – lunchtime for many workers. But outside the McDonald's on Mechanicsville Turnpike, just north of the Richmond-Henrico County line, a group of fast-food workers were hungry not for food, but for justice.

Moving together, they sat down in the street, blocking traffic, to dramatize their demand for a raise to \$15 dollars an hour.

Richmond was of 150 cities around the country that saw similar protests Sept. 4 in a national day of actions organized by the Raise Up campaign. Through strikes, rallies, sit-ins and other creative tactics, these mostly minimum-wage workers are on the front line of working-class struggles for economic survival.

The 10 workers arrested outside the Henrico McDonalds – all of them African-Ameri-

cans, most of them young – were charged with unlawful assembly and public nuisance, both misdemeanors. They are scheduled to go to court at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 19, at the Henrico County Courthouse. The campaign is asking supporters to attend.

"We invite as many community partners, leaders and friends to the fast-food workers' court date," said Raise Up organizer Cassandra Shaw.

The Richmond campaign will be hosting a community meeting from 6 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 29, at the Letters Carrier Union Hall, 2416 Chamberlayne Ave.

For more information about this important struggle, call 804-357-7688 or check out the Raise Up page on Facebook.

Union Kroger workers ratify new contract

Members of United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400 have voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new, four-year collective bargaining agreement with the Kroger supermarket chain in the Richmond and Hampton Roads areas. The union says the contract, approved by the members Sept. 24, preserves health and retirement security and increases wages.

"This contract is an improvement," said Local 400 President Mark P. Federici. "Our members will keep their current health-care benefits and won't be forced onto the often inferior plans offered through the ACA's health care exchanges. Kroger will pay their share of benefits in full through the life of the contract, our members' pensions will be properly funded and our members won't be subjected to management playing 'favorites' when it comes to pay increases."

"From what we started with, when the company proposed taking away part-time and spousal health care, we've come a long way and on top of that we got some extra money in our pockets!," said Joseph Vaughn, a Bargaining Committee Member who works at Kroger #537 in Virginia Beach. "We have demonstrated that by

standing together we are strong!"

Kroger members and their community allies leafleted stores, gathering thousands of shoppers' pledges to stand with them through contract negotiations. They also rallied their coworkers at Kroger stores across the country to wear buttons reading, "Solidarity with Virginia Kroger Workers" while at work.

Kroger's new Marketplace stores sell not just groceries but clothing and jewelry. In these new stores, the union says, Kroger is promising higher wages in exchange for a written pledge not to join the union. Local 400 leadership, Kroger members and community activists hand-delivered a letter in May to the Richmond Marketplace store manager demanding an end to the anti-union tactic.

"It was a long challenging ride to reach this good contract we ratified today," said Peggy Billie, a Bargaining Committee member who works at Kroger #500 in Richmond. "And we aren't done. We are going to keep the pressure up on Kroger until our fellow workers at the Marketplace stores have the same rights and protections on the job as we do in other stores in the region and across the country."

The collective bargaining agreement took effect retroactively as of Aug. 3. It expires on Aug. 4, 2018, and covers 3,500 workers. The previous contract was extended three times as negotiators worked to reach agreement.

UFCW Local 400 represents 40,000 members working in the retail food, health care, retail department store, food processing, service and other industries in Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Project to honor human remains found in VCU well

By Ana Edwards

The Richmond-made documentary "Until the Well Runs Dry: Medicine and the Exploitation of Black Bodies," explores the history of the Medical College of Virginia's role in the grave robbing that provided bodies for anatomical study by students at the Medical College of Virginia and also the University of Virginia.

Produced in 2011 by Shawn Utsey, psychology professor and then-chair of VCU's Department of African American Studies, the film features the 1996 discovery of human remains in a mid-19th century well uncovered during construction of the Hermes A. Kontos Medical Sciences Building on the MCV campus during the administration of VCU's President Eugene S. Trani.

VCU's archaeologist was given very little time to recover samplings of the remains, which were boxed and sent to the Smithsonian Institution for storage. Subsequent research revealed that the majority of the recovered remains were of African-Americans. Yet no plaque marks the site and there was no investigation into why the remains were there – nothing but silence for the next 15 years.

Rather than risk a repeat of the public embarrassment that followed VCU's operation, despite community outrage, of a parking lot on Richmond's African Burial Ground, the school's current president, Michael Rao, established the East Marshall Street Well Project Planning Committee.

The goal was to help determine a process for properly honoring the human remains through education about this chapter in MCV's history, as well as the proper memorialization and reburial of the remains.

The committee began meeting in September 2013. This summer it contracted with the Washington, D.C., firm Justice & Sustainability LLC to facilitate the project's public engagement process. J&S had previously worked with the National Park Service on New York City's African Burial Ground.

A public launch of the project will take place Nov. 19 at the The Carillon in Byrd Park.

Ana Edwards, Chair of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, is a member of the East Marshall Street Well Project Planning Committee.

