

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

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

FREE

A statewide quarterly newspaper published by the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality
Serving 16 Virginia cities and counties, primarily in the Richmond Metro Area

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What will be the future of **SHOCKOE BOTTOM?**

By Ana Edwards & Phil Wilayto

Richmond, Va., Charleston, S.C., and New Orleans, La., are the three major U.S. cities associated with the trade in captured Africans. As such, all three hold a special place in the history of Black people everywhere.

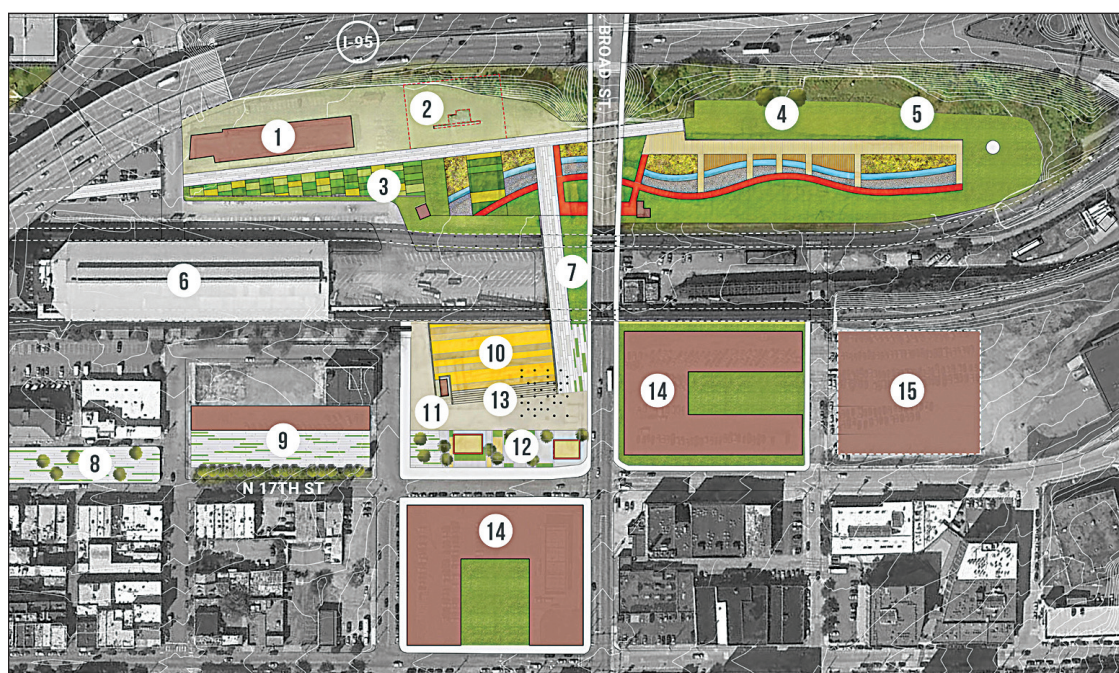
New Orleans was home to the largest slave market in the country, serving the plantations that opened up in the Deep South after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. A financially strapped France sold that vast area to the United States after being defeated by a revolutionary Black army fighting for freedom and independence in Haiti.

In New Orleans, the former Whitney Plantation opened in 2014 as a privately-owned museum to tell the story of slavery. This past Dec. 17, the New Orleans City Council voted

6-1 to take down its monuments honoring Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Generals Robert E. Lee and P.G.T. Beauregard and an obelisk dedicated to a reactionary insurrection against the post-Civil War Reconstruction government.

During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, **Charleston's** Sullivan Island was the entry port for some 40 percent of all Africans brought to what would become the United States. The U.S. Parks Department has an interpretive center there that tells part of this story. In 2006 the city government opened the Old Slave Mart Museum in a downtown building where Africans were once bought and sold. Now the city is building a \$70 million International African American Museum to examine its own role in the Trans-Atlantic trade.

And then there's **Richmond**, perhaps the most important of the three cities in terms of U.S. slavery and the internal slave trade. So how did a small, sleepy river town in the Upper South reach that level of involvement in the trade?



An artist's rendition of the proposed Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park and adjacent development. For more information about the proposal, visit www.sacredgroundproject.net.

Why Richmond?

In 1794 U.S. inventor Eli Whitney patented his mechanical cotton gin that could separate cotton fibers from their seeds much faster than by hand. That meant a huge boost in productivity – and greatly increased potential profits. So there was motivation.

By 1800 cotton had become the most important consumer commodity in the world, providing the raw material for the massive textile industries of Great Britain and New England. So there was demand.

The 1803 Louisiana Purchase dou-

bled the country's size, bringing in vast areas of rich soil that would soon be turned into Deep South plantations. So there was land.

What was needed was labor – cheap labor, to maximize profits, and labor that could be forced to work long hours in the blazing sun without any right to complain about pay, conditions or treatment.

Having watched with horror the successful slave insurrection in Haiti and fearful of the growing number of enslaved Africans in the U.S., Con-

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And much more!

"If you can live amid injustice without anger, you are immoral as well as unjust." – Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

regional & national news



Photo by Phil Wilayto

SHROC conferences include public actions. Above, participants in the 10th annual SHROC conference stage a Black Lives Matter protest in downtown Charleston, S.C.

SHROC 20: Two decades of Southern organizing

By Phil Wilayto

The Defenders are preparing to send a delegation to Jackson, Miss., to attend the 20th Anniversary Southern Human Rights Organizers Conference, known as SHROC. The bi-annual gathering of Southern social justice and peace activists is scheduled to be held Dec. 9-11 at Tougaloo College.

Why are we traveling so far? And why should you? Because this conference is important to building a Southwide movement for fundamental social change.

Here's what SHROC founder Jaribu Hill has to say:

"I am amazed at how the gathering has become an institution in our movement. It is hard to believe that we've been coming together for 18 years, bearing witness to struggles and victories, raising our voices and making just demands for an end to all forms of slavery, discrimination, xenophobia and colonization. We are really a central point for solidarity and principled unity. May we continue for the next 20 years and beyond."

Among the presenters at this year's conference will be Ajamu Baraka, currently the vice-presidential candidate on the Green Party

ticket; Margaret Kimberley of Black Agenda Report; Ray LaForest of the Haiti Support Network; Venezuelan Ambassador Jesus Chucho Garcia; Rolandah McMillan of the Defenders and Fight for \$15; SHROC Founder Jaribu Hill of the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights; and a supporter of the Council of Mothers of May 2 from Odessa, Ukraine.

Other organizations promoting and participating in the conference are Alternate Roots, Black Workers for Justice, Cooperation Jackson, Malcolm X Grassroots Center, MIRA, NAACP, National Domestic Workers Alliance, National Lawyers' Guild, One Voice, Organization for Human Rights & Democracy, Priory of St. Moses the Black, Project South, Southerners on New Ground (SONG), UAW Region 8, United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), U.S. Human Rights Network and Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement.

For more information, see the Facebook event page: "Southern Human Rights Organizers' Conference (SHROC) 20" and the SHROC 20 website: <http://ezregister.com/events/18102>

Defender Editor Phil Wilayto is a member of the SHROC 20 Organizing Committee and helped organize the International Issues panel.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Silver Persinger, left, videos a solidarity message read by members and friends of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project at Richmond's African Burial Ground.

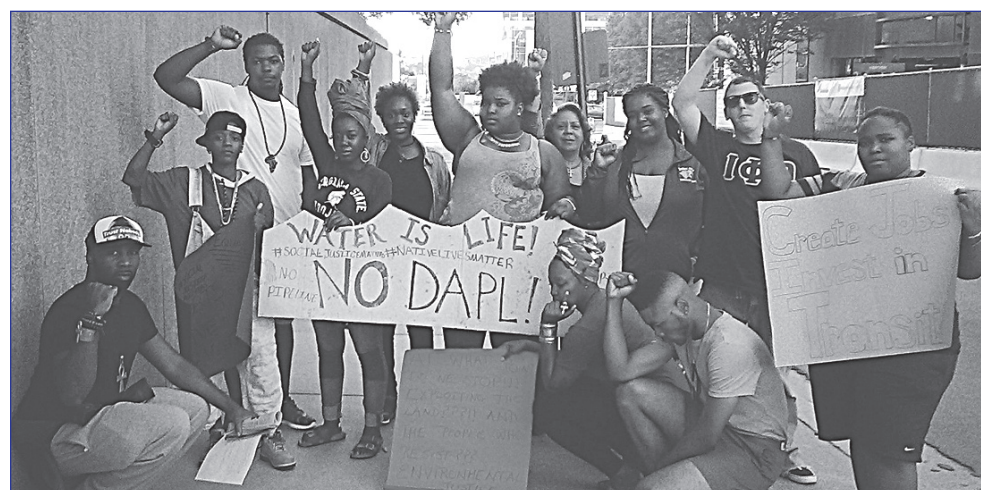


Photo by Teri Brown

Young activists in downtown Richmond show their solidarity with the Standing Rock struggle.

Solidarity with Dakota Standing Rock struggle

If completed, the \$3.8 billion, for-profit Dakota Access Pipeline would carry about 500,000 barrels of crude oil each day from North Dakota's Bakken oilfield to Illinois.

The project has faced months of resistance from the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, supported by nearly 100 other tribes from across the Unit-

ed States and Canada who view the project as a threat to critical water sources and sacred sites.

In response to a call from Standing Rock for solidarity statements, responses came in from around the world. In addition to the Richmond action, the Defenders wrote the statement sent by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).

THE DEFENDERS for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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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.

community news

news u can use

Looking for a lawyer?

Think you need a lawyer but don't know where to start looking for one? You might try the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service. For \$35 you can get up to a half-hour consultation with a licensed attorney who is a member in good standing with the Virginia State Bar and experienced in the area of law you are concerned about. The service is open 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. For more information, contact the VLRS at (804) 775-0808 (metro Richmond) or toll-free at (800) 552-7977.

Free STI testing

Richmond City Health District offers a free evening screening clinic for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) on the first Tuesday of every month at their downtown clinic at 400 E. Cary St. Registration is from 5 - 6:30 pm, or until the clinic runs out of slots. Patients receive free screenings for syphilis, HIV, gonorrhea and chlamydia. The STI screening clinic perform screenings only. Persons needing treatment will be given an appointment during the clinic's weekday hours, which may have a cost depending upon the person's financial situation. For more information: 804-482-5500.

RVA library sale

On Friday, Nov. 4, and Saturday, Nov. 5, the Richmond Public Library at 101 E. Franklin St. will have its Friends of the Library Book Sale, featuring deals on old or excess library stock. Sale hours: Nov. 4, noon-5 pm and 7-9 pm; Nov. 5, 10 am-4 pm. Information: 804-646-7223.

VCU library sale

From Oct. 27-31, VCU's James Branch Cabell Library at 901 Park Ave. will hold its annual Friends of the Library Book Sale: novels, nonfiction, academic texts, cook books, children's media, comics, audio books, CDs, DVDs, & more. Sale hours: Oct. 27, noon-7 pm; Oct. 28 & 29, 9 am-5 pm; Oct. 30, 1-4 pm; Oct. 31, 9 am-7 pm. Information: VCU Libraries Development Office at 804-827-3616 or see goo.gl/YGXo1v.

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THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

State Police:
Jones investigation 'ongoing'

By Phil Wilayto

As we go to press, state and federal authorities are continuing their investigation into the relationship between Richmond city government and a new church built by Mayor Dwight Jones in Chesterfield County.

"The investigation is ongoing at this time," Virginia State Police spokesperson Karin Geller told the Defender Oct. 20.

According to stories in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, the FBI also is involved in the investigation. The Defender tried, unsuccessfully, to confirm those reports.

"I have never confirmed an investigation" said Richmond FBI spokesperson Dee Rabiski, adding that such a confirmation would be against FBI policy. "I'm not saying it hasn't been reported, but I have not confirmed it."

The Times-Dispatch has reported that the investigation began when the mayor requested in January "... that state police review a city auditor's report that found the director of public works, Emmanuel Adediran, was overseeing a church construction project on city time."

