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**Hosted by the UNITED NATIONAL ANTIWAR COALITION (UNAC)**

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**Transportation from Virginia being organized by the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality**

**SEE PAGE 10 FOR DETAILS**

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

# **The Virginia DEFENDER**

**FREE**

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**Spring 2015**

## **Developing an alternative plan for Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom**

**By Ana Edwards & Phil Wilayto**

As Richmond approaches the 150th anniversary of its liberation from slavery and Confederate rule, the burning question facing Virginia’s Capital City is this: Is Richmond ready to honestly face its terrible past, or will it continue to bury its soul in historical denial?

The present evidence is not encouraging.

While Mayor Dwight C. Jones – a leading Baptist minister and head of the Virginia Democratic Party – refuses to abandon his developer-driven scheme to plant a commercial baseball stadium in the heart of the city’s former slave-trading district, Richmond’s elite is preparing to showcase to the world the street that is a virtual shrine to the slavery-defending Confederacy: Monument Avenue.

From Sept. 19 through 27, some 300 million television viewers around the world are expected to be watching the prestigious UCI World Roads Championship bicycle race, to be held here in Richmond. The event also is expected to draw some 450,000 visitors plus reporters from 100 countries, to this city of 215,000.

The planned race route has the riders in the elite women’s and men’s races on Sept. 26 and 27 pedaling west on Monument Avenue, right past the statues of Confederate generals Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart and other traitors to the Union and defenders of the slavocracy.

The turning point of the race is – are you ready for this? – the towering monument to Confederate President Jefferson Davis at the intersection of Monument and Davis avenues. (Yes, he’s got a street named after him, too.)



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**Spreading the word at Richmond’s 2014 Down Home Family Reunion. From left: Dieyah Ra-sheed of the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality and Omowale Deane and Monica Espazza of the African Ancestral Chamber. Poster by Monica Espazza.**

And then the riders pedal east, right over the sacred ground of Shockoe Bottom.

The obvious conclusion? It’s that, 150 years after the Civil War, the former capital of the Confederacy still refuses to acknowledge the importance of Shockoe Bottom to both Black and U.S. history, but it is more than willing to show off to the world a street indelibly associated with reviving the racist myth of the Lost Cause.

By doing this, Richmond is declaring that, in its opinion, Black lives simply do not matter.

Not in 1619, not in 1865 and not in 2015.

### **An alternative plan for the Bottom**

It was in August of 2012 that Venture Richmond Executive Director Jack

Berry and Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce) President and CEO Kim Scheeler first raised the latest proposal to build a stadium in Shockoe Bottom.

And it was in November of 2013 that Mayor Jones formally unveiled Revitalize RVA, the so-called economic development plan that includes the stadium.

And yet there still is no stadium in Shockoe Bottom. This is the happy result of years of relentless efforts by dozens of organizations and hundreds of activists in the city and beyond.

But it’s not enough to just oppose the stadium. There must be a fight to reclaim a section of the Bottom and use it to memorialize the suffering and resistance of the more than 100,000 Black people who were bought and sold there until April 3, 1865. And that

reclamation must include taking enough land out of consideration for economic development that there will be no room left for a stadium.

Winning that much land – and we estimate that it could be as little as two city blocks – is the absolute bottom line that needs to be fought for and won.

To advance this process, the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality have initiated a broad-based community campaign to develop an alternative proposal for Shockoe Bottom, one that allows for economic development while properly memorializing its history.

Starting on March 18, the Defenders’ Sacred Ground Memorial Reclamation Project, The Virginia Defender newspaper and our allies will sponsor a series of four public meetings, called Community Brainstorming Sessions.

Sacred Ground Chair Ana Edwards will speak on the history and significance of Shockoe Bottom. Then two meeting moderators will take suggestions for what people would like to see created on this sacred ground. A Memorial Park? Museum? Genealogy Center? Interpretive Site? Some combination of these? Something else?

Everyone’s input is welcome, but special weight will be given to suggestions raised by members of the Black community.

**See SHOCKOE on PAGE 7**

**EXCLUSIVE  
COVERAGE  
of the  
2015 VPA  
See page 6**

*“Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.” — George Santayana, Philosopher & Poet, Dec. 16, 1863 - Sept. 26, 1952*



## THE DEFENDERS

### for Freedom, Justice & Equality

PO Box 23202, Richmond, VA 23223  
Ph: 804-644-5834 Fax: 804-332-5525  
Email: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com  
Web: www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

### We believe in Freedom

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

### We believe in Justice

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

### We believe in Equality

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

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

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

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

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

## regional & national news

# SHROC X builds Southern struggles

By Phil Wilayto

The setting was a longshoremen's hall in Savannah, Ga. Union members were standing in small groups in the hallway, talking and waiting for their day's assignments on the docks. They nodded hello as we walked past into the assembly hall.

It felt like a good place to hold a Southern activists conference.

More than 250 people, about 75 percent of them African-Americans, came together for the 10th Southern Human Rights Organizers' Conference, dubbed SHROC X. Founded in 1996, the event takes place every two years, each time in a different city, "to build broad Southern-based coalitions to combat human rights violations in the Southern region and forge an agenda for social change."

This 10th conference, held Dec. 12-14 at the International Longshoremen's Association Local 1414 hall, highlighted the Black Lives Matter movement that was sweeping the country. On the third day, participants donned SHROC T-shirts with the BLM slogan on the back, headed downtown and held a loud and visible rally, bringing their message of anti-racist struggle to thousands of holiday shoppers.

The conference itself was very similar to the annual Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice, which took place Jan. 10 in Richmond. (See story on page 6.) There were reports of union organizing campaigns, community battles, protests against police shootings and talks linking these domestic struggles with the need to fight against the endless U.S. wars abroad.

One of the conference's most moving



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**Participants in the SHROC X conference gather in downtown Savannah to raise the cry of "Black Lives Matter!" before thousands of holiday shoppers.**

speakers was Elijah West, a cousin of Savannah resident Troy Davis, who was wrongfully executed by the state of Georgia in 2011. Poster-sized images of Davis were prominently displayed alongside a huge banner that read "Black Lives Matter."

Other speakers included Kali Akuno of the Lumumba Center for Economic Justice; Aleta Alston-Toure, Free Marissa Alexander Campaign; Ajamu Baraka, Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights; Ananya Bhattacharjee, Asia Floor Wage and United Workers Congress; Rose Brewer, Black Left Unity Network; Maurice Carney, Friends of the Congo; Rukiya Dillahunt, Black Workers For Justice; Efia Nwangaza, director of The Malcolm X

Center for Self Determination; David Gespass, National Lawyers Guild Southern Region; and SHROC founder Jaribu Hill.

"It is hard to believe that we've been coming together for 18 years, bearing witness to struggles and victories," Hill said, "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."

The next SHROC gathering, tentatively scheduled for Dec. 9-10, 2016, in Jackson, Ms., will mark 20 years since its founding.

Start planning now to attend!

## Boston bus drivers beat back anti-union frame-up

Staff Report

A Boston union local with a long history of anti-racist struggles and beating back anti-labor attacks logged another victory March 5 when a jury took just 10 minutes to reject frame-up felony charges against one of its leaders.

Steve Kirschbaum, USW Local 8752's grievance chair and one of the drivers who founded the union during the turbulent days of busing to desegregate the city's public schools, had been hit with charges that included breaking and entering to commit a felony, malicious destruction of property, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon and trespassing — all felonies.

The charges stemmed from a rally last June held by hundreds of union school bus drivers who work for the Veolia Corp., a company with a long history of union-busting. Starting in the company's bus yard, the drivers tried to move their rally indoors to their break room, but found the door had been locked — even though their union contact guarantees them the right to hold meetings on company property.

After Kirschbaum tried to enter the break room, Veolia managers told police they had been attacked and that the premises had been violently entered.

The courtroom victory was the result of an eight-month people's mobilization that included six pack-the-court rallies, national call-in days to both the district attorney and the mayor and weekly bus yard rallies organized by the local.

Drivers and community supporters packed the court for the three days of the trial. During lunch breaks, they held militant picket lines outside the building, carrying placards that read, "Drop the Charges!" and "No Contract, No Work!"



Photo courtesy USWA Local ----

**Union members and supporters celebrate the court victory with Steve Kirschbaum (center, with upraised fist). Veolia is the anti-union company that runs the city's school bus system. The next challenge is to win reinstatement for the fired leaders.**

Among the supporters were representatives of the Mass Mobilization Against Police Violence, Boston Teachers Union, Coalition for Equal Quality Education and United American Indians of New England, along with University of Massachusetts Professor Tony Van Der Meer and former and present City Council members Chuck Turner and Charles Yancey.

From the moment the bogus charges were filed against Kirschbaum, it was clear they were part of the union-busting campaign being waged against the local — a campaign that included the November 2013 firing of Kirschbaum and three other union leaders.

In fact, it was Veolia and its co-conspirators who were put on trial as witness testimony and the defense legal team showed that the events in question had everything to do with the fact that the contract was expiring that day at midnight — and that, in violation of the contract, Veolia had attempted to prevent the union from holding a meeting.

Those in the Boston establishment who were holding their breath over this trial and hoping to see one of the union's leaders convicted are now facing a renewed, fighting union determined to force the city to rehire the four fired members.

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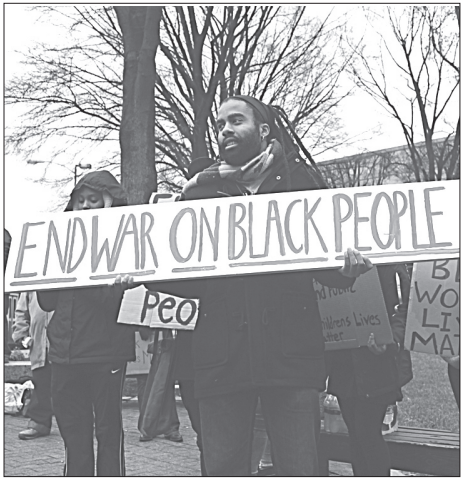
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community news



**Into the streets!** — The names became household words: Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown. Timir Rice. One Black person is killed every 28 hours by a police officer, security guard or vigilante, according to a study done by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. As they did across the country, mostly young people in Richmond, Roanoke, Blacksburg, Williamsburg and other Virginia cities took to the streets to voice their outrage and insist that Blacks Lives Matter! At left, marchers block traffic at the intersection of 9th and East Broad streets. At right, a speak-out earlier that evening at 9th and East Marshall streets.