Shockoe

Continued from page 1

As written, the lease could be extended for as many as three more years. And the team plans to upgrade the Diamond.

As we go to press, it's just been reported that the Squirrels actually wanted a longer lease. This clearly means the team has given up on getting a new stadium, in Shockoe Bottom or anywhere else, for the foreseeable future.

That news was Strike One against a Shockoe stadium.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Defenders Ana Edwards, left, and Shelli Cumber promote the Shockoe Bottom struggle at this summer's Down Home Family Reunion.

Strike Two came when world-famous actress Lupita Nyong'o, who won an Academy Award for her portrayal of Patsey in the critically acclaimed movie "Twelve Years a Slave," wrote to Mayor Dwight Jones asking him to withdraw his support for the stadium and instead engage the community in a real discussion about how to properly memorialize the area that once was the epicenter of the massive U.S. domestic slave trade.

Nyong'o posted the letter on her Facebook page, which has 1.8 million followers worldwide. Within 12 hours the post had received nearly 6,000 "likes," more than 400 "shares" and more than 100 comments, a number of them from Richmond.

News of the letter was widely reported, including in the high-fashion magazine Elle.

Strike Three is the continuing interest in the issue being shown by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit chartered by Congress in 1949 to protect historic sites around the country. Earlier this year the Trust included Shockoe Bottom in its annual list of 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, citing as its reason the mayor's stadium proposal. (The organization's president was quoted in The Washington Post as saying the Bottom actually topped the list.)

Following up on that designation, the Trust has been gathering input from Richmond activists and preservationists as to what they think should be done with Shockoe Bottom and what process should guide that work. A report synthesizing that input is expected soon.

(Strike Four would be the recent apparent firing of the mayor's top aide, Chief Administrative Officer Byran Marshall, and the subsequent resignation of his Economic

and Community Development director, Peter Chapman, both of whom were key to Jones' effort to promote a Shockoe stadium.)

David 3, Goliath 0

It's been a year now since Mayor Jones stood in a Shockoe Bottom parking lot owned by controversial developer H. Louis Salomonsky and unveiled Revitalize RVA, the economic development proposal that includes putting a commercial ballpark in the heart of the district where tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of Africans and people of African descent once were bought and sold.

As he spoke to a crowd made up mostly of employees of companies that stood to gain from the plan, more than 100 people shouted their opposition in a protest reported around the world.

"U.S. mayor plans ballpark near site of slave cemetery, market," read the headline from Reuters, the respected international news agency based in London.

Even so, many people thought the deal was in. "They're going to do what they want," was the most common comment heard. "You can't fight City Hall."

What's more, this was never just the mayor's plan. It was heavily promoted by Venture Richmond, the downtown booster organization that functions as a kind of shadow government for Richmond, including in its large board of directors representatives from most of the city's major corporations, banks, universities and media, along with a selection of leading politicians.

Mayor Jones serves as the group's president.

Salomonsky (he's the guy who went to prison in 2003 for bribing a former member of City Council), who was to build the 500 high-rent apartments that would flank the Shockoe Stadium, has a business partner on the board.

Over the past year Venture Richmond has spent at least \$50,000 in a slick public-relations campaign to promote Revitalize RVA.

The mayor's office has spent half-a-million in studies, reports and consulting fees.

'Follow the money'

And the mayor had some key allies at his side when he unveiled the plan last Nov. 11.

"I believe that this is the one chance we

Also on hand supporting the mayor were University of Richmond President and noted historian Ed Ayers, City Council President Charles Samuels and Council Vice-President Ellen Robertson – all of whom are Venture Richmond board members.

In addition, the mayor read a statement of support from former Richmond mayor and now U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine. In January, newly elected Gov. Terry McAuliffe took the apparently unprecedented step of speaking before City Council on a local matter, strongly endorsing the stadium plan.

But despite all this political and financial power, Mayor Jones still can't get a majority of the nine-member City Council members to support the plan, and he withdrew it from consideration last May just 15 minutes before council was to discuss a vote.

Fighting City Hall

So what went wrong? Why couldn't the richest and most powerful people in Richmond – the city's 1 percent – get their profit-making scheme adopted?

The answer is, the community stood up and said "No!"

The people of Richmond – Black, Latino, Asian and white – have come out against a Shockoe Bottom stadium. As many as 300 turned out for City Council meetings. More than 4,300 have signed a petition against the stadium.

Many individuals and organizations have played key roles in this struggle, petitioning on the streets, raising money to pay for electronic billboards, maintaining Facebook pages, putting up posters, holding vigils and rallies, doing media work, speaking at City Council, getting groups like Preservation Virginia and the National Trust involved and much more. The effort never had a formal coalition, but social media and a series of activists meetings hosted by the Defenders have helped keep people in touch and informed.

Of course, Mayor Jones still hasn't admitted defeat. (In response to an inquiry from the Defender, the mayor's spokesperson, Tammy Hawley, emailed Oct. 21 that "I don't have an update at this time on plans for Revitalize RVA.") But it's hard to see how Mayor Jones could bring the discredited plan back before council and get it adopted.