The church in question is the Chesterfield County campus of First Baptist Church of South Richmond, where Jones is senior pastor. Services are held in a 35,000-square-foot, \$6.5 million multipurpose building on 25 acres of land on Ironbridge Road in the northern part of the county.

Adediran is a member of the church, as are some 10 percent of Jones' top city employees. Formerly employed by the city's parks department, where he was paid a salary of \$58,000, Adediran was promoted over five years to his current post, with an annual salary of \$130,000.

Emails obtained by the Times-Dispatch indicate that Jones was aware that Adediran was overseeing the church project while on city time. Some emails — it's unclear if Jones saw these — "... included quotes from contractors for church purchases that listed the city of Richmond as the billing recipient," the paper reported.

While the mayor only asked that Adediran's conduct be investigated, the State Police subsequently received grand jury approval to investigate the mayor himself, the newspaper reported.

Mayor Jones did not respond to a request for a comment on the investigation emailed Oct. 20 to his press secretary, Tammy Hawley.

RVA Candidate
Scorecards

In the last Defender we published a list of 78 concrete suggestions for improving Richmond.

The suggestions addressed 17 issues: jobs, education, housing, homelessness, health care, transportation, poverty, immigration, food, police, crime, the city jail, city services, environment, taxes, peace and dealing with city sites honoring the Confederacy.

We also asked the candidates to take a position on implementing the Community Proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

(You can see the whole list in the Summer edition of the Defender, posted at www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com.)

Nine candidates returned completed checklists: two running for mayor and seven for City Council.

We report here on how many of the total 78 suggestions each candidate agreed with, where they stand on the issue of the memorial park and how they responded to four key suggestions:

- a \$15 minimum wage for all workers in Richmond;
- an elected Community Police Review Board with subpoena power;
- an elected Community Jail Review Board that would regularly tour the city jail and be able to privately interview inmates;
- declaring Richmond off-limits to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

All but one of the candidates supported the proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. The sole exception was Marcus Squires, 9th District, who also got the lowest overall score.

Levar Stoney and Lawrence Williams were the only mayoral candidates to return the checklist. Both have endorsed the

Community Proposal, as have Jon Baliles, Jack Berry and Joe Morrissey.

Levar Stoney scored 47 out of a possible 78 and gets extra point for supporting a \$15 minimum wage in the city, an elected Community Police Review Board and declaring Richmond off-limits to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

Lawrence Williams scored 54, but did not support the \$15 minimum wage or declaring Richmond an ICE-free city.

Scores for the City Council candidates were as follows:

Charlie Dirador (2nd District) - Agreed with 46 of the 76 suggestions and is for a \$15 minimum wage.

Milondra Coleman (3rd) had 32, and supported the \$15 and both review boards.

Dorian Danels (3rd) scored 51 and supported \$15 and both review boards.

Johnny Walker (4th) scored 52 and supports a \$15 minimum wage and a jail review board.

Montigue Magruder (5th) had the highest score, endorsing 77 out of the 78 proposals. The only one he declined to support was establishing a City shuttle bus and van service to bring workers in low-income communities to jobs in the counties, opting instead for supporting "increased funding to expand bus services into the counties."

Garrett L. Sawyer (5th) came in at 50, and supports the \$15 minimum, both the police and jail review boards and an ICE-free city.

Germika Pegram (9th) had 48, and supported \$15, the police and jail review boards and an ICE-free city.

Marcus Squires (9th) got the lowest score, 29, but supported an elected Community Review Board that would regularly tour the city jail.



Reva Trammell
Richmond City Council 2016

Open, available, and accessible to
all residents not just a select few

Represent the people
not special interests or projects

Listen, comprehend, then act
always on your behalf

community news



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Protesters gather at Richmond's towering monument honoring Confederate President Jefferson Davis to protest the decision by organizers of the 2015 UCI World Championship bike race to spotlight the monument during the internationally televised event.

Another controversial bike race for RVA?

Staff Report

“Richmond officials” are “in discussions” about holding another international cycling event in the city, according to a story in the Oct. 19 edition of the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

The 2016 UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale) race has been scheduled for Aug. 24-27, somewhere in Virginia.

In September 2015, Richmond hosted the UCI Road World Championships, a bike race similar in prestige to the more famous Tour de France. The race organizers — Mayor Dwight Jones, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, U.S. Sen. John Warner and Dominion Charman, President and CEO Thomas F. Farrell II — chose to highlight the Jefferson Davis monument on Monument Avenue as the turning point of the men's and women's elite races.

Aspirited campaign led by the Defenders put the race organizers on the defensive and helped spark a conversation about the many statues, streets, highways and other

government-owned entities that still honor Confederate figures in the former capital of the slavery-defending Confederacy. In the end, television cameras covering the races were positioned in such a way that the millions of viewers around the world did not see the offending statues.

The heavily promoted race wound up costing the city \$1.7 million in police overtime and \$5.77 million in “infrastructure improvements,” according to the daily newspaper.

Undaunted, Tim Miller, chief operating officer of RPM Events Group LLC, which wants to make international bike racing an annual event in the city, declared that a 2016 UCI race would be “a huge economic development opportunity and tourism opportunity.”

Other splashy projects that have cost the city money under the outgoing administration of Mayor Dwight Jones include the training camp for the Washington football team with the racially controversial name.

Here's what the former Carytown head-shop owner had to say:

“Well, I think, number one, you know the old saying ‘Always follow the money,’ you gotta, you gotta look at that, the control of the banking system, even the nature of the banking system is 100 percent Jewish, 100 percent usury-based, 100 percent owned by the Ashkenazi, the Sephardim, and, you know, in Russia, you know, a lot of, or some, Iranian Jews.

“So yeah, it's the money and that's where it starts and then the enforcement arm of the money, the military-industrial complex, [in] which I include the Internet, which is nothing but Darvanet, basically everything that's on cable television, pretty much that I've seen thus far, everything in the movie theaters. it's a full-spectrum dominance of military — oh, the schools, education, of course, the courts, the courts.

“So basically — everybody can help me out — when you look at every lever of pow-

Race & transit examined in RVA

By Amy Wentz

As the biracial daughter of two white parents, with a biracial brother, sister and Korean sister, growing up in Richmond and attending Richmond public schools, my family is always talking around the dinner table about race relations in the area and brainstorming about solutions to barriers and challenges.

So I was super-happy when family members invited me to “Eyes on Richmond,” a weekly speaker forum hosted by St. Paul's Episcopal Church with the theme “Envisioning a city where everyone thrives,” focusing on public transportation within the region.

At a time where talk of knocking down Confederate statues gets some Richmonders' panties in a bunch, the speaker, the Rev. Ben Campbell, began the forum with a shock technique, mentioning the “two mantels of segregation that need dismantling since the fall of the Confederacy.”

Once he assured the audience that he wasn't talking about the statues, he surprised us by naming public education and public transportation as areas where the most opportunity exists for change.

Ninety percent of the Richmond region's jobs are inaccessible by public transportation and Richmond is the only city of its size with no public transit to its regional airport, train station, community colleges and town centers.

One attendee asked, “Are there cities similar to Richmond that are getting public transportation right?”

Raleigh/Wake County, N.C. and Denver, Colo., Rev. Campbell answered.

The discussion went on to address deliberate segregation by the state, which limits resources for transportation. Attendees were encouraged to “stop making excuses” and get involved by putting pressure on county supervisors to support regional public transportation.

Not only would regional public transit solve some of the employment problems, it could promote civic pride and allow different people in the area to engage with each other as they ride. A healthy public transit system would spread income around the region, help with housing and assist with the other problems to be addressed in the next forum.

All eyes are on Richmond and its surrounding counties to GET ON THE BUS when it comes to a fully accessible, regional, public transportation system.

“Eyes on Richmond” is a weekly speaker forum (Oct. 7 - Nov. 11) hosted by St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Downtown Richmond. The \$10 admission fee includes a meal catered by local restaurants. Information at: www.stpaulsrva.org

Amy Wentz is the founder of BlackRVA and an active resident of the 8th City Council district.

Crowdfunding for entrepreneurs

The Richmond Office of Minority Business Development, in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration and Premier Bank, invites entrepreneurs interested in learning the basics of launching a crowdfunding campaign to register for an educational workshop.

The two-part workshop will be held Monday, Nov. 7, and Monday, Nov. 14, from 5:30-8 p.m. at Premier Bank, 320 N. First St. in Jackson Ward.

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. The workshops will cover the basic tools necessary to create a successful campaign, such as setting expectations, budgeting, advertising and creating a story video. Carl Knoblock, Virginia District Director of the U.S. Small Business Administration, will facilitate the workshops.

Registration is required to attend the workshops and seating is limited. Register online at: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0a49a4ad23a3f85-introduction1> or call 804-646-5947.

Chris Dorsey: Neo-Nazi 'commentator'

Staff Report

So what's Chris Dorsey up to these days?

The one-time Richmond peace activist who became the only person to be formally banned from Occupy Richmond, morphed into a gun-toting associate of Tea Party and militia types and ran an unsuccessful campaign to become Richmond's sheriff has found a new life as a neo-Nazi commentator on right-wing Internet talk shows.

In a recent interview on a show called “Herr Nordstorm,” Dorsey (who refers to himself as “A Man Called Chris Dorsey”) was asked by host Kyle Hunt what he thought were the most pressing current issues of “this Jewish Problem that we have.”

er there is an outlandishly disproportionate amount of quote-unquote ‘Jews’ that are in leadership positions and/or, you know, pulling the strings on every single individual in a leadership position. It's one thing that you can't ever disprove. You'll always be right when you see a powerful position or an event, you'll always find an Ashkenazi Jew or some other pulling the strings.”

In other on-line commentaries, Dorsey has claimed that the mass shootings at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., and a social service office in San Bernadino, Calif., were government-

staged “training drills.” He also has argued that President Barack Obama is a professional male prostitute.

On the positive side, it's been some time since Dorsey has been evicted kicking and screaming from a Richmond City Council meeting for allegedly threatening a city employee.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

is published quarterly on the first Thursday of the month, starting in March. 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.

Readers: Be sure to 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

TALK TO THE EDITOR – 1st Monday of the month. The Defenders' live, call-in talk radio show with host **PHIL WILAYTO**, Editor of The Virginia Defender. Get the latest updates on the Shockoe Bottom campaign and other important community news. 2-3 pm at WCLM 1450 AM and online at: www.wclmradioonline.com. Call in at (804) 231-7685.

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.

RICHMOND CRUSADE FOR VOTERS – Membership meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. 7 pm. Information: rcfv1956@gmail.com

ASWAN MEETING – Now weekly on Thursdays, 1:30-3:30 pm, Legal Aid Justice Center, 123 E. Broad St. ASWAN (A Society Without a Name for People Without a Home) is a Richmond homeless self-advocacy organization. To be a voting member, you must be homeless or formerly homeless. Non-homeless allies may become advisory members. Information: aswan-rva.org

MONTHLY PEACE MARCH – 2nd Saturday of the month, 9-10 am. A silent march for peace, starting at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Boulevard.

RICHMOND CLINIC DEFENSE – Every Saturday, 9-11 am, Richmond Medical Center for Women, 118 N. Boulevard. A volunteer force escorts patients past anti-abortion protesters. Clinic defense is not a protest; do not bring signs. Information: Richmond Clinic Defense Facebook Group (<http://goo.gl/mgc0W6>), or email rvaclinicdefense@gmail.com

BIRDHOUSE FARMERS MARKET – Every Tuesday until Nov. 22, 3-6:30 pm, 1507 Grayland Ave. A farmer's market in the Randolph neighborhood featuring locally-grown fruits and vegetables, more. Each week a nonprofit hosts a table with information. Vendors accept SNAP EBT (food stamps). Information: birdhousefarmers-market.org

EVERGREEN CEMETERY CLEANUP – Every Saturday, noon, at Evergreen Cemetery, 4100 E. Richmond Road. An all-ages volunteer cleanup of the historic Black cemetery established in 1897. Approximately 5,000 people are buried there, including Maggie L. Walker and John Mitchell Jr. Wear comfortable shoes. All are welcome.