Photos by Phil Wilayto

around virginia

Immigration, Justice & the DREAM

By Margaret Breslau

Why immigration happens, how we are all impacted by immigration, the need for immigration reform and what is happening in our state were the issues Carolina Velez brought to an audience of more than 65 people Feb. 23 at Virginia Tech.

The title of her talk was “Immigration, Justice and the DREAM.” Velez, a native of Colombia and a longtime Richmonder, is an organizer with the Faber-based Wayside Center for Popular Education. She had previously discussed these issues at the 2015 Virginia People’s Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice.

With immigration detention reaching crisis proportions and detention being used as the default to enforce immigration laws, Velez explained, more immigrants are being detained over minor matters such as shoplifting. With quota systems (detention-bed mandates) firmly in place, immigrants, including entire families, languish in facilities, suffering from emotional and physical trauma.

Velez also spoke about the business of detention and how private prisons work with the federal government to make sure the quota system stays in place. Doing so yields enormous profits at taxpayer expense. The vicious cycle of increased border enforcement means more detention and more beds being filled. Private prison companies then secure federal contracts to hold those immigrants in their own for-profit facilities and ruthlessly lobby against immigration reform.

Those attending the public presentation included students, community and faculty. Three professors, from Anthropology and Sociology, gave their students the option of attending the presentation for extra credit.

Sponsored by the Coalition for Justice, Tech DREAMers, VT NAACP and Virginia Tech’s Race and Social Policy Center, the event was covered by WDBJ7: <http://www.wdbj7.com/video/students-try-to-increase-knowledge-about-immigration-issues/31438808>

Before the presentation, Velez also had a meeting with the Tech DREAMers for an informal discussion on immigration issues.

*Margaret Breslau is an organizer with the Coalition for Justice in Blacksburg.*

F-burg victory

The Fredericksburg Chapter of Virginia Organizing is celebrating a campaign victory: the mural in the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors meeting room will get an update to include African-American and Native American contributions to the county’s history.

Va. Raise Up at VT

By Daniel Breslau

“We want \$15 an hour as a living wage,” Cassandra Shaw told a packed room at Virginia Tech’s Surge Hall. “We want freedom to join a union and dignity and respect on a job. How will we get that? By doing what we’re doing today!”

Shaw and other workers and organizers with the Virginia Raise Up campaign came to campus March 3 to promote a mass march and rally in Richmond on April 15, one of many actions scheduled to take place that day across the country to press the demands for higher wages and union rights for fast-food and other low-wage workers.

Fast-food workers in the South have been organizing and going on strike throughout Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia and elsewhere to demand \$15-an-hour and the right to form a union without retaliation.

Virginia People’s Assembly organizer Daniel Breslau gave opening remarks at the VT event, addressing the vulnerable position of fast-food workers: “They can get fired for no reason, fired for all the wrong reasons.” The key to improving pay and job security is to build working people’s power, Breslau said.

Dramatically illustrating that point, Shaw described the case of a group of South Boston fast-food workers who were fired after their McDonald’s manager told them the store was “too dark” and he needed to “get the ghetto out of the store.”

Two workers shared their stories with these issues involving race, low wages and unfairness in the work place.

Thomasine Wilson said that, after working for 15 years as a home-care worker, she still makes less than \$9 an hour. “If I don’t do an additional job or have additional resources, I can’t survive,” she said.

“It takes time for change to happen, but if we don’t keep pushing it towards what we want, it’s never going to get done,” said Jessica Resendiz, a student at Virginia Union University who also is a restaurant worker. She said that sometimes she makes just \$30 for a day’s work.

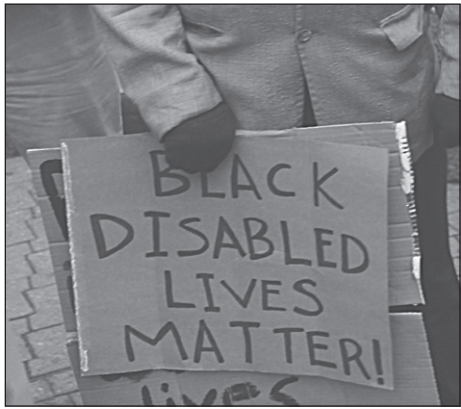
“We’re all in this together,” organizer Shaw said. “Let’s come together. That’s the only way we’re going to win!”

Virginia Tech students attending the event circulated a sign-up sheet for transportation to the April 15 event. The student groups announced plans to organize solidarity events on campus.

The event, co-sponsored by the Coalition for Justice and the VT branches of the NAACP and United Students Against Sweatshops, was organized by the Virginia People’s Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice ([vapeoplesassembly.org](http://vapeoplesassembly.org)).

For information on the April 15 actions, see the story on page 5 and the display ad on the back page.

*Daniel Breasu is an organizer with the Virginia People’s Assembly.*



Just as the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s inspired other people to fight for their rights, the current Black upsurge is having a similar effect.



Photo by supporters of JusticeRVA

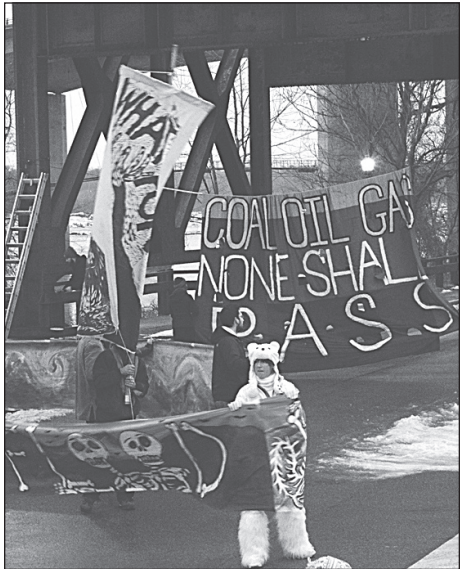
White supporters bring their message to a program inside historic Monument Church, displaying a banner and making a formal statement. There was some applause.

Climate change protests spread & grow stronger



Photos by Matt Oltmann

Opponents of Dominion’s planned multi-state fracked-gas pipeline kick things up a notch by suspending themselves — and a huge banner — for two-and-a-half hours from the Belle Island pedestrian bridge. The action took place Feb. 23 in Richmond.



Dozens more protesters block the entrance to Dominion headquarters. Nine received summons and one was arrested, after refusing to sign a summons. The actions received wide news coverage, including in The Washington Post.



Photo courtesy the Sierra Club of Virginia

Not on our fault line!

Plans by Dominion to build a third nuclear reactor in North Anna, where there is a known fault line, also have drawn intense opposition. Note: Dominion is the largest single donor to Virginia politicians.

For more information on the pipeline and North Anna struggles, see the Letters to the Editor on page 8.



cops, courts & prisons

CASE UPDATES

Ashley Williams

Oral appeal arguments before the Virginia Supreme Court are set for March 31 in the case of Ashley Williams, the young Richmond mother convicted in 2013 in connection with the 2009 death of her two-year-old son D’Sean.

“I had a handful of arguments on Feb 10, but her case was not one of those,” her attorney, David Hargett, told the Defender. “So it will be pushed to the next argument date, March 31.”

Hargett spoke on Williams’ behalf on Sept. 9 before the Court of Appeals of Virginia. That appeal was denied by the one judge who heard it and the attorney asked for a three-judge panel. When that panel also denied the appeal, he petitioned to the Virginia Supreme Court.

“If they deny it, then we’re done,” he said.

Williams was found guilty in May 2013 of neglecting D’Sean to the point where he basically starved to death. Family members and at least one medical expert argued that the boy suffered from health conditions that affected his ability to process food. Several young male cousins had similar conditions, but their mothers had health insurance. Williams’ full-time job as a home-care worker did not provide health insurance. She was sentenced to five-and-a-half years in prison.

“The issue we are raising is that the evidence wasn’t sufficient to prove Ashley engaged in willful omission,” Hargett said. “Not just intentionally, but that she had a bad purpose, when all the medical personnel who had seen the baby months and even weeks before he died did not take action. So how could we expect someone without medical training to know the baby was in danger?”

One of Williams’ sisters, Melva Jones, recently visited her at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women in Troy, about 60 miles northwest of Richmond.

“She is doing surprisingly well,” Jones said. “She wants to thank everyone for their continued support and prayers. She is in good spirits.”

Ashley William’s projected release date is Dec. 1, 2017.

Devin Thomas

Devin Thomas went to trial on Jan. 15 – Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday.

Except for his court-appointed attorney and this reporter, the Black teenager was alone. There were no family members, no friends, no supporters as he stood before the white judge in Petersburg General District Court.

He was convicted of resisting arrest and disorderly conduct and ordered to perform community service and pay court costs.

Devin’s crime?

He had videoed police officers

conducting a traffic stop in his sister’s neighborhood.

That was on June 10. After being told to back away from the scene of the police activity, he backed away.

You can see him moving backward on the video he was still filming.

You can see the police officers following him, telling him to leave as he was leaving.

You can see a few other people on the street, but nowhere near the nearly 200 people approaching the police as Devin urged them on, as a white police officer testified in court.

Then, as Devin was standing in the doorway of his sister’s apartment building, you can hear one of the cops come up and ask him how old he was.

“Nineteen,” Devin answered.

And then the video swings up toward the sky, then down to the ground, while sounds of some kind of disturbance are heard.

Devin says he was assaulted by a police officer and left bloody with a concussion after being struck with a baton. He was charged, not with inciting a riot or assaulting a police officer, but with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

The Petersburg community responded with demonstrations. A high-profile attorney from D.C. held a well-covered press conference, saying he would represent Devin in court, without charge.

Then he disappeared.

Concerned supporters were unable to reach Devin or his family to ask if he wanted them to organize another protest outside the courtroom on the day of his trial. So no one came.

After the trial, this reporter approached Devin and asked him to call the Defenders when he got home. Devin said he would, but he didn’t. The reporter called a woman friend of Devin and left a message, but there was no callback.

If Devin doesn’t perform the required community service and pay the court costs, he will be sent to jail in May.

They’ll be another hearing to decide that.

Hopefully, this time there will be people in the courtroom with him.

Jermaine Doss

A decision on whether Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe will pardon Norfolk native Jermaine Doss could come as early as May. That month will mark a year since Doss formally requested that the governor grant him a full pardon for a crime he did not commit.

Jermaine Doss was convicted in 2000 of being involved in the murder of Norfolk businessman James Webb.

Sentenced to life plus 38 years, he has always maintained his innocence. The only evidence against him was the testimony of the man who admitted

Buckingham prisoners celebrate Black History Month

Staff report

In a large, concrete-walled gymnasium, around 150 men were sitting in rows of chairs, facing another man standing behind a podium. All of them were dressed in blue jeans and denim shirts. About half were wearing orange hats or bandanas.