However: Stopping the stadium has always been just the first of a two-part struggle.

On to Part 2

The task now is to create a real memorial to the mass suffering and resistance that took place in Richmond from the late 1700s through April 3, 1865, the day Union troops, led by Black soldiers, liberated the city from Confederate rule and ended slavery here once and for all.

The continued pressure from the National Trust and famous people like Lupita Nyong'o is a big part of that. But the essential element will be a real community discussion in which the Black community must play the leading role.

What do people want to see in Shockoe Bottom? A memorial park? A museum? Interpretive center? Genealogy center? Signage? Statues? Commemorative trail? All these ideas and more need to be discussed at local community meetings all around town. And the Defenders will do our part to make sure that happens.

In the meantime, it's up to all of us to keep on top of what is happening, attend council meetings, pay attention to the media and attend the upcoming community meetings.

And we've got history on our side – in a very special way.

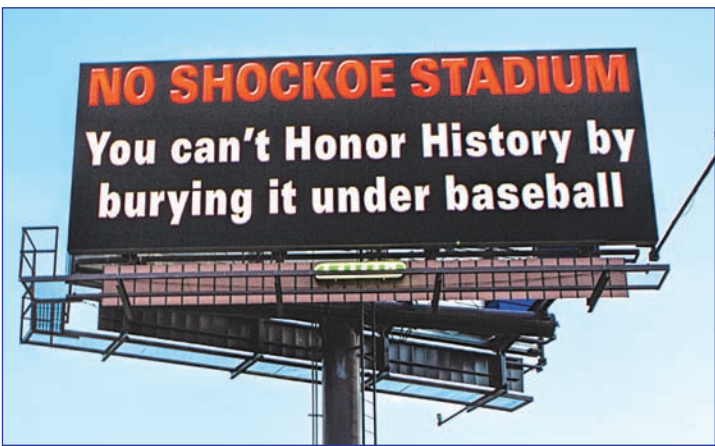


Photo by John Moser

This electronic billboard on I-64 in Richmond boldly lays out the case for defending Shockoe Bottom, once the center of the massive U.S. domestic slave trade.

A strategy to win

Next September, the city will host the 2015 UCI Roads World Championships, one of bicycle racing's most prestigious events. Promoters are predicting 400,000 visitors, including reporters from more than 100 countries, plus many millions of television viewers.

And what's the local interest news story going to be?

It's obvious: 150 years after the end of the Civil War and slavery, how is the former capital of the Confederacy dealing with its slavery-related past?

The bike race route runs right through Shockoe Bottom. So will the television cameras pan over the newly created Sacred Ground Memorial Park? Or hundreds of protesters?

April 3 will be the 150th anniversary of the end of slavery in Richmond, when Union troops led by Black soldiers marched into the city and ended that horrific institution once and for all.

If Mayor Jones and City Council haven't made substantial progress by that date on reclaiming and properly memorializing the sacred ground of Shockoe Bottom, the Defenders will call for mass protests during the UCI bike race. And we'll launch an international media campaign around that call.

But if the City does the right thing, Richmond can shine in the eyes of the world.

If we stick together, in a spirit of unity and mutual respect, we can win this historic struggle.

After all, we've already shown we can all beat City Hall.

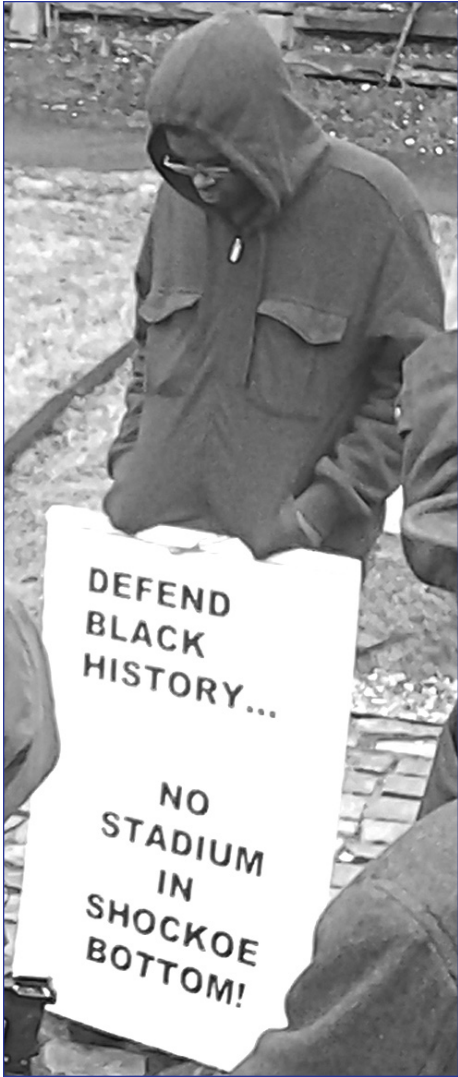


Photo by Phil Wilayto

A youth at a tour of Shockoe Bottom hosted by Urban Awareness Inc.