WMWT'S CALLS FROM HOME – Every Monday, 7-9 pm, at WMWT Hot 88.7 FM. This radio station records messages for prisoners in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia state prisons from 7-9 pm and then broadcasts the messages from 9-10 pm. Call 888-396-1208 to leave a message. Information: wmmt.org/callsfromhome



Talk to the Editor!

The Defenders' talk radio show with

PHIL WILAYTO, Editor of

The Virginia Defender

News, guests & analysis for the Richmond community & beyond

2-3 pm every first Monday of the month

WCLM 1450 AM & online at www.wclmradioonline.com

Call in at (804) 231-7685

EVENTS

Sat., Oct. 29 – **COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND EDUCATION: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN RICHMOND?** – the Community Justice Film Series is holding a discussion on community justice and the education system in Richmond with two film showings: "Chicago's School Closings" (2015) and "Restoring Justice" (2015). 2-5 pm, John M. Ellison Hall at Virginia Union University, 1500 N. Lombardy St. FREE. Information: <https://goo.gl/DrZmQu>

Sat., Oct. 29 – **REVIVING HOPE: STORIES FROM GAZA & LEBANON** – Join ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid), Richmonders for Peace in Israel & Palestine and the Arab American Association of Central Virginia at a benefit for ANERA's work in Gaza and with Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. "ANERA President Bill Corcoran will give a presentation about the situation on the ground in Lebanon and Palestine. In addition to refugees' needs and current conditions, you'll hear stories of hope and success. You will learn about Syrian refugee teens in Lebanon who are finally able to get an education and pursue their dreams and families in Gaza who've transformed fallow lots into thriving family farms." Hors d'oeuvres will be served. 6 pm, St. John's United Church of Christ, 503 Stuart Circle. FREE, but all donations will go toward ANERA's programs in Palestine and Lebanon. Preregistration is requested at: www.anera.org/richmond

Mon., Oct. 31 – **THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF RACIAL RECONCILIATION** – Richmond Times-Dispatch columnist MICHAEL PAUL WILLIAMS will give a presentation on racial reconciliation, followed by a discussion. 12:30 pm, St. Luke Lutheran Church, 7757 Chippenham Parkway. FREE.

Nov. 3 – **"THE ETHICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: BROADENING THE SCOPE OF THE DIALOGUE"** – Director of the Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State University NANCY TUANA will give a presentation on issues related to climate change. 4:45-6:15 pm, University of Richmond's Weinstein Hall, 28 Westhampton Way. FREE.

Fri., Nov. 4 – **2ND ANNUAL JUVENILE JUSTICE PARADE** – Art 180, 114 W. Marshall St. "Join us ... to honor and celebrate the voices of youth affected by the school-to-prison pipeline. Artists, community activists, faith leaders, families, formerly incarcerated individuals and a broad range of concerned citizens from across the political spectrum will gather at Richmond City Hall for the parade. The parade will feature musicians, chants written by incarcerated youth, community members carrying the youth's art, and an open opportunity for anyone to speak up for those youth who continue to be impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline. ... Participants are asked to bring their own signs or banners that answer the question, 'How can we create a world where no youth are locked up?' ... The parade will end at ART 180's youth gallery, ATLAS, where we are currently showing the 'I Am Powerful' exhibition featuring creative work by a group of teens who were or still are incarcerated in a local juvenile detention center." 5-6 pm, from Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St., to ART 180, 114 W. Marshall St. FREE. Information: goo.gl/j733oc

Nov. 4 – **PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE** – The Black Male Emergent Readers Program at the Richmond Public Library is holding a panel discussion on the school-to-prison pipeline, the means by which vulnerable populations of youth – kids of color, immigrant children and kids from poor households – are funneled directly from schools into the prison system. Moderated by Dr. ROBYN MCDUGLE of the VCU Wilder School of Government. 5:45 pm, Richmond Public Library, 101 E. Franklin St. FREE. Information: 804-646-7223.

Tues., Nov. 8 – **ELECTION DAY** – Federal and local offices. For the Virginia Defender's endorsements, see page 10.

Fri., Nov. 11 – **THE FIGHT TO WIN SHOCKOE BOTTOM: SHOWING OF "MEET ME IN THE BOTTOM"** – An event on the ongoing community struggle to reclaim Shockoe Bottom, once the hub of the domestic slave trade. ANA EDWARDS, of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Reclamation Project, will introduce DR. SHAUN UTSEY'S documentary film "Meet Me in the Bottom: the Struggle To Reclaim Richmond's African Burial Ground" and take questions after the showing. Light refreshments served. 5-7 pm, West Grace North Student Housing, 830 W. Grace St. FREE. Information and to RSVP: goo.gl/DCCnGA

Sat., Nov. 12 – **AUTHOR TALK AND BOOK SIGNING: DAVID COOGAN'S "WRITING OUR WAY OUT: MEMOIRS FROM JAIL"** – Professor DAVID COOGAN will appear with several authors featured in the collective book, "Writing Our Way Out." This collection of memoirs was written by inmates of the Richmond City Jail. 12-2 pm, Book People Richmond, 536 Granite Ave. FREE. Information: goo.gl/qF2vUI

Sat., Nov. 19 – **TRANS DOUBLE FEATURE SHOWING OF "TWO SPIRITS" AND "HERO MARS"** – Sistah Sinema and the Transgender Day of Remembrance Events Committee are partnering to show two films focusing on the stories and resilience of trans and gender-nonconforming people. Films will be followed by a Q&A with SKYLER COOPER, director of "Hero Mars." 11 am-1 pm, Richmond Triangle Players, 1300 Altamont Ave. FREE. Information: <https://goo.gl/ZA6YUD>

Sun., Nov. 20 – **TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE SERVICE AND RECEPTION** – A memorial to those killed this year in acts of anti-transgender violence, in honor of Trans Day of Remembrance. Light refreshments and social reception will follow. 7-9 pm, Diversity Richmond, 1407 Sherwood Ave. FREE. INFORMATION: goo.gl/HszVgC

Nov. 22 – **"TOXIC DUST: THE VIRGINIA KEPONE DISASTER"** – Virginia Foundation for the Humanities Fellow GREG WILSON will discuss his research into the history of Virginia production of kepone, a notorious pesticide. For 16 months in 1974-75, the Life Sciences Product Company produced kepone for Allied Chemical Corp. (now Honeywell), sickening workers and illegally dumping large quantities of the pesticide into the James River. Noon-1 pm, Library of Virginia, 800 E. Broad St. FREE. For information and to RSVP: goo.gl/hh0eBL

Tues., Nov. 29 – **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

Dec. 1 – **"CHILD PRISONERS: LIMITS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE NEW SOUTH"** – Virginia Foundation for the Humanities Fellow CATHERINE JONES will discuss her research into the early history of Virginia's juvenile justice system, using information about minors imprisoned in Virginia's Penitentiary between 1865 and 1921. Her research is focused on explaining the disproportionate vulnerability of Black children to incarceration and state violence across history and legal regimes. Noon-1 pm, Library of Virginia, 800 E. Broad St. FREE. For information and to RSVP: goo.gl/msWmIV

Fri. Dec. 9 - Sun., Dec. 11 – **SOUTHERN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZERS CONFERENCE** – The 20th anniversary of this biannual conference of Black and other human rights organizers in the South. Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Miss. Endorsed by The Virginia Defender and co-sponsored by many organizations including the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). Information: 662-334-1122 or email jaribu.hill@gmail.com

Sat., Dec. 31 – **CAPITAL CITY KWANZAA FESTIVAL** – The Elegba Folklore Society's annual Kwanzaa celebration. Information: efsinc.org

Fri., April 21 - Sun., 23, 2017 – **UNITED NATIONAL ANTIWAR COALITION (UNAC) CONFERENCE** – Uniting all the struggles to "Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad!" Richmond, Va. The national organizing committee is being anchored by the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. To volunteer, email DefendersFJE@hotmail.com. For information on UNAC: www.unacpeace.org.

MORE EVENTS AT ACTIVE-RVA

Active-RVA is an online bulletin for community and political events in Richmond. See active-rva.blogspot.com for events and news, and links to the project's social media. The bulletin was started in 2012 and covers activity relating to Black history, racial justice and anti-racism, the antiwar movement, defeating capitalism, economic justice, elections, environmentalism, feminism and women's concerns, homelessness, immigration, labor and workers' struggles, LGBT and queer concerns, prisoner support, public health, reproductive rights and abortion access, and more. To have an event listed, e-mail activervva@gmail.com. Note that "Active RVA," without a dash, is an unrelated physical fitness initiative.

our working lives



Lipton workers announce their victory Aug. 29 at a press conference outside their plant in Suffolk. They are joined by several supporters, including state Sen. L. Louise Lucas, Virginia AFL-CIO President Doris Crouse-Mays and ATU Local 1177 Financial Secretary Treasurer Renee Browder. Photo courtesy UFCW Local 400

Suffolk: Lipton factory workers win a union!

Staff Report

In the future, a cup of Lipton tea might taste even better: The tea bag will be produced by workers covered by a union contract.

A majority of workers at the 61-year-old Lipton Tea plant in Suffolk, Va., voted this August to be represented by Local 400 of the United Food & Commercial Workers, the same union that represents workers at Kroger grocery stores in Virginia. The Suffolk plant makes all Lipton tea bags sold in North America.

According to a story in the Virginian-Pilot, "A tally of the votes by the National Labor Relations Board shows 108 workers voted to join the union while 79 voted against. The union needed at least 102 votes, or half-plus-one from 202 eligible workers. Fifteen workers didn't vote, according to the ballot tally."

The union drive began earlier this year when several Lipton workers reached out to the UFCW to explore the possibility of forming a union at the plant.

Money was not the issue.

"At the time," states a union press release, "many workers were required to work up to 12-hour shifts for as many as 13 days in a row with only one day off before doing it again. The widespread practice of forcing employees to work overtime was known as 'drafting' and went on for years."

"We just want a voice," said Robert Davis, a maintenance technician who has worked at the Suffolk factory for 25 years. "A lot of us missed a lot of quality time with our families because of our forced commitment to the company – times that we will never get back. Now, we're looking forward to having a seat at the table and negotiating a fair contract with Unilever."

Lipton Tea is owned by Unilever, a multinational corporation based in London and the Netherlands. The company claims that every day more than a quarter of the world's

population uses at least one of its products, which include Dove soap, Hellmann's Mayonnaise, Ben & Jerry's ice cream, Mazola cooking oil, Popsicle treats and Vaseline petroleum jelly.

In keeping with Unilever's practice of promoting itself as progressive company,

factory director Katie Ingersoll sent a letter to employees earlier this year saying the company would remain neutral during the union organizing campaign.

On Aug. 29, workers held a press conference outside the plant to announce the union victory. They were joined by state Sen. L. Louise Lucas, whose district includes the Lipton plant; Doris Course-Mays, president of the Virginia AFL-CIO; and Renee Browder, financial secretary-treasurer of Amalgamated Transit Workers Union Lo-

cal 1177, which represents transit workers throughout the region.

"Unions are all about unity," Browder said, "not just unity with your brothers and sisters at work, but unity with everyone that works hard for a living. When we stand together, we all do better."

The next step is for the workers and the company to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement, or contract, which could cover wages, benefits, safety measures and workplace policies.

Attention all working people in Virginia!

The Virginia Defender urges you to read the opinion piece on page 13 titled "Vote NO on Amendment 1" by Virginia AFL-CIO President Doris Crouse-Mays.

Amendment 1 is an attempt to make the Commonwealth's so-called "right-to-work" law into a state constitutional amendment, which would make it much harder to ever get rid of this anti-worker law that has just one aim: to weaken unions so they can't represent us.

Please read the opinion piece and then VOTE NO ON 1.