The speaker asked what the men thought was going to happen next, pointing to four other men off to his left. Two of those men were holding a third by his arms, while the fourth stood before him, menacingly.

Would the little bit of theater end in peace? Or in tragedy?

This time, in the confines of Buckingham Correctional Center, about 60 miles west of Richmond, the scene ended in tragedy.

The threatening man made a gesture as if he were firing a gun. The man being held fell to the floor, while recorded sounds of gunfire were heard from a speaker.

It was a staged act of violence, meant to make the men assembled on that Feb. 27th think about the violence they had seen in their own lives, including inside the Virginia prison system.

The event was a prisoner-organized Black History Month program, and the theme was promoting nonviolence in their daily lives.

There also was live music, talks and a presentation on the historical relationship between the ancient West African Malian Empire and Black people in the colony and then state of Virginia.

When Ana Edwards, Chair of the Defenders’ Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, finished her talk, she received a standing ovation, along with a handmade plaque featuring an image of Africa, thanking her for her participation in the day’s activities.

Also speaking at the program was Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto, who gave an update on the ongoing struggle to reclaim and properly memorialize Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom, once the center of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

The event was chaired by Dale Pughley, a longtime prisoner whose release date is sometime around 2039.

So much talent, so much strength, so much human capital was concentrated in that one, grim-looking room.

As a great man once said, “When the prison gates are opened, the real dragon will fly out.”

The Defenders send warm greetings of solidarity to the men of Buckingham Correctional Center.

Va. prisoners launch clemency campaign

By Kat McNeal

A group of incarcerated individuals at the Buckingham Correctional Center has begun a campaign to start a statewide dialog on the racism inherent in the U.S. justice system.

The campaign centers around a heavily researched, 12-page petition which documents, in great detail, the ongoing racism of the U.S. justice system against Black Americans. It encourages Black prisoners to highlight the inequities of the system by submitting clemency petitions to Virginia’s Secretary of the Commonwealth.

“In Virginia, the racial disparity between the general population and those who encounter the criminal justice system is vast,” the petition states.

The document goes on to demonstrate that the overrepresentation of African-Americans in the prison system is “a function of justice system priorities, rather than equitable response to law violations.”

The campaign is being organized by prisoners themselves, with the support of an action committee of nonincarcerated allies in Richmond, including the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality.

Opened in 1982, Buckingham is an all-male Security Level 3 facility located in rural Dillwyn, about 60 miles west of Richmond.

To receive a copy of the petition and instructions on how to submit a clemency filing, write to: Virginia Prisoners for Racial Justice, c/o The Defenders, PO Box 23202, Richmond, VA 23223 or visit: [www.facebook.com/virginiaprisoners4racialjustice](http://www.facebook.com/virginiaprisoners4racialjustice).

UNDERTONES: An aural memorial for Richmond’s African Burial Grounds.

By melding together Jazz orchestration, improvisation, african rhythms, chants, narratives and dance, the work encodes the past injustices of slavery, acknowledges the present state of struggle for equality in America, while celebrating the triumph of reclaiming this sacred ground. The work encodes a message to future generations by constructing a collective memory for all through the heightened dynamics of community performances. **Composed and Orchestrated by Ashby Anderson.**

**Commissioning Partner: Jazz Arts Consortium.**

UNDERTONES will make its debut on April 3 at 6 pm on the ground that inspired it: Richmond’s African Burial Ground in Shockoe Bottom. Part of the 150th anniversary programming for the Liberation of Richmond & Emancipation Day. See display ad on back page. For more on the composer visit [MuseCreativeWorkspace.com](http://MuseCreativeWorkspace.com).

Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project says NO STADIUM IN SHOCKOE BOTTOM!

Named one of the 11 MOST ENDANGERED Historic Sites of 2014 by Preservation Virginia and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom is a Site of Conscience. You can help save Shockoe Bottom: Learn more at [ShockoeBottom.blogspot.com](http://ShockoeBottom.blogspot.com) and [www.SavingPlaces.org](http://www.SavingPlaces.org). Join a Community Brainstorming Session - See Community Calendar on the back page.



no hay fronteras en la luchas de los obreros

Virginia solidaridad con los estudiantes Mexicanos desaparecidos

Por Phil Wilayto

Más de 50 activistas locales se reunieron en el centro de Richmond el 6 de marzo para prepararse para la llegada de los padres de 43 estudiantes mexicanos que han desaparecido desde el pasado septiembre. Los padres visitaran 10 ciudades de los Estados Unidos, poniendo fin a su gira en Washington, DC, donde se le pedirá al gobierno de Obama que deje de enviar fondos a la policía federal en México.

Cuatro de los padres esperan estar en Richmond la primera semana de abril.

Los estudiantes desaparecidos asistieron a una escuela de magisterio progresista en Ayotzinapa en el sudoccidental estado mexicano de Guerrero. Los fiscales locales dicen que los estudiantes, todos ellos varones, fueron detenidos por agentes de la policía corrupta después de una manifestación el 26 de septiembre en la ciudad de Iguala. A continuación, fueron entregados a una banda criminal local, que los mataron.

Los fiscales creen que el alcalde de Iguala José Luis Abarca ordenó el arresto de los estudiantes porque su protesta estaba perturbado un discurso político planificado por su esposa, María de los Ángeles Pineda. Tanto el alcalde y su esposa han sido detenidos y acusados de implicación con el crimen organizado.

Sin embargo, los familiares de los estudiantes, así como algunos investigadores independientes han rechazado la versión oficial de los hechos y creen que los 43 estudiantes desaparecidos están vivos.

En respuesta, se han celebrado una serie de manifestaciones para exigir que el gobierno haga más para encontrar a los estudiantes. A finales de febrero, decenas de miles de personas marcharon en la Ciudad de México, portando pancartas con imágenes de los jóvenes desaparecidos. Otras protestas han tenido lugar en Argentina, Venezuela, Inglaterra, Francia, Austria y Estados Unidos.

Hablando del trabajo de la organización local, dijo el activista comunitario Carolina

Vélez, “Este esfuerzo es muy importante, porque es nuestra responsabilidad de apoyar actos de resistencia como el que los padres de los estudiantes de Ayotzinapa han tomado desde la desaparición.

“Ayotzinapa es el resultado de una opresión sistemática, es el resultado de la violencia de Estado, la brutalidad policial y un sistema capitalista donde las corporaciones, el crimen organizado y el gobierno están dirigidas por las mismas personas, y sólo para defender y proteger los intereses del 1 por ciento de la clase dominante.”

Vélez es un organizador de Richmond con el Centro del borde del camino basado en Charlottesville para la Educación Popular. Otros grupos de trabajo en el esfuerzo de apoyo incluyen Acción Negro Ahora, Justicia RVA, Santuario VA, Sol de RVA y sureños En Nueva Planta.

Además de abordar el caso de los estudiantes desaparecidos, la reunión Richmond incluyó una discusión acerca de la intervención de Estados Unidos en América Latina, la historia de las personas que desaparecen y “cómo todo lo que está relacionado con la emigración y la situación de los inmigrantes en los EE.UU.,” según a un comunicado anunciando en la reunión.

También hubo un evento de micrófono abierto para la apertura del Santuario VA, un centro de Richmond “con el propósito de crear salidas creativas y eficaces para los hombres y mujeres una vez encarcelados, y después de su puesta en libertad.”

Para obtener más información acerca de la reunión de abril en Richmond, póngase en contacto con Carolina Vélez en el (804) 868-0191 o carolina@waysidecenter.org.

Los padres de los 43 estudiantes desaparecidos también estarán en Blacksburg, el 1 de abril Para más información, póngase en contacto con la Coalición por la Justicia en Blacksburg: justiceburg@gmail.com.

Traducción Inglés-Español-to proporcionado por Guillermo Zamora.

RPS officials to Latino/a students: ‘We’re sorry’

When about 500 juniors and seniors at Richmond’s Huguenot High School were brought to the school’s auditorium March 2, they weren’t sure what to expect. Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Dana Bedden had joined Huguenot Principle Jafar Barakat on stage.

What followed was almost unprecedented in the city’s school system.

The two educational leaders, both African-Americans, apologized to the students, Black, Latino and white, for an act of racism.

“I am profoundly sorry and wholeheartedly committed to regaining your trust,” Barakat told the students.

“We want inclusion for all, regardless of race, creed or color,” said Bedden, who was hired by the school system after the incident for which they were apologizing happened.

The apology was the result of more than two years of work by Latin@ Students and Families United for Inclusive Schools, a group that formed after Principal Barakat had Latino students at the school brought into the cafeteria under the pretext of discussing a Latino student organization.

It was a ruse. The students’ backpacks were searched and they were threatened with reprisals related to their immigration status if they didn’t comply. They then were escorted in small groups to school buses and taken home.

There had supposedly been tensions between Black and Latino students at the school, but only Latino students were searched.

In response, Latino students and their families organized a protest outside the school. (The Defenders attended and helped bring Black activists in solidarity with the Latino community.)

The apology, one of the group’s demands that Dr. Bedden agreed to during a face-to-face meeting with Latin@ Students and Families United, was greeted with cautious optimism by the families.

“This sounds good, but we will be watching to make sure they follow through on all of our demands,” said Claudia Rodriguez, whose daughter was enrolled at Huguenot at the time of the incident. “This was just one incident, but there are many ongoing problems. We will continue to fight until we have justice for all of our children.”

ment are all run by the same people and only defend and protect the interest of the 1 percent in the ruling class.”

Velez is a Richmond organizer with the Charlottesville-based Wayside Center for Popular Education. Other groups working on the support effort include Black Action Now, Justice RVA, Sanctuary VA, Sol of RVA and Southerners On New Ground.

In addition to addressing the case of the missing students, the Richmond meeting included a discussion about U.S. intervention in Latin America, the history of people disappearing and “how all of that is related to migration and the situation of immigrants in the U.S.,” according to a statement announcing the meeting.

There also was an open-mic event for the opening of Sanctuary VA, a Richmond facility “with a purpose to create effective creative outlets for once-incarcerated men and women upon their release.”

For more information about the April meeting in Richmond, contact Carolina Velez at (804) 868-0191 or carolina@waysidecenter.org.

Parents of the 43 disappeared students also will be stopping in Blacksburg, on April 1. For information, contact the Blacksburg Coalition for Justice at: justiceburg@gmail.com.

our working lives

All out for 4/15 - for a \$15 minimum wage!

If the organizers are successful, Richmond will soon see its largest labor mobilization in many years, when union-backed fast-food and other low-wage workers gather for a rally and march to demand a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and the right to join a union without fear of retaliation from their bosses.