Lupita Nyong'o's letter to the mayor

Dear Mayor Dwight Jones,

My name is Lupita Nyong'o. I am an actress, best known for my portrayal of Patsey in Steve McQueen's film, 12 Years A Slave, based on the autobiography of Solomon Northup.

I learned recently that the "Revitalize RVA" program intends to construct a minor league baseball stadium, among other commercial structures in Shockoe Bottom, over the archaeological remains of America's second-largest slave trading center. I write to ask you to withdraw your support of such a venture.

Evidence of America's slave history simply must be preserved, as the legacy of slavery affects all American people. The tactic of the enslaver was to systematically erase all memory of the African's past; let us not repeat this ill by contributing to the erasure of his past in America too. Though this his-

tory is ugly and unjust, Shockoe Bottom is a site of conscience, a place where we can bear witness to the human rights abuses of slavery, learn from the lessons of history, and spark a conscience in people so that they can choose the actions that promote justice and lasting peace today.

And yet you are no stranger to the cause for education and the advancement of society through knowledge. On top of being an accomplished scholar yourself, during your term as mayor, you have seen to the construction of four schools in Richmond. I am confident that these schools are intended to engage students in understanding and interpreting our shared history, stimulating their minds about social issues that concern them, and promoting humanitarian values. A preserved Shockoe Bottom can be an integral part of these students' unique educational experience.

Historical sites like these are valuable not only to Americans, but to the entire world that engages with America. I, for one, originate from Kenya,

and had it not been for the preservation of slave history on the plantations in Louisiana and within the walls of museums that I visited, my immersion into Patsey's life and lifestyle would not have been as deep nor as empathetic as it was. I may not have been as equipped to portray her and thus contribute to the cinematic heritage that we now have in the movie, 12 Years A Slave.

We would be appalled if a casino was built over Gisozi in Rwanda, a mega mall was constructed over Robin Island in South Africa, or new condos were erected through the gates of Buchenwald in Germany. Let us therefore not have a baseball stadium sit atop the legacies of slavery at Shockoe Bottom.

I urge you to set aside the baseball stadium plans and, instead, fully involve the public in determining how best to commemorate the past of slavery at Shockoe Bottom.

Respectfully,
Lupita Nyong'o

All eyes on Richmond: Are we ready?

By Ana Edwards

Next year, as Richmond marks 150 years since the end of the Civil War and slavery, millions of people will be watching to see how the majority-Black, former capital of the slavery-defending Confederacy deals with that momentous anniversary.

The context is already being set. Leading up to the New Year will be the Nov. 19 launch of a public-engagement process on how to appropriately reinter and memorialize the bodies of 19th century African-Americans robbed from their graves to produce cadavers for students studying at the Medical College of Virginia. The bodies were discovered in 1996 in a well on the college's East Marshall Street campus. (See story on page 5.)

From April 2 to 4, under the banner of the Sesquicentennial of Civil War and Emancipation, Richmond will see a weekend of activities to mark its liberation from its status as capital of the Confederacy.

Those events will be followed by the April 9 commemoration of Virginia Union University's 150th anniversary. VUU's origins go back to the site of Lumpkin's Jail.

The bar is being set and Richmond has both an opportunity and a responsibility to take its rightful place in making new and better history for its children.

A central question will be how Richmond is dealing with its history as the

fountainhead of the domestic slave trade.

Recent evaluations of existing research show there are no less than eleven sites of archaeological value in the footprint of the Revitalize RVA plan. Dutton and Associates, the firm contracted by the City to review the district's archaeological resources, not only affirms the research of Richmond historian Elizabeth Cann Kambourian that revealed the area has archaeological value, but details at least seven representative sites dating back to the city's earliest years related to the slave trade, ethnic/cultural heritage and commerce that, if studied, could be no less remarkable than the findings at the site of the Lumpkin's Jail complex.

These include major slave-trading complexes clustered at 17th and East Broad streets (1830s-1860s); the public market at 17th Street (1780s); the Seabrook's tobacco warehouse (1810-1910); dwelling sites of 35 free Black families (1852); tenement houses for enslaved and free Blacks at the interior of the block bounded by East Grace, East Franklin, 17th and 18th streets; and a still-standing 18th century church.

Dutton's findings could be one reason why the mayor has not yet reintroduced the plan to City Council since pulling it from council's agenda just before a likely "no" vote in May.

As all these events unfold, the world will be watching to see how today's Richmonders are dealing with their city's pro-

Mayor Jones suggests Lupita Nyong'o visit Richmond

[Editor's note: The Defender asked the mayor's office if he had responded to Lupita Nyong'o's letter. We received this email from the mayor's spokesperson, Tammy Hawley.]

The Mayor welcomes Lupita Nyong'o to take the opportunity to visit Richmond.