Calling it "RIGHT TO WORK"



is like calling drowning
"RIGHT TO SWIM"



The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400 represents 35,000 members working in the retail food, health care, retail department store, food processing, service and other industries in Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. Learn more at UFCW400.org

cops, courts & prisons

Impunity

By Askari Danso

"Anyone who passed the civil service examination yesterday can kill me today with complete immunity." — George Jackson, Blood in my Eye

Chants like "Hands up don't shoot" and "I can't breathe" have become national slogans during protests of police killings of unarmed Black men. This is because of the amount of coverage the murders of men like Mike Brown, Eric Gardner, Freddie Gray and so on have gotten in both the national and local media.

But what if I told you there's been a series of extra-legal state killings in Virginia during that same period... Would it surprise you?

Here are a list of people who've been killed by police or who've died mysteriously while in custody here in Virginia since 2014:

- * Paterson Brown Jr. 18, and Richard "Pedie" Perez, 24, killed by Richmond police.

- * Tyre Privott, India Beaty and Willie D. Johnson, all killed by Norfolk police.

- * Dyzhawn L Perkins. 19, killed by Virginia State Police in Buckingham County.

- * Shawn Samuel, 22; Rashad Antonio Dandridge, 26; Gregory Lee Hill, 26; Zachary E. Tuggles, 29; Kenard L Haynes, 31; Jevon Antwan Morris, 38. All died mysteriously while in the "new" Richmond city jail.

- * William Chapman II, 18, killed by Portsmouth police.

- * Jamychael Mitchell, 24, and Derrick Lewis, 24, mysteriously die in the Portsmouth Regional Jail.

- * India Kager, 27, and Angelo Perry, 35, killed by Virginia Beach Police as they sat in a car while their four-month old child lay in the back seat.

The funny thing to me is how none of the people responsible for the murder or manslaughter of these people are in prison.

When I was convicted of second-degree murder in 1998, I was sentenced to 53 years without the possibility of parole. In my case my victim and I were wrestling over a gun and he was accidentally shot.

Because I didn't work for any of their state's imperial forces, I was held accountable for the killing. Yet, I'm left to wonder if I had a badge would I have spent the last 18 years of my life in prison? Hell, would I have spent any time in prison.

Virginia's lawmakers have made a career out of being "Tough On Crime," but this seems to only apply to us civilians. Why if I kill a cop I'll face a Death Sentence, but if that same cop kills me he likely won't even get indicted.

This government has become a de facto



Askari Danso

Police State and this is what them bourgeois rebels warned us about in the Declaration of Independence. You know, where old Thomas instructs us of what to do whenever a government becomes destructive of the Rights of the governed.

So its our civic and patriotic duty to struggle to end Police Violence towards the governed.

End Police State Impunity!!!

Update: Ashley Williams

Staff Report

Ashley Williams, the Richmond mother convicted in 2013 in connection with the death of her youngest child, has another 18 months to go until she is released from prison. Williams currently is incarcerated at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, about 60 miles northwest of Richmond. According to the Virginia Department of Corrections website, her release date is April 30, 2018.

On July 22, 2013, the single working mother of four small children was convicted of felony murder and felony child neglect in the death of her 2-year-old son D'Sean. She was sentenced to five years on the murder charge with two years suspended on the child neglect charge, plus six months for a probation violation.

What started out as a sensationalized case of a young Black mother who had supposedly let her own child starve to death became a major issue in the city after the Virginia NAACP got involved. The organization's then-executive director, King Salim Khalfani, objected to the fact that Williams had been convinced by a court-

appointed attorney to plead guilty in exchange for what the young woman hoped would be a reduced sentence, a practice Khalfani referred to a "plea deal assembly line."

Richmond attorney Joe Morrissey took up the case, pro bono, arguing that Devon had been suffering from a medical condition known as "failure to thrive," which also affected several of his young cousins. The mothers of those children, however, had job-related health insurance and were able to provide good medical care for their families. Williams, who had a 10th-grade education, was working as a home health-care provider, with no benefits. On those small wages she was supporting her children and her invalid mother. For medical care she relied on services provided by a local clinic funded by Medicaid, which did not pay for tests that might have revealed the seriousness of the medical condition.

The prosecutors in the case repeatedly showed the jury, and Williams, a photograph of an emaciated D'Sean as he appeared right after his death. Local reporter Mark Holmberg, then working for CBS Channel 6, reported that the jury "... heard testimony that indicated D'Sean slept in the bottom of a closet on a urine-soaked pillow, that he picked through the trash for food, and that Ashley had run out of Pediasure diet supplement for D'Sean and the money to buy it."

Contradicting that damning description was testimony at the trial that revealed that Williams, concerned about D'Sean's failure to gain weight normally, had repeatedly taken him to the clinic and followed every doctor's instruction to the letter. A family video taken a month before D'Sean's death showed a healthy-looking child, laughing and dancing at a family birthday party. Medical testimony explained that when D'Sean died his body would have released all fluids, explaining the urine-soaked pillow and a new loss of weight. His death came on May 30, 2013 - the end of the month, a time when many families run short on money to pay for food.

For months, the Defenders and others packed the courtroom for Williams' many hearings and worked to educate the public about the complexities of the case. In the end, Ashley Williams was convicted. She had been facing decades in prison, but the jury recommended the lightest possible sentence, which the judge then reduced by two years. Meanwhile, however, she had lost her job, her home and parental rights to her other children - all of whom were healthy.

The Virginia Defender will continue to keep the public informed about Ashley Williams and the miscarriage of justice that resulted from a failed criminal justice system, a failed health care system and commercial media more concerned with piling on a vulnerable Black woman than accurately reporting the news.

Update: Jermaine Doss

By Phil Wilayto

Jermaine Doss was 25 years old when he was sent to prison.

He'll be 44 in January, serving a sentence of life-plus-34 years for murder, a crime he did not commit.

How can we be so sure? Because the only evidence against him was that of the man who admitted committing the murder and who has repeatedly said he only testified that Jermaine hired him to do so because the authorities told him that otherwise he would face the death penalty.

At Jermaine's first trial, Nathaniel McGee changed his mind and refused to testify. The prosecution had to drop charges, because McGee's testimony was all they had.

McGee says that's when he was told he would be risking execution if he refused again.

So he testified. And Jermaine got sent away.

Jermaine has always maintained his innocence, saying he was set up by a crooked cop for refusing to pay him a large bribe.

Former Norfolk Detective Robert Glenn Ford is now serving a long prison sentence for extortion and then lying about it to the FBI.

It's been nearly two-and-a-half years since



Jermaine Doss, left, with his parents, Willie Mae and Ray Doss, at Suffolk II.

Jermaine, with the strong support of his parents and help from the Defenders, filed a request for a governor's pardon. That request finally has made its way to the Parole Board for review.

Meanwhile, the Mid-Atlantic Office of the Innocence Project says it's trying to find an attorney to look into the case.

Maybe Jermaine will finally find justice.

Maybe.

But the wheels turn slowly when you're poor and Black in Virginia.

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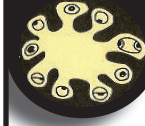
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Participants in the 14th Annual Gabriel Forum gather at Richmond's African Burial Ground to show support for the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. The Oct. 9 event was cosponsored by Untold RVA and the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project. Photos by Phil Wilayto

SHOCKOE (Continued from page 1)

gress in 1807 banned U.S. participation in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, with the ban taking effect in 1808. Cotton growers now turned for laborers to the Upper South states that had played out their land and now had more enslaved workers than they needed – or wanted.

Virginia, the first of the U.S. colonies to import Africans, was the most important of these states. Centrally located Richmond became the most important slave-trading city because it was connected to a growing system of railroads; it was on the James River, which provided easy access to Norfolk's seaport; and it had access to the 1,030-mile Fall Line Road that ran from Fredericksburg, Va., to Mobile, Ala.

As the internal trade in human beings grew, Richmond grew with it to become the epicenter of that trade.

Richmond central to Black History

In the three decades before the Civil War, some 300,000 to 350,000 Black people were sold out of Virginia. Most of these probably passed through the jails and auction houses of Shockoe Bottom. By the end of the Civil War there were around 4.5 million Black people in the country. That means that, like New Orleans, the majority of African-Americans today could likely trace some ancestry to Shockoe Bottom.

This history has long been buried, but it is being recovered.

Reclaiming Shockoe Bottom

In the 1990s, the organization Hope in the Cities discovered the existence of the path Africans were forced to walk from the Manchester docks to the slave jails in the Bottom and then, after the ban on importing Africans, from the jails to the docks.

Around the same time, Richmond historian Elizabeth Cann Kambourian came across an old city map while conducting research at the Library of Virginia for a book on the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel. The words Burial Ground for Negroes caught her eye and led her to rediscovering the existence of Richmond's African Burial Ground, then being used as a commercial parking lot.

In 2008 the city's Slave Trail Commission sponsored an excavation at the site of Robert Lumpkin's notorious slave jail known as the Devil's Half-Acre. What was discovered was

not just some artifacts, but the entire intact foundation of the jail and Lumpkin's tavern, hotel and living quarters. The prestigious Smithsonian Institution ran a story in its national magazine calling the find the most important U.S. archeological discovery of the decade.

In 2011, a sustained community struggle



Interpreter Yemima Davis channels the spirit of Nan, the revolutionary and wife of slave rebellion leader Gabriel. The event was the Oct. 9 Gabriel Forum at Richmond's African Burial Ground.

succeeded in forcing Virginia Commonwealth University, a state institution, to remove the parking lot it had purchased and operated over Richmond's African Burial Ground, the final resting place of hundreds if not thousands of enslaved Africans as well as free Blacks, poor whites and executed prisoners.

It was here that the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel was hung on Oct. 10, 1800, an event the Defenders have marked since 2003 with the annual Gabriel Forum.

In May 2014 a broad community struggle led by the Defenders forced Mayor Dwight Jones to abandon his effort to put a commercial baseball stadium in the heart of Shockoe Bottom. That was at least the fourth developer-driven attempt to build a stadium there.

Third stage of the struggle: winning the memorial park

We are now in the third stage of the struggle to reclaim and properly memorialize Shockoe Bottom: winning an area large enough to convey the enormity of what happened there while physically blocking any further attempts to build a stadium or other inappropriate development on this sacred ground.

In 2015 a five-month long process of Community Brainstorming Sessions led by the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project produced the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. The park would include the African Burial Ground, the site of Lumpkin's Jail and two blocks just east of the CSX railroad tracks where the Goodwin and Omohundro jails, several trader offices and supporting businesses once were located.

Except for a few empty lots held by the Loving family, the city already owns this land. It just has to secure it by passing a zoning ordinance reserving the nine acres for historical use. No money, just zoning, and the land is secure.

The next step would be to open discussions with the mayor, city council and the many organizations and individuals who have participated in the long process to reclaim Shockoe Bottom. These would include the Defenders, the Slave Trail Commission, Richmond Branch NAACP, Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, African Ancestral Chamber, Untold RVA, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Virginia, the Center for Design Engagement, Historians Against Slavery and many others. All should be welcome in this process, while recognizing the primary role of Richmond's Black community.

3 community discussions

There already have been three sets of community discussions about the future of Shockoe Bottom.

The first, led by the Defenders, consisted of four Community Brainstorming Sessions followed by an open citywide meeting that unanimously adopted the proposal for the memorial park.

The second, called Richmond Speaks, was Mayor Jones' \$86,000 effort to promote his plan for a memorial on the single site of Lump-

kin's Jail. There was no vote on the plan, but the official Richmond Speaks report admitted that the majority of participants had expressed a desire for a memorial larger than just the single jail site and specifically wanted the African Burial Ground included in the memorial.

The third series of discussions was directed, at the invitation of the Sacred Ground Project, by architects and historians from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst working with the Center for Design Engagement. Those discussions built on the original community proposal for the memorial park, adding design features approved at another open meeting.

And yet, despite the overwhelming demonstrated desire of the public and particularly the



Singer and songleader Nickey McMullen performs at the Oct. 9 Gabriel Forum.

Black community, Mayor Jones has decided to go ahead with his narrow but expensive one-site proposal.

Mayor Jones declares victory ...