The workers plan to gather at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 15, at Monroe Park, between West Main, West Grace, North Laurel and North Belvidere streets.

“I believe that April 15 will bring attention to the fact that we have so many people working 40 hours a week and they still can’t survive,” said Katrina Lewis, 30, who has been working at a Richmond Burger King for the past year.

“I’m a single person,” she said, “but it’s hard for me to survive, with student loans, transportation. Why should one person have to work two jobs just to buy a car so they can get to and from work?”

A flier being distributed to build for April 15 states, “America can’t build a strong future with falling wages. Corporations wiped out millions of good, middle-class jobs during the recession. Now they want new jobs to pay as little as possible.

“Even though Americans’ hard work is generating billions in profits, most new jobs — especially in food services and other service jobs — tend to pay very little. That means moms and dads who finally have full-time work again are paid so little they qualify for food stamps and other public assistance.”

The movement for a \$15 minimum wage began just two years ago when hundreds of mostly young people who work in fast-food restaurants in New York City went on strike, calling for \$15 an hour and the right to form a union.

Since that first walkout, thousands of fast-food cooks and cashiers in nearly 200 cities from coast to coast have joined the Fight for \$15 movement, with several waves of national one-day strikes.

The April 15 protest in Richmond will be one of many organized by the Southern Raise Up campaign. Atlanta, Raleigh and Charlotte also will see marches and rallies, along with several other cities.

Evidently the bosses are feeling the pressure. Since January, 10 states have passed higher minimum hourly wages: Delaware’s went up to \$8.25; West Virginia to \$8.75; Rhode Island to \$9; Michigan to \$9.25; Minnesota to \$9.50; Connecticut, Hawaii, and Maryland to \$10.10; Vermont to \$10.50 and Massachusetts to \$11 an hour.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, a total of 29 states plus the District of Columbia now have wage floors above the federal minimum. The city of Seattle has gone the furthest, implementing a \$15 wage. New York City’s Mayor Bill de Blasio has just called for a \$15 minimum in the country’s largest city.

Virginia is one of 14 states that adopt whatever level is set by the federal government, currently \$7.25 an hour, a minimum wage which hasn’t been raised in five years.

Two states, Georgia and Wyoming, have minimums of \$5.15. Five more — Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee, all of them in the Deep South — have no minimum wage at all.

In Richmond, April 15 will be a day of actions, with picketing in the morning and afternoon, followed by the mass gathering at 5 p.m. at Monroe Park.

Organizers say they are receiving support from the Richmond Branch NAACP, university student groups, “all the Richmond activist groups,” as well as cooperation from the Virginia AFL-CIO and individual Richmond unions.

A very big turnout is expected.

For more information, see [www.april15.org](http://www.april15.org), check out the event page on Facebook (“Save the date: 4/15 for \$15 — Richmond’s Biggest Labor March Ever!”) or email [info@fightfor15.org](mailto:info@fightfor15.org)

Also, see the display ad on the back page.

Virginia solidarity with missing Mexican students

By Phil Wilayto

More than 50 local activists gathered in downtown Richmond March 6 to prepare for the arrival of the parents of 43 Mexican students who have been missing since last September. The parents will be visiting 10 U.S. cities, ending their tour in Washington, D.C., where they will ask the Obama administration to stop sending funds to the federal police in Mexico.

About four of the parents expect to be in Richmond sometime in the first week of April.

The missing students attended a progressive teacher training college in Ayotzinapa in the southwestern Mexican state of Guerrero. Local prosecutors say the students, all of them males, were arrested by corrupt police officers after a demonstration Sept. 26 in the town of Iguala. They then were handed over to a local criminal gang, which killed them.

Prosecutors believe Iguala Mayor Jose Luis Abarca ordered the students’ arrest because their protest disturbed a planned political speech by his wife, Maria de los Angeles Pineda. Both the mayor and his wife have been

arrested and charged with involvement with organized crime.

However, relatives of the students as well as some independent investigators have rejected the official version of events and believe that 43 of the missing students are still alive.

In response, they have held a series of demonstrations to demand the government do more to find the students. In late February, tens of thousands of people marched in Mexico City, carrying banners with pictures of the missing youth. Other protests have taken place in Argentina, Venezuela, England, France, Austria and the United States.


Speaking of the local organizing work, community activist Carolina Velez said, “This effort is very important, because it is our responsibility to support acts of resistance like the one the parents of the Ayotzinapa students have taken since the disappearance.

“Ayotzinapa is the result of a systematic oppression, it is the result of state violence, police brutality and a capitalist system where corporations, organized crime and the govern-

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# 2015 VIRGINIA PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY FOR JOBS, PEACE & JUSTICE!

A report based on the VPA Organizing Committee debriefing held by conference call Jan. 18, 2015

For the seventh year in a row, the Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice succeeded in introducing new and veteran activists to a wide range of issues and struggles, facilitating networking and new alliances across lines of race, sex, gender orientation, age, issues and geography.

Nearly 200 people from around the state attended the 2015 VPA held Saturday, Jan. 10, at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, a historically Black congregation in Richmond's East End.



Photos by Phil Wilayto

**Richmond fast-food worker Lemont Dinkins explains the campaign for \$15 an hour for low-wage workers.**

Starting with a Black Caucus meeting at 8 a.m., the day included eight panel discussions and two plenary sessions. (The complete program, list of endorsers, resolutions passed, and a final report by the 2015 VPA Organizing Committee is posted on the VPA website: [www.vapeoplesassembly.org](http://www.vapeoplesassembly.org))

While all the panels were well-attended, the best-attended were those on police, labor, prisons and economic development.



**World-famous, Fulton Hill-based blues artist Corey Harris performing his original song "I Can't Breathe."**

A particularly inspiring part of the conference was the "Defending Unions & Organizing the Unorganized" panel, which included representatives from Virginia Raise Up, UFCW Local 400 and the Virginia Education Association. Other speakers were Charles Brown, a Newport News worker active in the Our Walmart campaign; Chris Greene, a VCU Arawark worker and supporter of the Raise Up campaign; and Wesley Memorial Pastor Rev. Rodney Hunter, a leading community supporter of labor struggles.

Phen Bowman received a standing ova-

tion after his presentation titled "Experiences as a queer trans man of color at work."

And for the first time, the panel included a written statement from workers behind bars: prisoners at the Buckingham Correctional Center, who examined their status as prisoners working for pennies an hour.

Dozens of people active in the Black Lives Matter movement attended the VPA, including representatives from Blacksburg, Charlottesville and several groups in Richmond.

Organizationally, things generally went smoothly. Having the voting on resolutions during the second plenary instead of at the end of the day meant more people were present to vote, giving the resolutions more meaning. Scheduling 15 minutes between each session meant a smoother transition between events than in past years. The meals were delicious and plentiful, as usual. Day care functioned very well, also as usual. And almost everyone showed a lot of patience and respect to each other during a very busy day.



**Guillermo Zamora of Virginia Raise Up reads a statement from prisoners at Buckingham Correctional Center. (See op-ed on page 9.)**

There also were areas in which we were weak, demonstrating the need for more people to be involved in the planning and organizing. There was only one press release and no media coverage. Plans for a variety of cultural presentations did not materialize, although an evening performance by world-famous, Richmond-based blues artist Corey Harris ended the conference in a very beautiful way.

Financially, the conference did well, taking in about \$600 more than was spent, meaning there will be enough seed money to launch the 2016 VPA.

One new development was the formation of a Continuations Committee, made

up of the people who were most responsible for organizing the 2015 VPA: Margaret and Daniel Breslau from the Coalition for Justice in Blacksburg; Weluna Queen Earth of the Nation of Gods and Earths in Richmond; Cassandra Shaw, an organizer with Virginia Raise Up; and Ana Edwards, Kat McNeal and Phil Wilayto from the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality.



**Walmart worker Charles Brown of Newport News talks about his work in the Our Walmart campaign.**

This committee will be responsible for initiating the organizing of the 2016 VPA and recruiting more people for that effort. It will also produce a monthly VPA email newsletter, promoting and reporting on campaigns that were endorsed Jan. 10. The committee members also will hold a monthly conference call to discuss how the VPA can further support these campaigns and help grow the progressive movement in Virginia.

To contact the VPA, email [vapeoplesassembly@gmail.com](mailto:vapeoplesassembly@gmail.com) or call 804-644-5834.



**Defender Kat McNeal gives a report on the anti-woman TRAP regulations struggle.**

## by the numbers

A total of **188 people** registered at the conference. A little more than half – 104, or 55 percent – came from Richmond. The second largest number, eight attendees, was from Henrico County, which borders Richmond. Blacksburg, about five hours away, was third, with seven. Other attendees came from another 15 Virginia cities. There also were eight from Washington, D.C., six from Charlotte, Durham and Greenville in North Carolina and one from Mt. Ranier in Maryland.

A total of **42 organizations** were represented, with **34 people** – nearly one in five – identifying themselves **with labor organizations**: 16 from United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400, 16 from Virginia Raise Up and one each from Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Our Walmart campaign.

Other groups that were well-represented included the Nation of Gods & Earths, also known as the Five Percenters (14); Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality (10); Wayside Center for Popular Education (7); Virginia Sierra Club (5); Collective X (4); Southerners On New Ground (SONG) (4); and three each from Black Action Now, Blacksburg Coalition for Justice, Rag & Bones Bicycle Cooperative, Richmond Jericho and Richmond Peace Education Center.

Black organizations present included AfroCity Tours, African Awareness Association, African Film Festival, All as One, Black Action Now, Identity Project, Richmond Branch NAACP, Nation of Gods & Earths, Pan African Unity Network, Resource Information Help for the Disadvantaged (R.I.H.D.) and Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church.

The list of endorsers also showed broad support: **47 endorsers**, representing 11 cities & three counties. **Ten resolutions** were submitted by eight endorsers. All were adopted, nine of them unanimously, and are now posted on the VPA website. (<http://www.vapeoplesassembly.org>)

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**Shockoe** Continued from page 1

At the end of the four meetings, the suggestions will be consolidated into one proposal, which will then be voted on at a fifth, citywide meeting.

Then this alternative proposal will be formally presented to Richmond City Council, which will be asked to take concrete steps to implement it.

If council refuses, then we will announce plans to make the planned desecration of Shockoe Bottom the major media issue during the UCI bike races in September – in front of 450,000 visitors and 300 million television viewers.

The Defenders and our allies urge all our friends, supporters and the public at large to attend the Community Brainstorming Sessions, offer your ideas, and work with us to make them reality.

Win or lose, our descendants will know that, when Black History was challenged on our watch, we stood up for them and for the Ancestors.