We feel if Lupita were to see our proposal for the area she would see where we are in agreement that important history needs to be preserved in Shockoe.

She would also see that what is going on in that area now is no way to highlight and preserve that history. Our proposal shows where we want to invest in that history and lift that history up for future generations to learn from.

Our plans call for a \$30 million investment into that history, to highlight and preserve that history.

foundly inhuman history.

The world's eyes will be on Richmond in 2015.

Will we be ready?

Ana Edwards chairs the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project. She is also a member of The Future of Richmond's Past, the VCU Well Committee and the General Assembly's Remembering Slavery, Resistance and Freedom Project. She counts among her ancestors two women who were sold out of Shockoe Bottom.

2015 VPA

Continued from page 1

The 2015 General Assembly opens on Wednesday, Jan. 7, so that means the 2015 VPA would be on Saturday, Jan. 3, with the march and rally on the 7th.

The first organizing meeting will be held on Saturday, Nov. 1, from 1-4 pm, in Richmond. After that a lot of business can be conducted by email, but traditionally the first meeting has been face-to-face so everyone can get to know each other.

As of Oct. 23 — just four days after the fist cll waent out — 21 organizations and individuals had endorsed the 2015 VPA.

They are:

STATEWIDE

Raise Up — the movement to win a \$15 wage for fast-food workers
The Virginia Defender

ABINGDON

Bryan G. Pfeifer — Labor Activist

BLACKSBURG

Coalition for Justice

HIGHLAND SPRINGS

Respource Information Help for the Disadvantaged (RIHD)

NORFOLK

Willie Mae & Ray Doss — Parents of Wrongfully Incarcerated Virginia Prisoner
Jermaine Doss

NEWPORT NEWS

Charles Brown - Labor & Community Activist

RICHMOND

Active-RVA
All As One, Richmond Chapter
Kwame Binta — November Coalition
Collective X
Lillie A. Estes — ALO Community Strategy
Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality
Ana Edwards — Chair, Sacred Ground
Historical Reclamation Project
Flying Brick Library
Jamil Jasey — Sol Society
Jericho Movement, Richmond Chapter
Steven Loughman - Rag & Bones Bicycle
Collective
Weluna Earth Mother — Nation of Gods & Earths, Richmond Chapter
Richmond Peace Eduction Center

WOODBIDGE

Woodbridge Workers Committee

To get involved in the organizing work, please call 804-644-5834 or email DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

Let us know:

Do you endorse the 2015 Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice? That just means endorsing the call to hold the VPA, under the general theme of Jobs, Peace & Justice. Please say if you are endorsing as an individual or as a representative of your organization.

Can you be part of the 2015 VPA Organizing Committee? There's no set time commitment — we'll all do what we can.

The problems we face as working people are only getting worse, while the state

of the progressive movement needs a lot of work.

The VPA can be a big shot in the arm to organizing work in the state. Help make this year's people's Assembly the best one ever.

Remember, no one else can take your place.



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In our opinion

Obama, Ebola & Cuba

Compare these two news reports:

Reuters, Sept. 16: "President Barack Obama on Tuesday called West Africa's deadly Ebola outbreak a looming threat to global security and announced a major expansion of the U.S. role in trying to halt its spread, including deployment of 3,000 troops to the region."

BBC News, Sept. 12: "Cuba to send doctors to Ebola areas"

Cuba has already sent hundreds of doctors and nurses to the affected countries in West Africa. Some 15,000 volunteered to go, according to an Oct. 21 story in the London-based Reuters international news service.

In fact, Cuba, with just 11 million people, is sending the largest medical contingent to West Africa from any country in the world: 165 doctors and nurses are in Sierra Leone and another 296 were headed for Liberia and Guinea.

The U.S. contribution is "3,000 military engineers, medical personnel and other troops to the region." (Reuters, Oct. 17)

We wonder how the people in West Africa will look back on the help they received during their hour of need.

One of the poorest countries in the world sent doctors.

The richest country sent soldiers.

Anti-Zionism vs. Anti-Semitism

During this summer's deadly attacks by the Israeli military against the people of Gaza, there were many protests around the world, including here in Virginia.

In some European countries, there were reports of protesters attacking Jewish neighborhoods, giving fuel to the charge that being against Israel is the same thing as being against Jews.

It's not. Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism.

The Jewish people have been around for thousands of years. Zionism is a new phenomenon, dating back to its founding as an organized movement in 1897 by Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian journalist, playwright, political activist and writer. Its original goal was to establish a homeland – not a country – for the Jewish people. Uganda was under consideration before the movement decided on Palestine.

The growth of Zionism caused real divisions within the Jewish community. There were fierce political battles between Zionists and leftists in progressive U.S. unions like the Furriers in New York City.

Today not all Zionists are Jews and not all Jews are Zionists. In fact, some of the most outspoken anti-Zionists are Israeli Jews, outraged over their government's treatment of Palestinians.

But those who support Israel purposely blur the difference.