On Oct. 10 the mayor presided over a press conference extravaganza held at the site of Lumpkin's Jail, where he announced that he had chosen a design firm to move his proj-



Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones announces on Oct. 10 a \$30 million project to memorialize just one of the nearly 100 sites in Shockoe Bottom once associated with Richmond's role as the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade. Several of the people on the stage previously supported the mayor's plan for a Shockoe Bottom stadium. None opposed it.

ect forward: the SmithGroupJJR, which had worked on the recently opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

More than 150 people turned out: a gospel choir, a Junior ROTC unit, Gov. Terry McAu-



Unlike the Gabriel Forum, the mayor's event featured a heavy police presence.

liffe, former Gov. Bob McDonnell, Slave Trail Commission Chair Delores McQuinn, Vice Chair Janine Bell, Commission member Rev. Ben Campbell, U.S. Rep. Robert "Bobby" Scott, state Sen. Donald McEachin – the stage was full of dignitaries. When the program

opened with a rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner, nobody dropped a knee.

It being Oct. 10, reference was made to Gabriel, executed exactly 216 years before at the African Burial Ground, just across Broad Street from the press conference.

And yet no mention was made of including the Burial Ground in the mayor's memorial. Nor was there any mention of protecting the rest of Shockoe Bottom from inappropriate commercial development.

Gov. McAuliffe called for putting up a statue of President Abraham Lincoln on the memorial site, erroneously stating that Richmond had no Lincoln statues.

(The April 6, 2003, unveiling of Richmond's Lincoln statue on the grounds of Tredegar Ironworks was covered by The New York Times.)

The message – delivered to an audience well-protected by local and state police – was clear: The fight over the future of Shockoe Bottom is over. Jones has won, and the only memorial will be on the site of Lumpkin's Jail, crammed in between and overlooked by Interstate 95, East Broad Street, the Main Street Station and a soon-to-be renovated train shed.

Further, all available money will go to this project: the \$8 million appropriated by City Council for Shockoe Bottom memorialization, \$11 million from the General Assembly (it's really \$2 million, with another \$9 million allocated to reimburse Richmond if the city raises and spends up to \$9 million on its own) and another \$11 million Jones said would come from private fund raising. That's a total of \$30 million

to memorialize the slave jail complex whose buildings were later leased for use as a school for freed Blacks that eventually became Virginia Union University, the mayor's alma mater.

... a bit prematurely

However, Mayor Jones has been wrong before – about many things – and this struggle is far from over.

For one thing, the mayor is being investigated by the FBI and the State Police for possible corruption while in office. With that investigation ongoing, and after Jones' many financially-challenged projects, including the 2015 UCI bike race, the Stone Brewery incentive package and building a training camp for the wealthy D.C. football team with the racist name, it remains to be seen how many donors will be lining up for a new Jones initiative.

At any rate, indicted or not, Jones will be finishing his second and final term as mayor in January.

With the new year we will have a new mayor and a largely new City Council.

And here's the kicker: As of Oct. 28, five of the seven candidates for mayor, including the four front-runners, have endorsed the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

Also endorsing the community proposal are 15 of the 29 candidates for city council, including at least one candidate in seven of the nine council districts. (See the list to the right.)

What this means is that, come January, we will be playing in a whole new ballpark.

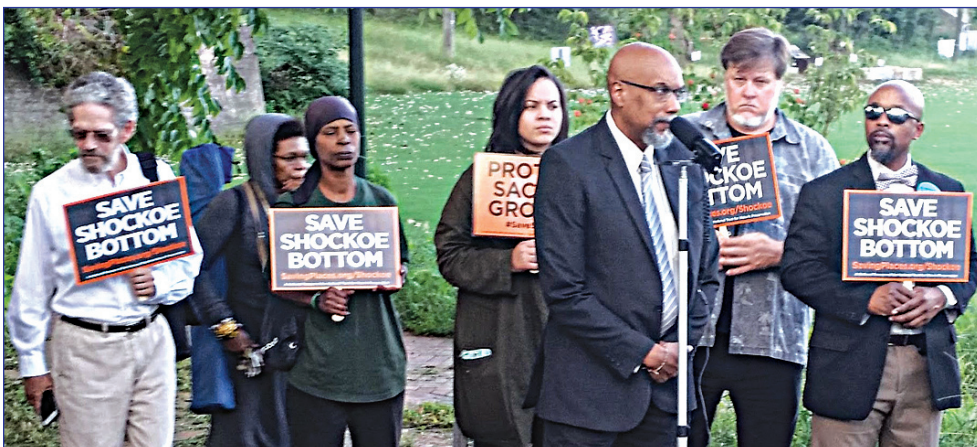
RVA Candidates who have endorsed the general concept of a 9-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park

MAYOR - 5 of 7 candidates

Jon Baliles
Jack Berry
Joe Morrissey
Levar Stoney
Lawrence Williams

CITY COUNCIL - 15 of 29

Charlie Diradour - 2nd District
Kimberly Gray - 2nd District
Rebecca K.W. Keel - 2nd District
Milondra Coleman - 3rd District
Dorian Daniels - 3rd District
Jeff Thomas - 4th District
Johnny Walker - 4th District
Parker Agelasto - 5th District
Montigue Magruder - 5th District
Garrett L. Sawyer - 5th District
Donald Moss - 6th District
Josh Williams - 7th District
Leon Benjamin - 9th District
Germika Pegram - 9th District
Marcus Squires - 9th District



Internationally known human rights activist Ajamu Baraka announces his support for the Community Proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. The Green Party vice presidential candidate spoke Oct. 3 at a Defender press conference held at Richmond's African Burial Ground. The announcement received wide local media coverage.



Richmond Branch NAACP President Lynetta Thompson addresses City Council, urging support for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. Standing with her are representatives from the Richmond Crusade for Voters, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Virginia, Richmond Peace Education Center and several other organizations.

international & antiwar news

U.S. Hands Off Syria!

An Urgent Message for Peace on the Eve of Wider War

Dear Readers,

In response to the escalating U.S. involvement in the devastating conflict in Syria, the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) has joined with other peace organizations to initiate an ad hoc coalition to demand “U.S. Hands Off Syria!”

The coaliton has issued the following statement, which within days had gathered hundreds of endorsers from organizations and individuals around the world.

Concrete actions are being discussed, but the immediate goal is to provide some badly needed clarity on an issue that has deeply divided progressives in the United States, some of whom are actually calling for increased U.S. military intervention.

To endorse the statement, log onto:

<http://handsoffsyriacoalition.net>

Thanks,

Phil Wiluyto

Editor, The Virginia Defender

Member, UNAC Administrative Committee

We raise our voices against the violence of war and the enormous pressure of war propaganda, lies and hidden agendas that are used to justify this war and every past U.S. war.

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, endorse the following Points of Unity and will work together as an Ad Hoc Coalition to help put an end to the regime change intervention by the United States, NATO and their regional allies and the killing of innocent people in Syria:

- The continuation of the war in Syria is the result of a U.S.-orchestrated intervention by the United States, NATO, their regional allies and reactionary forces, the goal of which is regime change in Syria.

- This policy of regime change in Syria is illegal and in clear violation of the United Nations Charter, the letter and spirit of international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- This policy of forced regime change is threatening the security of the region and the world and has increased the danger of direct confrontation between the United States and Russia, with the potential of a nuclear catastrophe for the whole world.

- War and U.S. and EU sanctions have destabilized every sector of Syria's economy, transforming a once self-sufficient country into an aid-dependent nation. Half the Syrian population is now displaced. A UN ESCWA report reveals these U.S. sanctions on Syria are crippling aid work during one of the largest humanitarian emergency since World War II. The one third of Syrians refugees in surrounding Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have been hit hard by U.S. cuts to UNICEF. This forces desperate refugees to struggle to reach Europe.

- No foreign entity, be it a foreign government or an armed group, has the right to violate the fundamental rights of the Syrian people to independence, national sovereignty and self-determination. This includes the right of the Syrian government to request and accept military assistance from other countries, as even the U.S. government has admitted.

- Only the people of Syria have the inalienable right to choose their leaders and determine the character of their government, free from foreign intervention. This right cannot be properly exercised under the conditions of U.S.-orchestrated foreign intervention against the Syrian people.

- Our opposition is to forced regime change in Syria by U.S.-backed foreign powers and their mercenaries. It is not our business to support or oppose President Assad or the Syrian government. Only the Syrian people have the right to decide the legitimacy of their government.

- The most urgent issue at present is peace and putting an end to the violence of foreign intervention that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions of Syrians both internally or as refugees abroad.

Based on these Points of Unity, we, as individuals and organizations—in an Ad Hoc Coalition—agree on the following demands and commit ourselves to working together to help achieve them:

- An immediate end to the U.S. policy of forced regime change in Syria and full recognition and compliance by the U.S., NATO and their allies with principles of international law and the U.N. Charter, including respect for the independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

- An immediate end to all foreign aggression against Syria, and serious efforts toward a political resolution to the war.

- An immediate end to all military, financial, logistical and intelligence support by the U.S., NATO and their regional allies to all foreign mercenaries and extremists in the Middle East region.

- An immediate end to economic sanctions against Syria. Massive international aid for displaced people within Syria and Syrian refugees abroad.

Only in a peaceful and independent Syria, free of foreign aggression, can the people of Syria freely exercise their sovereign rights, express their free will and make free choices about their government and their country's leadership.

We invite all supporters of peace and peoples' right to self-determination around the world to join hands of cooperation in this effort to achieve these most humanitarian demands.

We need jobs, healthcare, education and an end to racist police violence here at home, not U.S. wars abroad!!