In the three decades before the Civil War, up to 350,000 people were sold out of Virginia to the plantations of the Deep South.

Richmond's Shockoe Bottom was the center of this trade.

In fact, it was the hub of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

It's sacred ground that should be properly memorialized, not used for playing sports.



Photo courtesy National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Richmond advocates for Shockoe Bottom are receiving support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which invited them to meet Sept. 30 in Washington, D.C., with experts in various preservation fields.**



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**As public awareness of the importance of Shockoe Bottom grows, more and more people are taking up the cause of reclaiming this sacred ground. Above, local Black activist groups conduct a tour of the Bottom on Feb. 28.**

**SHOCKOE BOTTOM CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE**

**PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Mon., March 16**  
to announce the Shockoe Bottom campaign.  
Noon, in front of Richmond City Hall  
900 E. Broad St.

**COMMUNITY BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS**

**WEST END**  
**Wed., March 18, 6:30-8:30 pm**  
Humphrey Calder Community Center  
414 North Thompson St.

**EAST END**  
**Fri., March 20, 6:30-8:30 pm**  
Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church  
1720 Mechanicsville Turnpike

**NORTH SIDE**  
**Sat., March 21, 3:30 - 5:30 pm**  
Dream Academy  
North Avenue & Brookland Park Blvd.

**SOUTH SIDE**  
**Fri., March 27, 6:30-8:30 pm**  
Taza Coffee 'n Crème  
5047 Forest Hill Ave.

**RICHMOND LIBERATION & EMANCIPATION DAY ACTIVITIES**

**Fri., April 3 - 4-11 pm**  
Shockoe Bottom  
(See display ad on back page)

**CITYWIDE MEETING**  
to ratify the Alternative Proposal for Shockoe Bottom  
(Time & Place to be announced.)



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# In our opinion

## Attacking Obama

President Barack Obama is a faithful servant of U.S. imperialism who is responsible for mass death and destruction in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, while ignoring the economic devastation of Black communities here at home.

And if he puts on a pair of jeans and a hoodie and walks into the wrong neighborhood in Washington, D.C., he’s going to get stopped by the police.

It’s this dual nature of having a Black president that the still-predominantly white anti-war movement has yet to understand.

When nationally known peace activists declare that there is no difference between Obama and Bush, they are telling the Black and other communities of color that there is no difference between white antiwar activists and white people as a whole, and no reason for people of color to join their movement.

On the one hand, the election of the first Black person to be U.S. president was a tremendous victory for the African-American community and for all poor and working people. Holding any position in society off-limits to people of color is not only wrong, but it allows the ruling class to perpetuate racial divisions among working people, which makes it much harder for us to unite and fight the country’s 1%.

On the other hand, having a Black president actually has made it easier for that 1% to promote its policies of war and occupation abroad and class and racial oppression here at home.

Race and class – race and class. It ought to be possible for progressives to hold those two ideas in their heads at the same time.

Yes, we should condemn President Obama as an imperialist warmonger. And at the same time, we must defend him from racist attacks, because allowing any such an attacks against any Black person makes it that much easier for the racists to attack all Black people and all people of color.

That’s something the Black community understands all too well.

It’s time everyone else did too.

### Lessons from Wisconsin

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker is emerging as a serious contender to be the Republican candidate for president in 2016. This not good news for working people.

Walker, heavily backed by the arch-right-wing billionaire Koch Brothers, is known as the guy who in 2011 succeeded in pushing a bill through the state legislature that essentially gutted union rights for public-sector workers.

This March 9, he followed up by signing legislation outlawing mandatory union dues for private-sector unions, something he previously had denied he would ever do, thus making Wisconsin the 25th state to become so-called “right-to-work.”

Far from being a local issue, these anti-union attacks have been the stimulus for similar laws around the Midwest, once a relative labor stronghold.

And now Walker is going national.

This didn’t have to be.

This editor traveled to Wisconsin during the big labor upsurge in 2011, bringing a delegation of activists from the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), who provided the first organized solidarity shown to that struggle by the antiwar movement.

At that time, it was city, county and state workers who were under attack, but all rank-and-file union members across the region recognized the danger.

Some 150,000 union members and their supporters surrounded the State Capitol in Madison. Thousands were inside the Capitol Building itself, occupying it, organizing their own little union city in the rotunda and hallways.

The president of the Madison police union gave a speech inside the rotunda, calling on all off-duty city cops to come and join the occupiers – to protect them against police attacks!

The mood was confident, defiant. Black, Latino, Asian, American Indian and white workers, women and men, young and old, native and foreign-born, LGBTQ and straight stood side-by-side in real unity.

Messages of solidarity were coming in from all over the world, including from pro-democracy protesters in Egypt.

Then, in an electrifying move, the Madison Central Labor Council sent a memo to its affiliates asking them to prepare their members for a general strike.

See **WISCONSIN** on **PAGE 9**



# Letters to the Editor

### Costs of Dominion’s pipeline

As we look at the environmental havoc invoked on the Commonwealth since colonization, we should learn from those mistakes or we shall be doomed to repeat them.

The Monacan tribe of Virginia has come out in opposition to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which is proposed to inch staggeringly close to ancient above-ground burial mounds, if not on top of them.

A 75-ft-wide path will clear-cut all life for 550+ miles. Currently 177,000 acres of land in George Washington Natural Forest are reserved for fracking. Pipelines have already caused over 10,000 accidents, 373 deaths, 1,422 injuries and over \$6 billion in property damages.

According to research done by Dhyani Simonini, a member of the Eastern Lenape nation living in nearby Buckingham county, these burial mounds can be found from as early as the late Woodland period (approximately 900 A.D.). They can be found in high concentration in the Wingina region, where monuments for 50 to 100 people were buried.

Similarly, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is expected to disrupt many cemeteries for enslaved peoples and their descendants. Enslaved peoples were not always offered the same dignified burials as we see in places like Hollywood Cemetery, often buried in unmarked graves. Could we imagine a pipeline carrying fracked natural gas disturbing Hollywood Cemetery or Monument Avenue?

In this moment we must not only worry about the past, but also worry about current and future generations. Rev. James Rose is from Nelson County and has seen how African-American and low-income residents of Nelson County “have been targeted” and could be disproportionately affected by the pipeline construction.

If the Hampton Roads region is second only to coastal Louisiana for vulnerability to climate change, should we wait for another Hurricane Katrina? Should we wait for an oil spill off the coast or a pipeline explosion in the mountains? Should we wait for a worsening of the asthma that disproportionately affects African-American and Native-American children?

Do we really believe that #blacklives-matter? Do we recognize and respect in-

igenous Virginians and the indigenous environmental movement in #idlenomore?

Vanessa Nunes  
RICHMOND

On behalf of Richmond People’s Climate March and JusticeRVA

### Not on our fault line

The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club has steadfastly opposed the construction of a third nuclear reactor at the North Anna Power Station in Louisa County since Dominion first applied for an Early Site Permit in 2003. Despite many delays, it now appears that Dominion is moving forward with an expansion of nuclear power in Central Virginia, which will cost billions of dollars, endanger residents, and threaten the environment.

Last autumn, the Sierra Club organized a coalition of environmental groups known as “Not on Our Fault Line.” We sent a letter to the governor, General Assembly members, the NRC and Dominion executives asking them to abandon plans for building this new reactor. On March 11 coalition members demonstrated their opposition outside Dominion headquarters on the fourth

anniversary of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan.

The Sierra Club and its allies oppose the expansion of nuclear power at North Anna because it is too risky, too expensive and too dangerous:

Too Risky: North Anna Power Station is located on an active earthquake fault. After an earthquake in 2011, both existing reactors were shut down for more than three months. Recent maintenance problems (damaged fuel rods, leaks) may be related to this quake. Virginia needs a reliable and resilient supply of electricity.

Too Expensive: The estimated cost of this reactor is more than \$10 billion. Investing this money in efficiency, solar and wind energy will generate more electricity, create longer term jobs across the state and be much better for the environment.

Too Dangerous: Building a new reactor on a known active fault line endangers the population of central Virginia. The reactor and the tons of radioactive waste stored in cooling pools and casks are vulnerable to earthquake damage and a terrorist attack.

To learn more about how you take action on this issue, please go to our website at <http://vasierraclub.org>.

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### The Virginia Defender

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# What is the relationship between prisoners and workers in a global economy?

By Dale Pughsley

On Monday, Dec. 22, 2014, my friend Cross and I walked around the rec yard discussing his medical care. Cross has been receiving treatment at the UVA medical center for a rare disease called sarcoidosis. Sarcoidosis is an inflammatory disease caused by an adverse reaction by your immune system to some mixture of pathogens.

On this particular day, Cross had asked me to meet him outside to talk. Every so often the pressure of living in prison with a potentially life-threatening illness places upon him the need to vent. When those moments arrive, I mostly just walk with him and listen as he communicates the strain of living with his condition.

However, that day was different. On that day Cross told me that he'd lost vision in his left eye and he was afraid that he might lose vision in his right eye. Cross is scheduled to be released from prison in October of 2015, and because his release date is so close he's a prime candidate for a medical pardon.

But Cross doesn't want to be pardoned.

In fact, Cross isn't even sure he wants to be released next year ...

Because Cross won't be able to afford the care he currently receives once he's released.

I was asked, what is the connection between the labor struggle and the role of prison in the global economy?

Well, in Virginia there are an estimated 30,000 prisoners in the prisons on any given day. Roughly seven out of 10 of those prisoners are African American.

Approximately 95 percent of all prisoners in Virginia are male. So what you have is a prison system in Virginia made up of mostly Black men. Now, Black men make up about 60 percent of the state's prison population. Sixty percent of those are Black men in their prime, between the ages of 18 and 40.

This conflates with the 45 percent school drop-out rate among African-American men.

Add to that, African-Americans as a whole are much more likely to experience living in highly concentrated areas of poverty, compared

to every other racial group in the state. Now, the mixture of poverty and lack of education, naturally, is an antecedent of crime.

Black men and women traditionally have provided Virginia with its largest source of menial skill labor. This traces back to 1619. Today, however, menial skill labor is becoming less useful in Virginia. Free trade, combined with technological advancement, is making all of us young Black men in here useless to the global economy.

Simply put, we don't have any job skills that can be used.

Now, we are still valuable as consumers in the global economy, because we still have family and friends who will give us money. Add to that the Virginia tax dollars that finance prison slave-wages through the so-called work programs.

These work programs are supposed to help prisoners develop the sense of responsibility that comes from having a job and contributing to the daily operations of this penal society. So guys work as education aides, treatment aides, food-service workers, yard crew workers, recreation crew workers and here at Buckingham there's a sheet-metal shop.