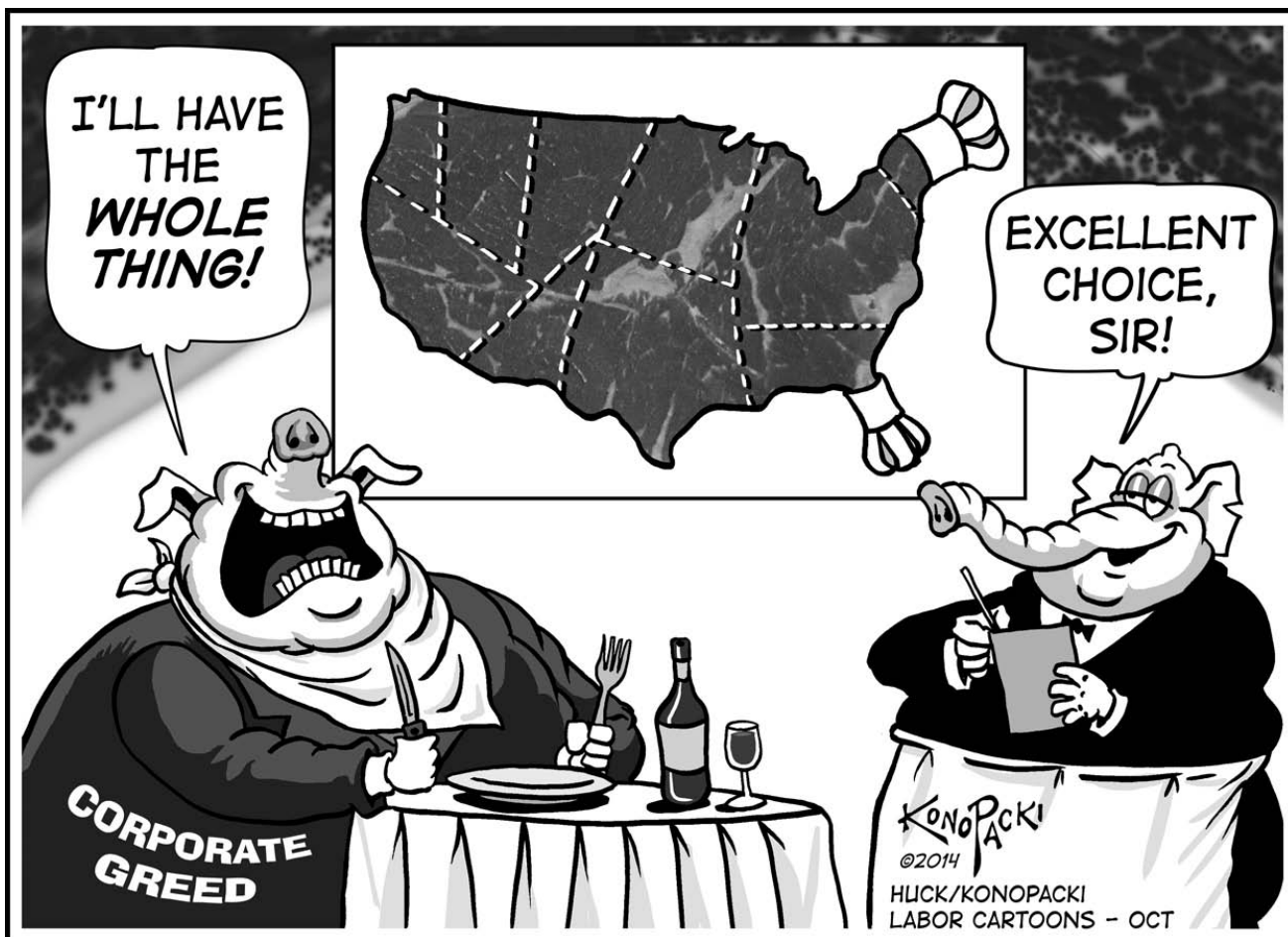
A prominent local example is the editorial policy of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, which never misses a chance to make excuses for Israel and disparage Palestinians. One editorial this summer declared that the Palestinian people bear a collective guilt because they have not, as a community, condemned attacks on Israelis.

This is strikingly similar to some Christians who charge Jews with collective guilt for the killing of Christ. And it leads directly to justifying collective punishment, which is official policy in Israel.

If being progressive means anything, it means opposing all forms of racism, including both anti-Semitism and Zionism. We all must speak up against both.

And, just as white people have a special responsibility to speak out against white racism, members of the Jewish community have a special responsibility to speak out against Zionism.

And that is also the best defense against a rising tide of anti-Semitism.



Letters to the Editor

Speaking of cats ...

I want to talk about CATS.

I believe that cats need a Defender. You and your editorial team do not give enough space to the issue of cats. Dogs are important too, and rabbits. But cats are under-supported in our community.

Do you know of any pet grooming station or parlor that is called Cat Groomer? There are a number with funny names about dogs, but not a single one that gives emphasis to cats.