<http://handsoffsyriacoalition.net>

Initial List of Signers

1. Akademie Solidarische Akademie, Germany
2. Albany Park, North Park, Mayfair Neighbors for Peace and Justice (Chicago)
3. Alliance for Global Justice
4. Al-Awda — Palestine National Right to Return Coalition
5. All-African People's Revolutionary Party
6. All-African People's Revolutionary Party (GC)
7. All India Anti-Imperialist Forum, India
8. American Party of Labor
9. ANSWER Coalition
10. Antiwar Committee — Chicago
11. Antiwar Committee — Minneapolis
12. Antiwar Committee — Tampa
13. Antiwar Committee — Tucson
14. Antiwar Committee — Utah
15. Arab Americans for Syria
16. Arab Women Progressive League
17. Arbeitskreis Marburger WissenschaftlerInnen für Friedens – und Abrüstungsforschung (AMW) — Germany
18. Associazione per la Pace di Pordenone, Italy
19. BAYAN — Philippine Coalition
20. Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace
21. Bike Arts Artist/Environment Forum, Toronto, Canada
22. Black is Back Coalition for Social Justice, Peace and Reparations
23. British Afro-Asian Organisation
24. Mohammed Arif, Gen. Secretary
25. Buffalo Anti Racism Coalition
26. Byke4Peace.com
27. Citizens of the World — Canada
28. Coalition of Arab Canadian Professionals and Community Associations
29. Cognitive Liberty, Californian, USA
30. Columbus Campaign for Arms Control
31. Comité Surveillance OTAN, Bruxelles, Belgique
32. The Committee to Stop FBI Repression — NYC
33. Conselho Português para a Paz e Cooperação / Portuguese Council for Peace and Cooperation
34. Consejo de la juventud de Torrelavega, Torrelavega, Cantabria, Spain
35. Coop Anti-War Cafe, AntikriegTV, Berlin, Germany
36. CT 9/11 Truth
37. Dallas Left Alliance
38. Democracy TV Berlin, Germany
39. Democracy without Borders, Canada
40. Deutscher Freidenkerverband, Berlin, Germany
41. Disarmament and Security Centre, Christchurch, New Zealand
42. Earth Neighborhood
43. Ecumenical Peace Institute Clergy and Laity Concerned
44. Ecumenical Women's Forum — Philippines
45. El Movimiento Meicano Por la Paz Y el Desarrollo (MOMPADE) — Mexico
46. Far Eastern Press
47. FBK, Friedensbewegung bundesweite Koordination, Germany
48. Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice — Canada
49. FLC-CGIL Trade Union University of Florence (Italy)
50. Frente Socialista de Puerto Rico
51. Friedensbewegung 2015 (Peace Movement), Thale, Germany
52. Foro Contra la Guerra Imperialista y la OTAN (Spain)
53. Free Mumia Abu Jamal Coalition — NYC
54. Frome Stop War, UK
55. Fronte Popolare (Italia)
56. Galway Alliance Against War, Ireland
57. Greater New Haven Peace Council, Connecticut
58. Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War (Ontario, Canada)
59. Hands Off Syria (Australia)
60. HEAL
61. House of Creative Writing, Michigan, USA
62. Houston Peace Council
63. Houston Communist Party
64. Humanistischer Landesverband Thüringen e.V., Jena, Germany
65. ImaginAction Theatre, Sierra Madre, California
66. In Service to Humankind of Planet Earth, Washington DC
67. International Action Center
68. International Anti-imperialist Coordinating Committee, Kolkata, India
69. International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity
70. International Indigenous Society, Georgia, USA
71. International-Lawyers.Org, Geneva, Switzerland
72. International League of Peoples Struggle — U.S.
73. Jersey City Peace Movement, New Jersey, USA
74. Labor Fightback Network, New Jersey, USA
75. Labor Union Advocates
76. Los Alamos Study Group — AZ
77. Maine Social Justice — Public Access TV Show
78. Malcolm X Center
79. Manu Waiata Restoration & Protection Society, Ltd, New Zealand
80. Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice
81. Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) — Canada
82. Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center, California, USA
83. Mütter gegen den Krieg Berlin-Brandenburg
84. New Afrikan Independence Party (NAIP)
85. New Jersey Peace Council
86. New Orleans Workers Group, USA
87. No NATO List, Rome, Italy
88. No Nukes No War — CT
89. Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Committee
90. Northeast Philly for Peace and Justice
91. No War Net — Rome, Italy
92. Nowar-Paix, Ottawa, Canada
93. One State Assembly
94. One World Media, Berlin, Germany
95. One World Life Systems, New York
96. Ontario Civil Liberties Association, Canada
97. Orange County Healthcare For All!
98. Our Revolution Los Angeles
99. PädagogInnen für den Frieden, Hamburg, Germany
100. Pakistan USA Freedom Forum, New York
101. Pax Christi — Clinton, Iowa
102. Peace, Bochum, Germany
103. Peace Action of San Mateo County, California
104. Peace Forum Sangerhausen, Germany
105. Peace Roots Alliance — Tennessee
106. PeaceWorks, Maine
107. Peoples Organization for Progress
108. Pittsburgh Anti-Imperialist League
109. People Demanding Action, Florida
110. Peoples' Liberation Front — JVP, Sri Lanka
111. Peoples Opposition to War, Imperialism & Racism — POWIR (Florida)
112. Popular Resistance
113. Popular Committee in Defense of Syria
114. Project NatureConnect, Los Angeles, USA
115. Trudy Quail, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace
116. Queers Without Borders — Hartford CT
117. Return Now Coalition
118. Racine Coalition for Peace and Justice, Wisconsin, USA
119. Rochester Peace Action and Education
120. Rumble of the People, New Mexico, USA
121. Samizdat: Socialist Prisoners Project, Wisconsin
122. San Diego County Central Committee of the Peace and Freedom Party of California
123. Socialist Action
124. Socialist Action — Ligue pour l'Action Socialiste, Canada
125. SOLVE, Florida, USA
126. South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship & Training (SAFEST)
127. South Coast People For Peace and Justice
128. Southern Human Rights Organizers' Conference — SHROC
129. St. Pete for Peace
130. Stop the War Machine
131. Students for a Democratic Society — SDS
132. Students for a Democratic Society at University of Houston
133. Students for Justice in Palestine at Fordham University, New York
134. Swedish Doctors for Human Rights, Sweden
135. Swedish Peace Council
136. Syria Solidarity Movement
137. Syrian American Forum
138. Syrian American Will Association — SAWA
139. Syrian Social Club Community in the UK (Dr. Issa Chaer, Co-founder)
140. The Expatriates Association of Syrians in Canada
141. The Pacific Institute of Resource Management, Wellington, New Zealand
142. Topanga Peace Alliance and MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles
143. United National Antiwar Coalition — UNAC
144. United Opt Out National
145. United Steelworkers Local 8751
146. Unleashed (Anarcho-Liberation)
147. Upstate New York Drone Action
148. U.S. Peace Council
149. Veterans For Peace / Chapter 021 — Northern New Jersey
150. Veterans For Peace Chapter 111, Bellingham, WA
151. Veterans for Peace — Ireland
152. Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality
153. Walden Three, Wien, Austria
154. War is Unacceptable to Consciousness
155. Whores Against Wars, New Zealand
156. WissenschaftlerInnen für Friedens – und Abrüstungsforschung (AMW) — Germany
157. Wolf's Enterprises Human and Civil Rights Advocacy
158. Women Against Military Madness — WAMM
159. World Peace Council (WPC)

international & antiwar news

In Odessa, Ukraine: Fascists continue attacks on Council of Mothers

By Phil Wilayto

While the attention of the U.S. public has been focused on the bizarre slugfest between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton, actual things are happening out there in the real world.

What kind of things? Well, the U.S. and Russia could go to war, maybe in Syria. And both countries have nuclear weapons. It could get interesting.

In Korea, the U.S. is setting up a “missile defense shield,” which it says would protect South Korea from a nuclear attack by North Korea. Of course, it could also allow the U.S. to lob a few nukes over into North Korea without fear of a counterattack. That’s called getting a “first-strike capability,” a fact not lost on North Korea (whose proper name, by the way, is the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.)

And over in Eastern Europe, the U.S. is busy signing up more and more countries into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO was started in 1949, supposedly to protect Europe from the Soviet Union. At the time, NATO had nine member-countries. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 – a quarter-century ago. NATO now has 29 member-countries and pretty much surrounds the western and southern borders of Russia. For some reason, this has made Russia nervous, so it’s building up its own military – within its own borders. The U.S. and NATO says this proves that Russia is dangerous and so they’re building up NATO even more.

Caught right in the middle of this developing crisis is Ukraine, a largely agricultural country about five-and-a-half times the size of Virginia. It used to be part of the Soviet Union and had relatively friendly relations with Russia until the U.S. guided through a right-wing coup in February 2014 that overthrew a pro-Russian president and replaced him with one friendly to the U.S. and NATO.

Ukraine has a sad history. During World War II it was overrun by the Nazis and Romanian fascists. Total civilian losses are estimated at four million, including up to a million Jews. In the single most notorious incident, nearly 34,000 Jews were herded into the Babi Yar ravine outside the capital city of Kiev and then machinegunned. Some Ukrainians collaborated with the fascists. Others went underground and heroically fought the invaders.

Today the political descendants of both sides are squaring off again. Fascist groups with names like Right Sector, Azov and the Brotherhood are supported by the right-wing government they helped to bring to power. Crimea, a largely ethnic Russian area that was actually part of Russia until 1954, broke away from Ukraine after the 2014 right-wing coup and rejoined Russia. The Dombass region, also largely Russian, also broke away, but is now pretty much demanding some autonomy within the Ukrainian state.

In Odessa, most of the anti-fascists were

driven out of the city after a terrible massacre on May 2, 2014. Hundreds of progressives were chased by a much larger mob into the House of Trade Unions at Kulikovo Pole (square). The fascist-led mob pelted the five-story building with Molotov cocktails. Forty-six people died – from the fire, smoke inhalation, gunshot wounds or being beaten to death after jumping from windows to escape the flames.

This spring, I travelled to Odessa, a beautiful city on the western shore of the Black Sea. The occasion was the second anniversary memorial for the 46 progressives who were murdered there. The same fascists were vowing to attack the memorial like they had in 2014. The memorial organisers, called the Council of Mothers of May 2, were asking human rights activists from around the world to come as international observers. They asked me. So I went, with two antiwar activists from the great state of Maine, Bruce Gagnon and Regis Tremblay.

Working with the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), we also organized an international solidarity campaign that got 180 organizations from 22 countries to sign on to a statement demanding the Ukrainian and U.S. government respect the rights of the mourners to hold the memorial.

That May 2 was a beautiful, sun-drenched day in Odessa. The fascists came out, but so did some 3-4,000 people of Odessa. Young, old, women, men, proud veterans of the World War, Orthodox priests and international monitors from around the world.

It was hard to leave Odessa and the good friends we made there. We were going home and they were still in danger. So we started the Odessa Solidarity Campaign to keep up the support. This is now an ongoing project of UNAC. I’m the coordinator and Victoria Machulko, president of the Council of Mothers of May 2, is on the Advisory Board. The campaign acts as a support group for the Council of Mothers.

In September, Victoria was attending one of the weekly memorials they hold at Kulikovo Pole. One of the fascists slugged her in the face. On Oct. 9, at another memorial, a fascist pushed down an elderly woman and broke her arm. On Oct. 22, members of Right Sector disrupted a showing of a documentary film about the massacre.

Reports about these incidents are posted here:
www.odessasolidaritycampaign.org.

Please take the time to read the reports. Then sign the online petition for an international investigation into the massacre of May 2, 2014.

There are many struggles going on in this world and the one in Odessa is just one of them. But holding the line against fascism in a country that could become the next battleground in the U.S. drive to control the world is an important contribution to justice and world peace.

Please help support the brave women and men who are carrying out that mission in Odessa.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

European leftist intellectuals and activists came together Sept. 2-4 for the annual Leftist Island Festival held on the Danube River about 30 miles north of Budapest, Hungary. The purpose was to analyze the dangerous rightward drift of the governments of Central and Eastern Europe. Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto gave a presentation on the growing threat to peace represented by NATO’s steady expansion east toward Russia.

Women’s strike in Poland stops reactionary abortion law

By Ewa Groszewska

When Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło announced in June that the government would be tightening the rules against abortion, nobody treated it too seriously. The new ruling party, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), or Law and Justice, is conservative and very close to the Catholic Church, but the fundamentalist Catholic electorate is a minority in Poland. Even believers are pragmatic and, for example, do not respect the ban on contraception.

About half the people who voted for PiS supported its conservative ideology and nationalism. The other half had had enough of neoliberal parties and PiS was talking about poverty and systemic solutions related to social-democratic social policy. It is very doubtful that the ruling party would change those policies, especially in terms of accepting the CETA “free trade” deal, but PiS managed to sound better on some issues that affect working people.

But the party’s intentions to restrict the abortion law were true. On Sept. 23, Parliament began an absolutely radical project of banning all abortions and imprisoning women who have abortions. At the same time, a proposal submitted by feminists called “Save Women” that would have liberalized the current anti-abortion law was rejected.

The current law allows for abortions in case of rape, incest, threats to the woman’s life or permanent damage to the fetus. However, women in those cases still have many problems with finding access to legal abortion in Polish hospitals. Some doctors are pressured by blackmail from the anti-abortion lobby, while the so-called “conscience clause” allows medical personnel to refuse to perform abortions if they say it conflicts with their personal values or beliefs.

After Sept. 23, the anger of women was rising up very easily and quickly. A new social-democratic party called Razem (Together), which does not have seats in Parliament, called for a “Black Protest” in which people opposed to the proposed new restrictions on abortion would wear black clothing.

That call was spreading on Facebook and was based on publishing pictures of people in black clothes. Plenty of Facebook users of both

sexes joined the action. Solidarity from abroad also was very visible. Women from Europe but also Palestine and Latin America published their pictures in black.

This Facebook event started being supported by well-known celebrities, including the respected actress Krystyna Janda, who proposed to organize a “women’s strike,” alluding to events in Ireland in 1975. This proposal was spread on social media as “Polish Women on Strike,” but only a few journalists and politicians believed that people would go out into the streets or that women would not go to work or school.

The turning point came when the neoliberal media like “Gazeta Wyborcza,” being in the so-called opposition, started supporting this initiative. Universities and companies officially organized non-working days for girls and women. Coordinators of local actions were very impressed by the spontaneous commitments in schools, offices and bars.