Now, combined, there are about 480 workers here on any given day, making between \$0.27 and \$0.70 an hour. Most guys are capped at 30 hours a week, so the average monthly expenditure on the jobs program by the state is, roughly, \$23,500 – or about \$48 per worker.

After the state takes 10 percent of your income (for your supposed "re-entry fund"), we're left with about \$43.20 as disposable income.

Now, beginning in the mid '90s, Virginia switched to a mass incarceration criminal justice model. They abolished parole and mandated that all prisoners serve a minimum of 85 percent of their sentences. At the same time, they built four super-maximum security prisons (Red Onion, Wallen's Ridge, Sussex I and Sussex II State Prisons) that cost taxpayers more than \$100 million each.

Within the system, the Department of Corrections switched from an old to a new penology strategy and implemented the phrase "controlled movement" into the Virginia DOC. This was just code for their mission to stabilize the prison population as they transformed us into a market.

The VA DOC was beginning to privatize prison services such as commissary, medical, food service, telecommunications, etc., and they needed prisoners and contractors both to be able to operate in a safe and secure environment. Thus, you have the implementation of so-called "controlled movement."

Now, almost immediately in the first five years of this strategy – from 1996 to 2000 – the VA DOC began a campaign of labeling formerly approved property items such as jewelry, watches, tennis shoes, 13" television sets, etc., as contraband. In some instances, they confiscated the items guys had and in others they just stopped allowing us to purchase the items.

Once this overhaul was complete, the new contractors were allowed to resell us generic versions of these same items, at a higher price. For example, we used to be able to order tennis shoes from an outside vendor, but we weren't allowed to spend more than \$50 for a pair of shoes. Now we're only allowed to purchase shoes from commissary – which is contracted by the Keefe Corp. – and they sell us shoes that are between \$60 and \$100.

So what this highlights is that the prison-industrial complex today isn't concerned so much with creating a viable labor market in so much as it is a viable consumer market.

However, labor struggles and prisoner struggles intersect, because of globalization.

Modern economic forces such as automation, digitization and outsourcing are making low- and even medium-skilled labor useless in so-called modern societies with developed economies. This puts so many people in a position where crime is increasingly becoming the only option for basic survival.

Once you're caught, you'll be placed in a



draconian penal colony – where those corporatists who lobby to keep you in here because they fear your existence in society can sell you products.

As the Black male population in our society is properly contained, others labeled as potential threat groups will become the primary target for containment. This is, the Latino immigrant population along with Black women and the emerging poor white populations.

This is the connection between the role of prison and labor struggles in the global economy. The fact is that America's 400 wealthiest people have wealth equivalent to the bottom 150 million people. As the income inequality gap continues to widen, labor opportunities and wages will decrease. At the same time, prisons – acting as containment centers to control threats – will increase.

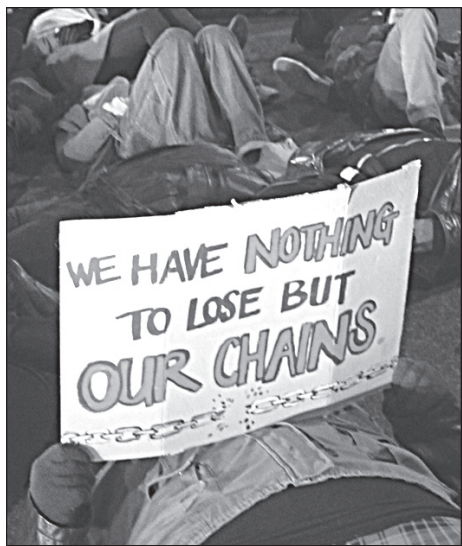
As for my good friend Cross, his story highlights the burden placed on some people by the behavior of the greedy segment of our society. What happens when profits are placed before justice is you have men in prison terrified of leaving for fear they'll be unable to continue to afford their treatment.

More than 50 million Americans live in poverty. These people are both unemployed and underemployed, unable to earn a living wage at all. Everyday, we, the poor and working-class populations, seem to be getting larger. And we are the threat the wealthiest among us hope to contain with their prisons.

This is why we must unite!

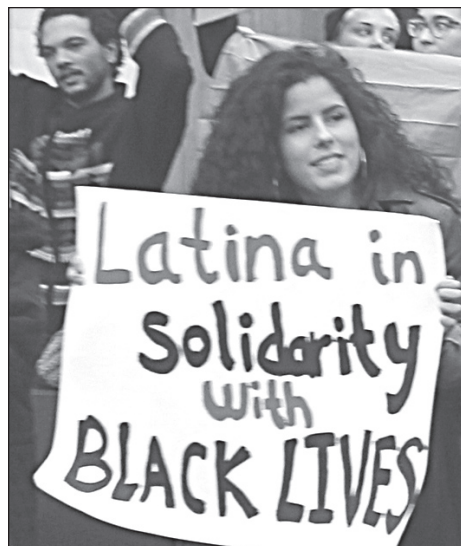
*Dale Pughsley is incarcerated at the Buckingham Correctional Center in Dillwyn, Va. Dale's analysis was read at the "Defending Unions & Organizing the Unorganized" panel at the 2015 Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice.*

## More moments from the #BlackLivesMatter movement



Photos by Phil Wilayto

One of several protests in which demonstrators conduct a "die-in" in the street, blocking traffic while holding signs, often with the names of police victims.



Members and supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement disrupt the first meeting of Richmond City Council in 2015. Solidarity was the watchword.



Black-led mobilizations against police shootings have inspired actions across the country. Here a supporter joins a protest at 9th and East Marshall streets.

### Wisconsin

Continued from page 1

It's been so long since we've had a general strike anywhere in this country that they sent out literature from the Canadian labor movement.

The rank-and-file were for it – you could feel it in the crowds at the Capitol.

But the AFL-CIO leadership, unable to think about carrying the fight to a higher level, put the kibosh on that idea.

Instead, it steered the Wisconsin labor movement into a recall campaign against Gov. Walker.

In doing so, it moved the fight from a battlefield where we could have won to the vastly uneven playing field of electoral politics.

Predictably – incredibly predictably – the Koch Brothers poured millions into the campaign and Walker survived the recall attempt, which greatly strengthened him and greatly weakened the entire labor movement.

Now a large section of the powerful right-wing establishment wants him to be president.

The labor movement everywhere needs to go back and examine the lessons of this historic defeat and come to the proper conclusion: Our only hope lies in mobilizing labor's rank-and-file and in organizing new members from the vast layers of low-paid workers.

And always, always, always educate the members about the need to really struggle, including practical and strategic lessons on how to conduct a strike, including a general strike.

Anything less, and we may as well just toss out our union cards, bow our heads and put our hands into the shackles ourselves.

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**Byrd House Market**  
May 5, 2015  
3:30-7 pm  
[byrdhousemarket.blogspot.com](http://byrdhousemarket.blogspot.com)

**Community Consultations on The Well**  
A series of learning and feedback sessions  
**April 18, May 2, May 16 & May 30, 2015**  
The Planning Committee of the East Marshall Street Well Project invites you to attend all four consultations and engage in the community process for memorializing remains uncovered from the 19th century well on the VCU Medical College of Virginia Campus in Richmond. Saturdays, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School, 1000 Mosby Street, Richmond, VA 23223.  
**[www.emsw.vcu.edu](http://www.emsw.vcu.edu) or call 804-828-1200**



## international &amp; antiwar news

# How should progressives view the nuclear negotiations with Iran?

By Phil Wilayto

As of Defender press time, Iran and the so-called G5+1 countries – U.N. Permanent Security Council members China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, plus Germany – are headed for an end-of-March deadline for coming to an agreement over Iran's nuclear program. The latest news report have it that the talks may be extended into April.

On the surface, the negotiating issue is this: How far must Iran scale back its nuclear program in order to convince the Western countries to lift the economic sanctions that, along with falling oil prices, are weakening the Iranian economy?

The G5+1 governments charge that Iran's ostensibly peaceful program to produce nuclear energy also puts it into position to produce nuclear weapons anytime it makes the decision to do so and they have declared that that situation must be prevented at all costs.

Meanwhile, Iran's government insists that it has no plans or desire to build a nuclear bomb and that all its efforts are aimed at simply producing nuclear power for peaceful energy needs.

## Why negotiate now?

The truth is that the Obama administration wouldn't be negotiating with Iran at all if it didn't need that country of nearly 81 million people in the fight against real enemies: ISIS, al-Qaeda and their related extremist organizations.

Fatigued from endless wars, the U.S. public has made it clear that it does not want to see any more "boots on the ground" in the Middle East. But air power, even pilotless drones, are not enough to stop the desperate fanatics that threaten U.S. control of the region.

Iran isn't pouring troops into Iraq or Syria either, but its expert military advice and influence with determined Shiite militias have become the major factor in blocking the extremist advances.

Without admitting it, the U.S. is now in a de facto military alliance with Iran. Under these conditions, continuing its relentless march toward military confrontation with Iran just would not do.

So Washington negotiates.

Lost in the endless commentaries streaming out of the Big Business media is the incontestable fact that there is not one shred of evidence that Iran is trying or even wants to build nuclear weapons. Nothing.

As a signer of the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran is recognized as having the right to develop nuclear power for peaceful energy purposes. In fact, the treaty says it has a right to expect help from the other signer countries to advance its nuclear program.

And no country has the right to demand that Iran reduce or end its enrichment of uranium as part of its nuclear program, something the U.S. has done for years.

Further, as a signer of the NPT, Iran is subject to inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog. And the U.S. has used its considerable financial and political influence over the U.N. to make sure that Iran is now the most inspected country in the world.

And yet, neither the U.N., the U.S. nor Israel has been able to come up with one

credible shred of evidence that Iran is trying to make a nuclear weapon. In fact, the U.S. even admits that it has no evidence that Iran has even decided it wants the bomb.

Also lost is the fact the the Supreme Leader of Iran, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has issued a fatwa, or binding religious edict, saying that nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam, because they are weapons of mass destruction that kill the innocent as well as aggressors.

During Iran's eight-year war with Iraq, Iranian generals who had previously served under the U.S.-backed Shah implored the first Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to allow them to use chemical weapons and to bomb civilian areas in Iraq, as Iraq's Saddam Hussein was doing to Iran.

Khomeini said no, that those tactics kill the innocent as well as the guilty and so were forbidden under Islam. Saddam continued to gas and bomb Iranian towns and cities, but the United Nations reported they could find no evidence of Iran responding in kind.