There is an over-emphasis on dogs in Richmond, and cats suffer from the fact that there are dog parks, dog pooh stations, professional dog walkers and the fact that every evening the streets of Richmond are filled with amateur dog walkers, otherwise identified as overweight elderly Americans taking their dog for a walk.

Do we see Richmonders taking their cats for a walk? Not very often. The only person I know who takes their cat for a walk is Mrs. Emilia Higgintogham of Park Avenue, and she gets strange looks from the fact that she walks along pulling her cat in its harness. I can provide a picture on demand, as this would improve your paper and make its stories and illustrations more interesting.

I like your coverage of the baseball park dispute, I want to keep the stadium on the Boulevard and I am a supporter of making Shockoe Bottom a Cat-Friendly-Space.

Yours sincerely,

Concerned Citizen and Cat Lover
RICHMOND

Malians on Sacred Ground

I wish to report on the visit of the Sister City delegation from Mali, and their attendance at the Oct. 10 commemoration at the African Burial Ground.

This is the fifth year that people from Segou, our Malian sister city, have attended the 10/10 ancestral celebration - but the first time for the governor of the Region of Ségou. Gov. Thierno Boubacar Cissé spoke movingly of the

need for all peoples to come together to fight poverty and oppression. This tall and distinguished African was speaking not from the heart, but from the gut.

This hallowed land is a place where Malians lie: people called Thierno, people called Boubacar, people called Cissé – although, of course, they were denied the use of their names and their identities by their slaveowners in the 1600s and 1700s. The governor's words were made all the more powerful by the emotion on the speaker's face. It was impossible not to see his emotion, walking the Slave Trail from the James River at Manchester where the slaves landed, across the water to Lumpkin's Jail where they were humiliated and Shockoe Bottom where they were later sold as objects.

Despite the Statue of Reconciliation, Richmond still has a long way to go. There is conflict even about the African Burial Ground, where the An-

cestors have lain for 300 years. It was a privilege to stand with Malians on this Sacred Ground, remembering our common Ancestors.

Each year a dedicated group meets on the spot where Gabriel and his supporters were executed by hanging on 10/10/1800 for the crime of wanting Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness for all Americans – not just for rich white ones.

When confronting his judges, Gabriel – who was an educated and skilled blacksmith – used the same words that George Washington had used to justify his own revolt against the oppression of Britain's King George III. The colonists' objection to George III was taxes.

Gabriel was objecting to slavery, a whole different scale of oppression.

Sincerely,

Robin Poulton
RICHMOND

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Caught between Israel & the PA, Palestinian struggle needs new beginning

By Adeeb Abed

As you cross the border from Jordan to the West Bank, you are met with Israeli security personnel and Israeli passport control. They decide who will be granted a visa and who will be denied.

Then you purchase a ticket for a bus ride to Jericho to an enclosed area called “al-esteraha,” which translates to “rest area.” That’s where Palestinian Authority (PA) police look at your passport and Palestinian workers unload your bags, expecting a tip. You walk out and are met by taxi drivers looking for a fare. This experience has an element of theatre on the PA’s part to lead you to believe that they have some control over the border of the proposed Palestinian state.

As you travel across the West Bank, you are continuously within eye contact of an Israeli settlement, the security wall or an Israeli-only road (roads which are monitored and guarded to ensure they are only traveled by non-Palestinians). The road networks are such that settlers can travel within the West Bank and to any Israeli city without coming in contact with the Palestinian population.

When speaking with Palestinians in the West Bank, they speak of helplessness in the face of unemployment, poverty and the widespread corruption and nepotism in the PA.

During the most recent Israeli war on Gaza, called Operation Protection Edge, there were no acts of solidarity or support worth mentioning in the West Bank. The few protests and the collection of humanitarian aid in no way rose to the level of the events in Gaza.

I mention this because it is a direct result of the fear and despair that the security collaboration between the Israeli occupation and the numerous PA’s security apparatuses have instilled in the Palestinian population.

According to the “Two State Solution,” a Palestinian state is to be created from the West Bank and Gaza. However, since the Oslo Accords in 1993, the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank has swelled from 264,000 to 750,000 in 123 settlements.

Area A of the West Bank, where the PA

has “complete” control (Israeli Security Forces retain the right to go in to arrest any person or raid their home within this area) constitutes 17 percent of the West Bank, which is, to start with, only 21 percent of historic Palestine. The barrier wall is 703 km long and 60 m wide (including security roads), all of which is in Palestinian territory. Additionally, the “Green Line” (1967 borders) is significantly outside of the barrier, leaving another 8.5 percent of the West Bank effectively annexed by the de facto border created by the wall.

In addition to all of the above, Israel maintains control of several security zones, including the entire Jordan valley, under which lie the water resources for the entire West Bank.

With these realities on the ground that Israel created, it becomes an impossibility to establish anything that resembles an independent state.