On Oct. 3, the streets of Poland were full of people in black clothes. Hospital nurses joined the women’s strike. There were demonstrations in all the big cities, including 50,000 people in Warsaw and 30,000 in Wrocław, but also in small towns, which usually are seen as more conservative because of the control exercised by the Catholic Church.

The demonstrations were led by feminist groups and social-democratic parties, but also by the official so-called neoliberal opposition.

The government was shocked and officially withdrew the proposed ban on abortion.

The difference between the Left and the neoliberals lies in relation to the current law. Neoliberals want to keep the current “compromise,” while the Left demands liberalization. Neoliberal organizations tried to dominate and eliminate the Left from the protests Oct. 23 in Warsaw.

As of Oct. 24, the “Women’s Strike” continues. The declarations of the ruling party related to the abortion issue are still unacceptable. It is an open question which idea will win: liberalization or “compromise.”

Ewa Groszewska is a participant in “Polish Women on Strike,” representing the radical left group Socialist Agreement.

In our opinion Our endorsement

We said this newspaper would not be making endorsements this election, and that's true for local offices. Instead, we're issuing candidate scorecards. (See page 3.)

But we're going to make an exception for the national contest.

In 2016 we have a choice between cancer and a heart attack. And no, we don't have to choose one over the other. Not voting for a heart attack is not the same as voting for cancer. It just means we would rather not assist in our own destruction.

Donald Trump is an out-an-out pig. He's a crooked, rich businessman who doesn't represent the interests of any working person of any race, gender or sexual orientation. He's a racist, misogynist, xenophobic and insanely narcissistic psychopath. What he would do if he had the code to the nuclear arsenal is anyone's guess, which is why we can't let him become president.

Hillary Clinton is the Wall Street servant who pushed the hardest for the U.S. to bomb Libya, turning what once was the African country with the highest standard of living into a failed state and breeding ground for murderous extremists. When she was told that the country's leader, Muammar Gaddafi, had been killed – lynched, really – she laughed. She laughed and said, “We came, we saw – he died!” And she laughed again.

With Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Libya and so many other U.S. wars on so many other countries, overt and covert, Clinton's hands are dripping with the blood of the oppressed.

So that's the choice they gave us: a maniacal neo-fascist or a war criminal.

We refuse to choose the manner of our own poisoning.

That's why The Virginia Defender is endorsing the Green Party ticket of Jill Stein for president and our good friend Ajamu Baraka for vice president.

We don't agree with Stein on everything. Her position on the Palestinian struggle is neo-liberal at best. But she at least represents a generally pro-worker, anti-racist, pro-woman, anti-war program that we can support. Ajamu is in a different class: a thoroughly anti-imperialist revolutionary who has lived a life of activism and struggle. Like us.

Like most of you, we truly fear the possibility of a Trump presidency. Our problem is that we are equally afraid of a Clinton presidency. So we will vote out of defiance, not out of fear.

And we will continue to prepare for the future doing just what we are doing: helping to build an independent mass movement for fundamental change.

Stop the killings!

A man recently was shot and killed around 8 p.m. about a mile from our place in South Side. A few weeks ago a man was shot and critically wounded on a nearby street corner an hour before I was walking by there.

When I lived in the Chimborazo neighborhood in the East End, shootings were even more common, but I think we're now up to 51 fatalities so far this year in Richmond, a city of about 220,000 people.

The police chief says the problem is bad people with guns. I think the problem is depths of despair that know no bounds.

It isn't always a simple case of poverty that can be solved just with more jobs and certainly not with more police. It's the sense of utter hopelessness that leads some people to feel little value in their own lives and none in those of others.

We need to end this system of post-industrial capitalism that has no more use for unskilled Black men. We need to get rid of politicians whose only solution is to drive the poor out of the city or send them into the prison system. We need people not affected by this carnage to start seeing it as a crisis that must be addressed now.

We need to create a new system in which every woman, man and child feels like they are valued and – yes – loved.

And we need to do this now.

Letters to the Editor

Ignoring parole law?

I'm an offender incarcerated under the state of Virginia's *pre-1995* discretionary parole system. I'm writing to express my continuing concern that the Virginia Parole Board's rejection of parole applications continue to contain no explanation of the basis for Board action other than standard boilerplate terminology, without any reference to efforts about rehabilitation or other factors that the Board may have considered.

Effective July 1, 2013, Virginia law has been reformed in part to reflect enactment of new parole legislation relating to parole review and denial. This act amends the powers and duties of the Virginia Parole Board to require that the Board shall:

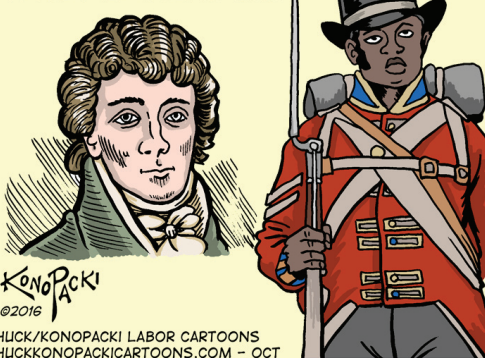
“Ensure that each person eligible for parole receives a timely and thorough review of his suitability for release on parole, including a review of any material post-sentencing factors. If parole is denied, the basis for the denial of parole shall be in writing and shall give fact-specific individualized reasons for such denial to such inmate.”

This legislation was intended to address the Board's longstanding practice of denying parole based solely on a form letter listing standard reasons, such as “serious nature and circumstances of your offense,” or “release at this time would diminish seriousness of crime.”

Since the enactment (of) the new statute the Board has not made the appropriate changes as statutorily mandated and it continues to provide parole-eligible offenders nothing more than a simple form letter when denying parole applications.

Believe It or Don't!

Francis Scott Key, WHOSE POEM “DEFENCE OF FORT MCHENRY” BECAME THE WORDS OF THE **STAR SPANGLED BANNER**, WAS A **SLAVE OWNER** AND **FEDERAL ATTORNEY** WHO **PROSECUTED ABOLITIONISTS**.



HUCK/KONOPACKI LABOR CARTOONS
HUCKKONOPACKICARTOONS.COM - OCT

IN THE THIRD (AND OMITTED) STANZA OF THE *STAR SPANGLED BANNER*, KEYS DENOUNCES THE AFRICANS WHO *FLED SLAVERY* AND JOINED THE BRITISH NAVY. IN THE *WAR OF 1812* THEY FOUGHT WITH THE BRITISH AS THE *COLONIAL MARINES*.

THE THIRD STANZA READS: “NO REFUGE COULD SAVE THE HIRELING AND SLAVE FROM THE TERROR OF FLIGHT OR THE GLOOM OF THE GRAVE, AND THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER IN TRIUMPH DOETH WAVE O’ER THE LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE.”

IN 1814, WHEN THE POEM WAS WRITTEN, THE *U.S.* COULD HAVE BEEN CALLED “THE LAND OF THE FREE AND HOME OF THE *SLAVE*.”

Ultimately, the true measure of our Commonwealth will be gauged by how it determines to treat the least of us, the disenfranchised who are all too easily dismissed or forgotten. I urge you to take effective action to ensure that the Board is discharging responsibly its statutory obligation to make individualized determinations on discretionary parole applications and to support denials of parole with specific statements of reasons.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Nathaniel H. Winston, #1169631
Buckingham Correctional Center
DILWYN, VA.

Ignoring Section 3?

To promote the general welfare of the low- and very low-income persons, Congress enacted the HUD Act of 1968 (Section 3) to provide a financial bridge for upward mobility for citizens that were below the poverty rate during the Civil Rights movement. The government intent was to ensure all Community Development Block Grant funding for any economic development projects be directed first to all recipients living in the Housing Projects and sur-

rounding areas of economic development project.

Congress placed the responsibility to comply with Section 3 in its operations on each State and Local Government recipients of the funds and to ensure that their recipients comply. This is where the discretion of the FIRST recipients, without OVERSIGHT, was identified by the HUD OIG as the systematic point of failure in why Section 3 has not reached its full potential and benefited the community during projects.

HUD OIG found in the Audit that RRHA did not have documentation of efforts to pursue competitive bids and it occurred because the authority was not fully aware of HUD procurement requirements and mistakenly believed that it was properly procuring.

Creighton Court development reveals lesson still not learned by RRHA & DECD

Earl Bradley
Bradley Development, LLC
Community Development Consultant
Specialist
SWAM & MBE
RICHMOND, VA.

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Vote NO on Amendment 1

By Doris Crouse-Mays

The right to work. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? You might be thinking it's a law that guarantees you the right to go out, get a job and go to work. Well, you would be wrong.

In fact, a right-to-work law means something very different and far more detrimental to hard-working Virginians. And this year, it's on the ballot for voters to decide.

Right-to-work laws have nothing to do with the rights of working men and women. They do not guarantee access to a job – and certainly not a good job – nor do they guarantee safe working conditions, fair wages or job security.

Virginia is an at-will employment state. That means, without the protections of a union contract, an employer can fire you for just about any reason – or no reason at all.

That doesn't seem very fair, does it?

In most cases, a contract that is bargained for collectively is the only way to ensure that a worker cannot be fired for no real reason.

Unions help workers to create better working conditions by negotiating for things like safety equipment, fair grievance procedures, training programs, paid sick days, health insurance and better wages.

Strong unions set standards for all workers by advocating for legislation and policies that put real people and our communities first.

If the majority of employees in a workplace vote to form a union, that union is legally required to represent all of the workers in that location, whether they are dues-paying members or not.

A right-to-work law, like the one that's been on the books in Virginia since the 1940s, means that union is prohibited from collecting any type of fee from non-members to cover the costs of representing them in grievances, negotiating their contract, administering benefits – like retirement plans and health insurance and more. Unions often spend tremendous resources to make sure members – and nonmembers alike – are represented and safe in the workplace.

No other organization works this way. If a business chooses to be a part of the Chamber of Commerce, they pay a membership fee. If you want to exercise in a gym, you pay a membership fee in order to have access to weights and treadmills. Homeowners' associations, fraternities and sororities and even certain wholesale shopping clubs all require some sort of dues or sign-up fees in order to receive the full benefits of being a member.

Why should labor unions be any different?

This November, voters in Virginia will decide whether or not part of the state's existing right-to-work law will be added to our Constitution. By



definition, a constitution is supposed to protect the rights of the citizens of the Commonwealth and must be held to a higher standard than the laws written in the code of Virginia. It does not need to be changed, and certainly should not be amended in such a way that it infringes on the rights of workers.

Priorities matter. And for the lawmakers behind Amendment 1, it's clear they don't have Virginia's best interest in mind. This amendment was designed by big businesses to silence the voices of hardworking Virginians and introduced by members of our General Assembly to score political points.

Make no mistake, the ones pushing this are the very same ones who oppose raising the minimum wage, oppose expanding Medicaid, oppose efforts to reform our justice system, oppose protections for our LGBTQ sisters and brothers and oppose free and fair access to the voting booth.

Efforts like this do nothing to address income inequality or raise wages for working people.

Amendment 1 is a distraction and our elected leaders should be focused on issues that truly affect our communities – fully funding our public schools, fixing our crumbling infrastructure, investing in transportation, raising wages and creating good jobs right here in Virginia.

We need policies that protect workers, put our families first and help strengthen our communities, not another wedge to divide people.

This Election Day, I'll be voting NO on 1, and I hope you'll join me. It's time to stand up for working families, protect our voice on the job, and defend our constitution from petty political games.

Doris Crouse-Mays is President of the Virginia AFL-CIO and a proud member of the Communications Workers of America (CWA).

Reflections of a Charlotte Protester

By Shewanna Johnson

As a Charlotte resident, I'm watching the news and the many different accounts of the loss of life of Keith Lamont Scott, another Black man-turned-hashtag, turned into the focus of protest.