In addition to being an attempt to undermine a sitting president during delicate negotiations with a country seen as an adversary, these hostile and even subversive actions are also a reflection of the neocons' near-physical inability to accept the fact that a Black man is occupying the previously all-White House, no matter how pro-imperialist his policies may be.

## How should progressives view the negotiations?

First of all, we should state loudly and clearly that Iran not only has the right to develop nuclear power for peaceful energy purposes – a right the world recognizes under the NPT – but that it also has the right to develop nuclear weapons for its own defense.

After all, all of the G-5 countries have nuclear weapons, as do India, Israel, Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea.

(Of these last four countries, only North Korea is a signatory to the NPT. That's why

You just can't trust those rouge Iranians.

But if Iran isn't building a nuclear bomb, if it believes it would be immoral to do so and it's the Western powers and Israel that are threatening a nuclear strike against Iran, what is the whole struggle all about?

## Besides oil, Iran has influence

The answer is simple, and it's the neocons who are most honest about admitting it.

Despite being hit with the most intensive campaign of sanctions in modern times, Iran's 36-year-old government is internally strong and regionally influential. Even with a battered economy, it is playing a far more influential role in the Middle East than is the U.S. As stated above, it's the major factor in blocking the reactionary ISIS organization's advances in Iraq and Syria.

Far from being diplomatically isolated, as U.S.-North Americans are told, Iran has developed strong economic and diplomatic ties with a broad range of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Its capital Tehran regularly hosts government leaders and international conferences. It's the U.S. and Israel that are both hated and feared by the broad masses of the Middle East.

As a long-term goal, the U.S. would like to regain the control over Iranian oil that it lost in 1979 when its puppet Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was overthrown in a popular revolution.

As a more immediate goal, it wants to curb Iran's influence in the oil-rich Middle East, an influence that has grown into a major obstacle to U.S. hegemony, or control, in the region.

If Iran can successfully negotiate with the Western powers and find some significant relief from the U.S.- and U.N.-imposed economic sanctions, without compromising its fundamental right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful energy purposes, that would be a positive development.

It would relieve some pressure on the Iranian economy, which in turn would reduce internal tensions within the country. It would allow Iran to grow itself economically and diplomatically, and so become an even greater factor in blocking U.S. control of the region – control that would only result in even greater robbing of the peoples of the Middle East of their natural resources for the benefit of U.S. corporations.

To the extent that this is the scenario that emerges from the Geneva talks, progressives should support Iran's right to engage the enemy over a negotiating table rather than on a battlefield.

But if the neocons in D.C. are able to sabotage the talks, impose new sanctions and intensify their calls to attack a country that poses no threat to the American people, but only to U.S. corporate interests, then progressives here must be ready to again take to the streets to demand:

**No war, no sanctions,  
no internal interference  
against Iran!**

**Money for Jobs, not for War!**

Virginia Defender Editor **Phil Wilayto** is the author of "In Defense of Iran: Notes from a U.S. peace delegation's journey through the Islamic Republic."

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Transportation from Virginia is being organized by the Defenders, a founding member of UNAC and a member of the conference organizing committee.

To reserve a seat or to volunteer to help,  
call 804-644-5834 or email DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

## Neocons vs. neoliberals

Meanwhile, back in Washington, a fierce debate is raging between the neoconservatives, who believe the U.S. must control the world through brute force, used unilaterally if necessary, and the neoliberals, who believe the U.S. can control the world through the use of strategic alliances and economic pressures, backed up by the threat to use force, if necessary.

So while President Obama's Secretary of State, John Kerry, negotiates in Geneva, right-wing Republicans back home are pushing for even more sanctions against Iran and a Republican leadership invites Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak to Congress, without first consulting the president, a serious break with established protocol.

(In a show of loyalty to the president, 55 Democrats in Congress refused to show up for Netanyahu's speech, among them Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine (D) and Rep. Bobby Scott (D-3rd District). Virginia's Sen. Mark Warner (D) joined Virginia Republicans in attending the speech.)

In an even more outrageous move, 47 Republican senators on March 9 sent a letter to Iran's leadership advising them against signing any nuclear deal with President Obama.

There is now some question as to whether the letter violates an 18th century law forbidding such correspondence with a foreign power.

Israel's nuclear arsenal never gets inspected.

Even more interesting is the fact that India, a non-signer, is nevertheless a member of the IAEA and so regularly inspects Iran for possible violations of the NPT.)

So why is it all right for the U.S., U.K., Russia, China, France and Israel to have nuclear weapons, but not Iran?

Because, we are told, Iran is a "rogue" state. And if it had nuclear weapons, it would use them.

But the only country ever to use nuclear weapons is the United States, and that was only when it was the only country that had them. Once the Soviet Union had the bomb, it was never used again. (The military doctrine was called MAD, for Mutually Assured Destruction. Such jokesters, those Cold War politicians.)

Furthermore, the U.S. has been in a near-continual state of war since its founding, most of them wars of aggression, while Iran hasn't attacked another country with any kind of weapons in more than 200 years. It even stayed neutral during World Wars I and II.

But labeling Iran as a "rouge" country serves both the neocons and the neoliberals very well. What does it matter that Iran denies it is building a bomb? Rouge countries lie. What does it matter that it says it has no territorial designs on other countries? It's rouge. And how could you trust Iran to abide by any agreement that might come out of Geneva.? You can't.



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In the event of any military attack on

## IRAN

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

**Teens, ages 12-19: Come to the Richmond Peace Education Center's annual Youth Peace Summit.**

**April 25, 10 am-4 pm**  
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700 E. Belt Blvd.

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**Richmond Peace Education Center**



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

... is published quarterly on the first Thursday of the month, starting in February. 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 and call ahead to make sure the information listed is 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.

NATIONAL

Sat., March 21 – **SPRING RISING: AN ANTIWAR INTERVENTION IN D.C.** - Noon: Rally at Lafayette Park in front of the White House. 1 pm: March from the White House, through Chinatown to the Capitol. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/430232700485435>.

Fri, May 8 - Sun., May 10 – **“STOP THE WARS AT HOME & ABROAD!”** - National conference for social justice & anti-war activists, hosted by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), Secaucus, NJ. Information: [www.unaconference2015.org](http://www.unaconference2015.org). (See box on page 10.)

Wed., May 13 - **MOVE ANNIVERSARY EVENT** – 30th anniversary of the bombing of the MOVE house on Osage Ave., Philadelphia. Information: <http://onamove.com/30-years-of-philly-bombing-imprisonment-of-the-move-9>.

RICHMOND - ONGOING

**“TALK TO THE EDITOR”** – Live call-in show with Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto. Every first Monday of the month, 2-3 pm, on WCLM Radio. 1040 AM in Richmond or online at: [wclmradioonline.com](http://wclmradioonline.com). Call-in number: 804-231-7685 or -2186.

**RENEGADE FARMERS MARKET** – Tuesdays, 3 - 5:30 pm through April. “The freshest and localest foods” and Richmond’s only community-center-based market. Idlewood Ave. & So. Linden St. 23220. Information: (804) 643-2717; [ByrdHouseMarket@gmail.com](mailto:ByrdHouseMarket@gmail.com); [ByrdHouseMarket.blogspot.com](http://ByrdHouseMarket.blogspot.com); [www.WBCH.org](http://www.WBCH.org). *Changes to BYRD HOUSE MARKET on Tuesday May 5, 3:30 - 7 pm through October.* SNAP accepted. Children’s activities.

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

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

**RICHMOND CRUSADE FOR VOTERS** – Membership meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. 7 pm, Wilder Library at Virginia Union University. Information: [rcfv1956@gmail.com](mailto:rcfv1956@gmail.com).

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

**ANTI-CONFEDERATE COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION** – Saturdays at noon, outside the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Boulevard. To counter the yahoos who display the racist Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia.

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

RICHMOND EVENTS

Sat., March 14 – **COMPOSTING & GROWING WORMS** – Presentations by Bruno Welsh, Founder of CompostRVA, and



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Dennis Williams, Tricycle Gardens. 11 am - 12:30 pm, Blanton House, 700 Blanton Ave. Part of the 2015 Urban Agriculture Lecture Series of the Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities. Information: <http://www.richmondgov.com/parks>.

Sun., March 15 – **SANKOFA HOUR WITH EVANDRA CATHERINE: BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP** – New VCU student Internet radio show. Sundays at 3 pm. This week’s topic: “Microaggressions.” Airs at 12 pm. [www.WVCW.org](http://www.WVCW.org).

Mon., March 16 – **PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN FOR AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN FOR SHOCKOE BOTTOM** – With Ana Edwards, Chair, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, and a representative of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Noon, in front of Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St. Information: 804-644-5834 or DefendersFJE@hotmail.org.

Monday, March 16 – **REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE & THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN** – With Autumn Reinhardt-Simpson, leader of Richmond Clinic Defense. 6 pm, Helen’s Restaurant, 2527 W. Main St. Sponsored by Alternatives for Progressive Values & Together Virginia.

Tues., March 17 – **ROLLERSKATE FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE** – A fund raiser for the Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project, which provides funds for low-income women seeking abortions. 7:30 pm, Skateland of Richmond, 5512 Hull St. \$5 admission, \$3 skate rental. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/277734285730559>.

Wed., March 18 – **FAMILY LAW CLASS** – Richmond Attorney Charles Schmidt of the People’s Law of Richmond will teach a Community Law Series class in Family Law, answering questions about divorce, support and more. 5-7 pm, Richmond Public Library, 101 E. Franklin St. FREE. To reserve a seat, call 804-646-7223. Sponsored by the Richmond Public Law Library.

Wed., March 18 – **COMMUNITY BRAINSTORMING SESSION** – To develop an alternative plan for Shockoe Bottom. 6:30-8:30 pm. Humphrey Calder Community Center, 414 North Thompson St. For more information, see story on front page.

Thurs., March 19 – **JUMP** – A short film, followed by Q&A with director Anthony Harper. \$5 minimum suggested donation. Reservations recommended. 7 pm, 220 W. Broad St. Presented by the African Independent Film Festival’s Noir Cinema Series. Information: [www.afrikanafilmfestival.org](http://www.afrikanafilmfestival.org).

Thurs., March 19 – **WE HAVE ALREADY WON: FER-GUSON, FAITH & THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY** – Discussion with the Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Seko, with Zenobia Bey, Jihad Abdulmumit, Iman Shabazz and Richmond community members. 7:30-9:30 pm, Good Shepherd Baptist Church, 1127 N. 28th St. Information: [https://www.facebook.com/events/1571643639749923/?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/events/1571643639749923/?ref=br_tf).

Fri., March 20 – **COMMUNITY BRAINSTORMING SESSION** – To develop an alternative plan for Shockoe Bottom. 6:30-8:30 pm, Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, 1720 Mechanicsville Turnpike. For more information, see story on front page.