The Palestinian struggle is one of equality for human rights, political rights and civil rights for all of those living in historic Palestine. The current Palestinian leadership has proven incapable of dealing with Israel in a way that serves Palestinians’ best interest or even works toward justice for the Palestinian population.

The following steps must be implemented for any real and lasting peace to be achieved:

- the dissolution of the PA;
- convening or reactivating the Palestine National Council with representation from the 1948 territories;
- adopting a new political program that deals with the realities as they are;
- adhering to a method of peaceful resistance that is modeled after the South African anti-apartheid movement.

These are bold suggestions that require the PNC to elect a new executive committee that will not include any of the current members, for they have proven their inability to accomplish any tangible gains for the Palestinian people since 1982 and in fact have significantly set back the Palestinian cause since the Oslo Accords.

War

Continued from page 1

Another big federal expense is care for the country’s veterans. But that spending comes under the Department of Veteran Affairs, which is separate from the DoD.

Then there’s the fact that funding the present wars doesn’t come out of the DoD budget. All those billions come from separate Congressional appropriations.

And finally there’s the cost of all the past wars, in the form of the federal deficit. Annual payments for the national debt is now almost as large as the DoD budget itself.

In other words, the government isn’t being up front with us about how much all the wars are costing.

It’s like if someone asked you what your average household expenses are and you tell them your monthly rent or mort-

gage payment, but leave out the food, lights, water, heat, home insurance, medical expenses, car payments or bus fare and gas money.

So when you add up the costs of past, present and future wars, plus the cost of maintaining the largest military in the history of the world, you can see that military spending takes up more than half your federal tax dollar.

What else could that money have paid for? For some answers, let’s visit the website costofwar.com, sponsored by the National Priorities Project.

In 2014, the project says, Virginia taxpayers will contribute \$15.42 billion to the DoD budget.

That’s enough money to give one-year university scholarships to 1.25 million stu-

What same-sex marriage means to me

By Lindsey O-Pries

I am completely humbled, filled with joy and grateful for yesterday. The support and celebration from our family, friends, community and even the media has been extraordinary. Being the first lesbian couple to be legally married in my home state of Virginia is truly one of the highlights of my life. There are so many people and couples who were far more deserving of the honor, folks who have worked so very hard for marriage equality. I wish that they had shown up first. The truth is that we were the only couple “in line” until right before 1 pm, something that we could have never anticipated. We honestly thought we were going to be in a very long line and I had an appointment at 3 pm that I didn’t want to cancel.

I knew that we were part of something much larger when the Clerk of Richmond City, Ed Jewett, brought out the folder of all of the applications for same-sex marriage licenses that had been denied over his tenure. His voice shook and his eyes watered as he gave us our oath. The deputy clerk who entered our information into the computer was so nervous that her hands shook, she beamed as she handed us our license and asked to shake our hands. The Clerk’s Office was so kind to us, and you could tell that this was a day they had been waiting for for a very long time. We have been blown away by all of the support, shouts of love and joy and congratulations from total strangers and of course all of the warm love that so many of you poured out into our world. I wish all of you a day like yesterday, because everyone deserves to feel so held by their community.

I am disappointed but not surprised that even with the many, many interviews we did with reporters there were very few articles/interviews that included my feelings about marriage being a very important step towards LGBTQ liberation, but far from the only one. I talked about jobs, housing and safety – I wish that I had been more articulate.

The truth is that marriage is a very, very sweet and important victory for my community, but while there are trans people being murdered, lesbian mothers being denied housing and gay folks being legally fired for being gay, we are far from equal. While watching the news last night, it was reported that a 12-year-old was shot and while riding his bike in Gilpin court. It was in the middle of the news program. His life matters, Black lives matter, trans

lives matter, immigrant lives matter, low-

income and working poor lives matter and they are just as big a part of my community as anyone else. Marriage will not make them equal.

The Governor of Virginia tweeted his congratulations to Nicole and me and I have requested a meeting with him to talk about the next steps for LGBTQ liberation. I will be following up with him and reaching out to the Virginians who are already doing the hard and important work of LGBTQ liberation to see if there is anything I can do to leverage my two minutes of fame to help advance their work. It is important work. It is the difference between life and death.

I love Nicole with everything in me. Choosing to make a commitment to one another on Topsail Beach in North Carolina three years and one day ago was the single best decision I have ever made. This marriage was about getting the rights that we all deserve and shouldn’t have to be married to receive. Getting married was the biggest political/personal compromise I have ever made in my life and so far, I have no regrets.

Yesterday was the first time in a very long time that I felt confident that we would be parents. Today we should be legally allowed to adopt and be foster parents in our state. On Sunday we couldn’t. This very well could be the most important right that I have ever wanted, or needed, to live the life that I most want to live. And I am overcome with the magnitude of it all. My heartfelt thanks goes to every single person (hundreds, thousands) who worked to make this possible.

Thank you.

Lindsey Oliver is a North Side Richmond resident who has fought for social justice as long as she can remember. She was one-half of the first same-sex couple to be legally married in the state of Virginia.



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