I've heard he was reading a book, waiting on his son to come home from school. I heard he emerged from his car holding a gun and no book was found. The family and witnesses all proclaim that he was unarmed. And unless he been living under a rock, and had a death wish (which I doubt, considering he was picking up his son from the bus stop), what sense does it make to step from a car holding a gun unless he had intent to use it?

What I know to be fact is that the police are supposed to protect and serve. Why, if he really did have a gun, do the police shoot first without even attempting to get him to put the gun down? Why not use a taser? Why not talk him down off the ledge?

Many will claim it's a matter of safety, yet Ahmad Khan Rahami (a non-Black man) was arrested in Manhattan and New Jersey for bombings all over NYC and he lives, but we dying with our hands in the air? We don't get a chance to live. How in the hell is Charlotte under a State of Emergency for protesting, but there hasn't been a State of Emergency for the unarmed murder of African Americans?

Black lives are indeed in a state of emergency. Yet we can't call 911 and say, "There's serial killers out here murdering us" and expect something to be done about it, because the police are the ones responsible for policing the police and they feel they are doing a great job.

What bothers me most about the way all of these Police Brutality/Killing of Black People is bigger than the fact that they get paid vacations while leaving families broken and bitter and people hurting and confused. It's the fact that the police are given the liberties to police and investigate themselves. If a plane crashes, the airline itself doesn't investigate it, the National Transportation Safety Board does. If I commit a crime, I can't investigate and determine if I'm guilty or not, so how in the hell are we allowing this to happen??

Do you realize that since Colin Kirkpatrick started his protest, 15 African Americans have lost their lives to police? Yet people are running around screaming about what's not considered to be patriotic and how we can't blame "ALL" police? How about if the police stop killing us? Then there wouldn't be a problem? How about if these cops with an obvious GOD complex stop getting rewarded with paid vacations and are held accountable? We wouldn't need to be having this conversation.

I look at the news when I return home from our protesting and watch emotionless as they get it all wrong. It hits me that they don't understand why we are here. Why we care. Or how their tear gas and flash bombs enraged those who started out peacefully protesting.

Many of us as Charlotte residents commenced to tearing up the city, looting and damaging cars, buildings etc. I don't agree with the looting and destruction, but I understand. My guess is that our peaceful



protests have produced no results. They have proved that we are mere modern-day slaves and they feel they can revoke even our most basic liberties whenever they see fit.

Drastic times call for drastic measures, and it is these drastic measures that they pay attention to. The color of our skin is a red flag that immediately seems to provoke fear in those bearing a badge. Raising our hands in the air simply makes it easier for them to kill us.

We now live in a society where the police have been given the authority to play God. Many of us are now one traffic stop away from dying. Think about this. Even the most routine of traffic stops, even with our hands raised in surrender, even if we reach for our license and registration, we are gambling with our lives. If we refuse out of fear to reach for our wallet and registration, then we are being noncompliant and risk being tased, assaulted or killed anyways.

Why should we as law-abiding citizens have to worry about being murdered for simply being Black today, yesterday and tomorrow? Are we to simply accept that we no longer matter?

Our lives have lost their value and we must simply hope for the best but expect the worst. In the moments that I see those flashing lights behind me, should I call home and send out mass text messages to tell my kids mommy loves you and my friends and family the same, just in case? Do I need to immediately turn on my camera phone and go live on FB in hopes that people see how I'm to be murdered before the police instruct FB to take it down?

These things plague my mind and fuel such hatred towards the police. Sure, there are good cops out there who do their jobs, but how can you tell the good cops from the bad when they pull you over? By the time you realize you're dealing with a bad cop, it's too late. You're already bleeding to death. This is the gamble we are forced to take with our lives that pits us against what we now know about police and the fear of becoming the next RIP meme. I'm sure this invokes the same high level of anxiety our ancestors succumbed to when choosing between running away and waiting to see how things would play out.

Every time I see a police, my heart races. My life is a game to them. I just gotta figure out what position I'm willing to play.

Shewanna Johnson is a medical doctor who lives and works in Charlotte, N.C.

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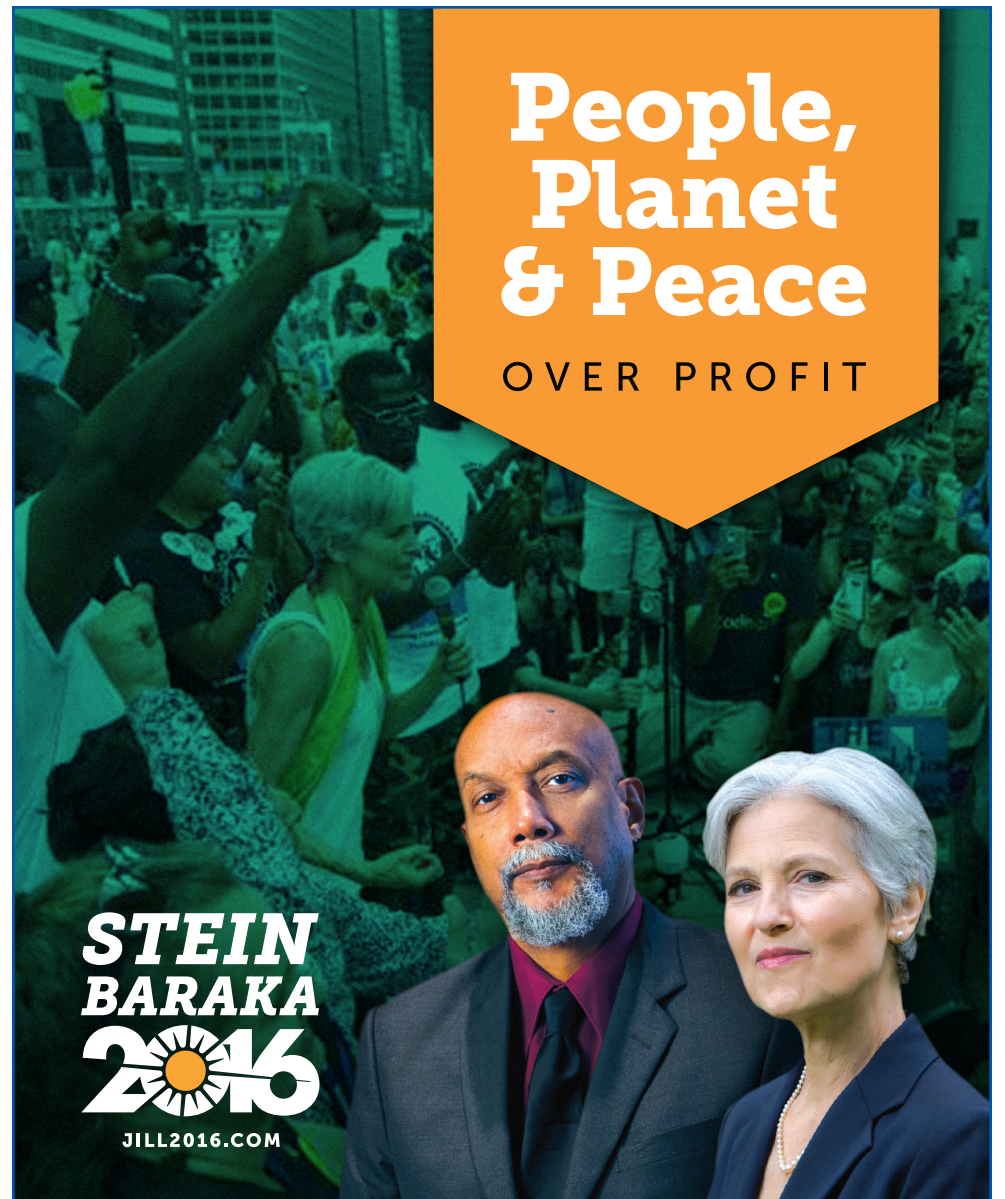
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reclaiming our sacred ground

Update: the VCU Well Project

By Ana Edwards

Sometime shortly before the Civil War, workers at the Medical College of Virginia sealed up an old brick well and covered it with soil. Underground water had stopped flowing or was contaminated and the well had been used as the dumping site for medical waste from the college.

That “waste” included the remains of cadavers – human bodies – used to study anatomy.

Twenty years later, Medical College employee Chris Baker would go about the notorious trade he’d learned from his enslaved father. The job title was “janitor,” but the tasks included the routine procurement of cadavers for anatomical study by the young men and (later) women studying to be

doctors. Almost all the bodies were of recently deceased Black people, stolen from local cemeteries.

Chris Baker lived in the basement of what is now called the Egyptian Building. Near his living quarters was another well/trash pit where he would dispose of cadaver remains. The older well lay sealed, buried and lost to memory, just a few dozen yards away under what is now the plaza of the Kontos Medical Building.

The East Marshall Street Well (EMSW) project was initiated to tell the story of the use of these stolen bodies in medical research over the course of the 19th century in Richmond and Virginia. It’s also the story of the further degradation of the lives of enslaved and free but poor Black people.

Chris Baker’s role is one bridge between these two histories: two

generations of a family involved in an awful business while both enslaved and free. If you have seen the documentary “Until The Well Runs Dry” by Virginia Commonwealth University Professor Shawn Utsey, you have a good idea of this history and the rediscovery of the old well and its contents in 1994.

The documentary led to the EMSW project, initiated in 2013 by VCU’s new president, Michael Rao. The university already was on the defensive after being forced in May 2011 to end its use of Richmond’s African Burial Ground as a parking lot, a story told in Professor Utsey’s documentary “Meet Me in the Bottom.”

This project also adds VCU to the list of universities such as the College of William & Mary, Brown University in Rhode Island and the Universities of Virginia and Georgia (which also both had medical schools) that are engaged in self-examination for the

Family Representative Council (FRC), convened in August 2015 “to represent the ‘descendant community’ of the human remains discovered in a well near East Marshall Street and to make recommendations to the VCU East Marshall Street Well Project Planning Committee to support the appropriate study, memorialization and reburial with dignity.”

After a year of study, field trips and discussions, the FRC presented their recommendations to the public on April 25, 2016, in the form of a summary report: “The Draft Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment of the East Marshall Street Well Ancestral Remains,” available online at: http://emsw.vcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5206/2016/06/Current-EMSW-FRC-Report_Summary.pdf.

FRC Chair Joseph Jones, a professor at the College of William & Mary, is now finalizing the report after community input received following the April public presentation. The FRC anticipates submitting the report to the Planning Committee sometime this fall.

The next step will be the formation of an Implementation Committee and for the Office of the President to move the project forward according to the recommendations of the FRC.

Ana Edwards, Chair of the Defenders’ Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, is a member of the East Marshall Street Well Project Planning Committee. Members of the project’s Family Representatives Council include Defenders Christopher Rashad Green, Rolandah Cleopatrah McMillan and Janet “Queen Nzinga” Taylor.

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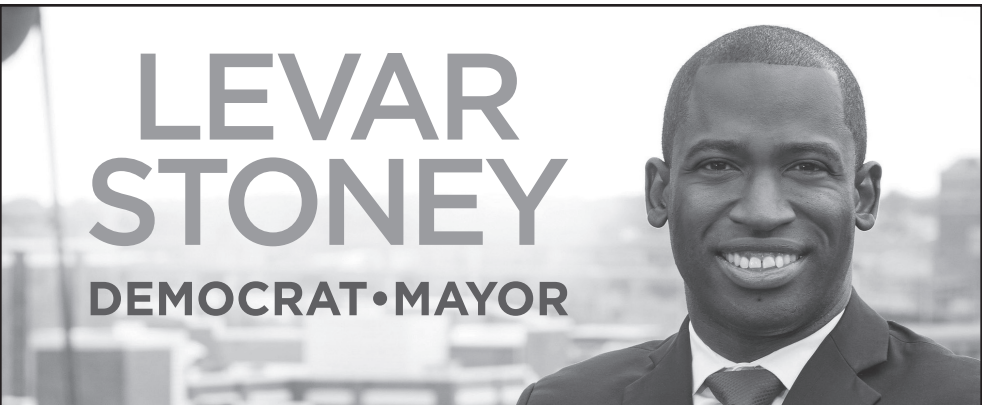
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