Sat., March 21 – **HOW TO PRESERVE FOODS & COOKING WHAT YOU GROW** – Presentations by Cheryl Crawford, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and Ana Edwards, Market Coordinator for Byrd House Farmers’ Market. 11 am - 12:30 pm, Blanton House, 700 Blanton Ave. Part of the 2015 Urban Agriculture Lecture Series of the Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities. Information: <http://www.richmondgov.com/parks>.

Sat., March 21 – **#ALLBLACKLIVESMATTER: INCLUSIVITY IN THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT WORKSHOP** – “Through discussions and interactive exercises, we will help explore how to understand and incorporate ALL BLACK LIVES within the #BlackLivesMatter movement and in Black empowerment initiatives. ... Open to everyone committed to Black liberation to provide a comprehensive look at issues of privilege within the Black community and the ways we all benefit from some form of privilege, and how we may be silencing specific groups of people by not understanding our privilege or someone else’s marginalization.” 1-3 pm, location to be announced. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1053863077974046>.

Sat., March 21 – **COMMUNITY BRAINSTORMING SESSION** – To develop an alternative plan for Shockoe Bottom. 3:30-5:30 pm, Dream Academy, North Avenue & Brookland Park Blvd. For more information, see story on front page.

Thurs., March 26 – **BRIDGING THE DIASPORA** – Discussing the relationships between Africans and Black Americans. 6 pm, VCU Academic Student Commons Building, Room 1102, 1000 Floyd Ave. Information: Evandra Catherine at 804-484-0936 or [ecatherine@vcu.edu](mailto:ecatherine@vcu.edu) or vist <http://afam.vcu.edu>.

Fri., March 27 – **COMMUNITY BRAINSTORMING SESSION** – To develop an alternative plan for Shockoe Bottom. Taza Coffee ‘n Crème, 5047 Forest Hill Ave. For more information, see story on front page.

Thurs., April 2 – **DEFINING CONSENT** – A panel discussion with attorneys, law enforcement and community advocates “that will provide a meaningful opportunity to learn about various components of sexual assault.” The first of a series of Brown Bag Lunch Discussions hosted by the YWCA, in partnership with SCAN for Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2015. FREE. RSVP is required. Noon, YMCA Richmond, 6 N. 5th St. Facebook page: “Defining Consent” Panel: SAAM Brown Bag Discussion”

Fri.-Sat., April 3-4 – **RICHMOND LIBERATION & EMANCIPATION DAY** – See display ad on back page.

Thurs., April 2 – **MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL “SLAVE TRAIL” COMMISSION** – 4-5:30 pm, Richmond East District Initiative Government Services Building, 701 N. 25th St. Information: STC Chair Delores L. McQuinn, 804-698-1070 or [deldmcquinn@house.virginia.gov](mailto:deldmcquinn@house.virginia.gov).

Wed., April 15 – **4/15 FOR \$15: RICHMOND’S BIGGEST LABOR MARCH EVER!** – Join fast-food workers with the Raise Up campaign and a coalition of supporting organizations and individuals to demand a \$15-an-hour wage for low-wage workers. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/812482645490263>. See display ad on back page and story on page 5.

Fri., April 17 – **SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT** – Dr. Rick Kittles, world-renowned geneticist, co-founder of AfricanAncestry.com. 5:30 pm, VCU Academic Student Commons Building, 1000 Floyd Ave. Information: Evandra Catherine at 804-484-0936 or [ecatherine@vcu.edu](mailto:ecatherine@vcu.edu) or vist <http://afam.vcu.edu>

Sat., April 25 – **YOUTH PEACE SUMMIT** – “The summit promotes teen leadership, nonviolent conflict resolution, social justice and positive self-expression.” For ages 12-19. FREE. Sponsored by the Richmond Peace Education Center. For more information email: [rypp@rpec.org](mailto:rypp@rpec.org).

Thurs., May 7 – **MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL “SLAVE TRAIL” COMMISSION** – 4-5:30 pm, Richmond East District Initiative Government Services Building, 701 N. 25th St. Information: STC Chair Delores L. McQuinn, 804-698-1070 or [deldmcquinn@house.virginia.gov](mailto:deldmcquinn@house.virginia.gov).

Thurs., June 4 – **MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL “SLAVE TRAIL” COMMISSION** – 4-5:30 pm, Richmond East District Initiative Government Services Building, 701 N. 25th St. Information: STC Chair Delores L. McQuinn, 804-698-1070 or [deldmcquinn@house.virginia.gov](mailto:deldmcquinn@house.virginia.gov).

NORFOLK

Sat., March 14 – **POLICE CORRUPTION & ITS EFFECT ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY** – “National speaker Bro. Seville will be putting the pieces together of how the black family is effected by police brutality and what it does to the family structure for generations. He will also be speaking on his brother, Natural Tahuti’s case and the corruption of the system that has his brother fighting for his life!” Also, Felicia Doss will be speaking about the case of her brother Jemaine, who is serving life-plus-26 years after being wrongfully convicted of a crime he did not commit. 5-7 PM, House of Consciousness, 633 W 35th St. Free. Information: 757-314-1943.

Sun., April 26 – **GOLD** – “The Real Money Group” aka “Karat Bars,” speaking on the importance of investing in gold, how to get it below market value and how the market works. 4-7 pm, House of Consciousness, 633 W 35th St. Free. Information: 757-314-1943.

Sat., May 16 – **MALCOLM X SYMPOSIUM** – Honoring John Henry Clarke in commemoration of Malcolm X. Conducted by H.O.P.E. 2-6 pm, House of Consciousness, 633 W 35th St. Free. Information: 757-314-1943.

ROANOKE - ONGOING

Every third Saturday of the Month – **SILENT PEACE VIGIL** – “To remember the dead and wounded in America’s conflicts abroad.” Noon-1 pm, Market Building, Campbell Avenue & Market Street. Sponsored by Plowshare Peace Center. Information: 540-989-0393 or [plowshare@plowshareva.org](mailto:plowshare@plowshareva.org).

ROANOKE EVENTS

April 11 – **TEEN PEACE JAM - 2015** – “Learn about peace, social justice and youth empowerment.” Music, poetry & more. Free breakfast & lunch. For ages 12-19. 8:30 am - 4 pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, 2015 Grandin Road. Sponsored by Plowshare Peace Center. Information: 540-989-0393 or [plowshare@plowshareva.org](mailto:plowshare@plowshareva.org).

**Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project**

Abortion support in VA

[rrfp.net](http://rrfp.net)  1-888-847-1593

**THE FLYING BRICK LIBRARY**

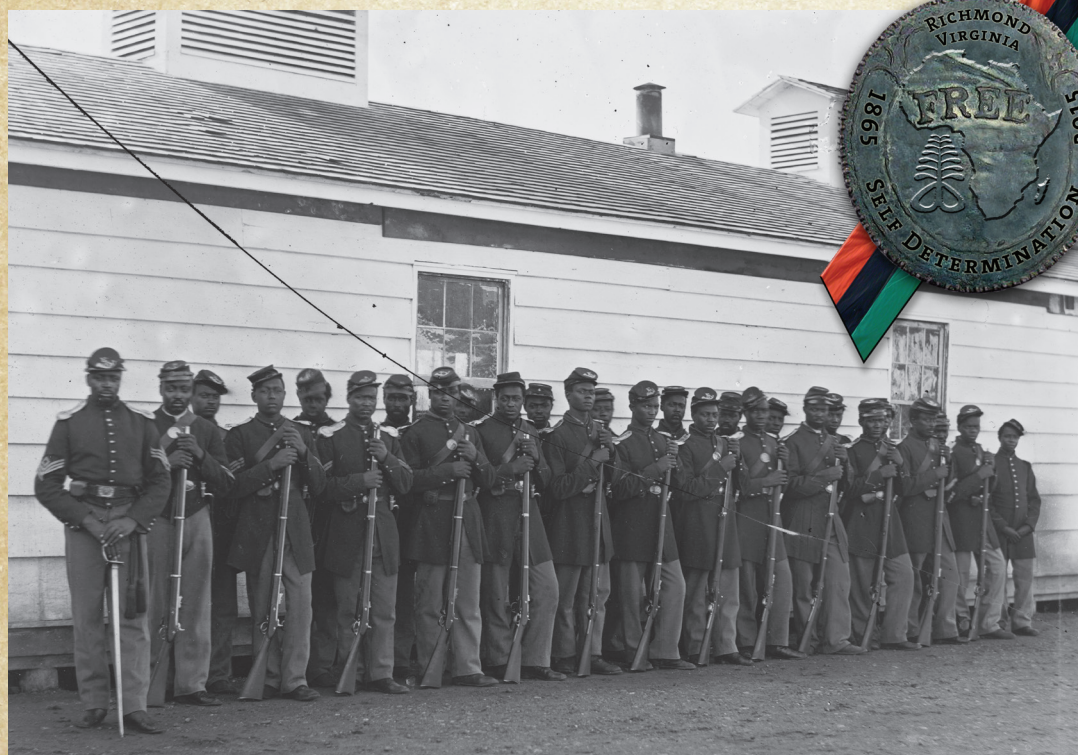
Open by appointment  
**Ellen - 912-541-4234**  
**Nathan - 804-577-7656**

[theflyingbrick@riseup.net](mailto:theflyingbrick@riseup.net)  
**506 SO. PINE STREET, RvA 23220**





# THE PATH TO FREEDOM BURNED THROUGH RICHMOND RICHMOND'S JOURNEY END OF SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR



Friday, April 3, 2015 | 4pm-11pm

## Self Determination

Dance, music, film, rituals and declarations of liberation

Saturday, April 4, 2015 | 6pm-Midnight

## The Future is Now

World music, dance, imagery, and ceremony

Afrikan Arkestra | Afrikana Film Festival | The Beloved Unseen for #untoldrva | The Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia | Defenders' Sacred Ground Project | Drums No Guns | Elegba Folklore Society

## Shockoe Bottom & African Burial Ground

both sides of the 1500 block of East Broad Street

[ONTORICHMOND.COM](http://ONTORICHMOND.COM) or [RICHMONDSJOURNEY.ORG](http://RICHMONDSJOURNEY.ORG) or CALL 1-888-RICHMOND

Sponsored by the Future of Richmond's Past, more than 20 history and cultural organizations in central Virginia

## WORKERS ACROSS VA RISING ON APRIL 15!

5PM MONROE PARK, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA | #FIGHTFOR15

APRIL15.ORG | @RAISEUPFOR15 | FB.COM/RAISEUPFOR15

