

**A national conference: June 16-18
at the Greater Richmond Convention Center:**

STOP THE WARS AT HOME & ABROAD: **Building a Movement Against War, Injustice & Repression!**

See pages 4-5

*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*

D The Virginia DEFENDER

FREE

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Spring 2017

Take down the Confederate statues & build the Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park!

By Phil Wilayto

New Orleans finally has taken down its towering statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

The event was big deal. Lee's was the last of four Confederate-related statues the city has recently removed.

In the decades before the War of Southern Aggression, also known as the Civil War, New Orleans had the country's largest slave-trading district.

Richmond had the second largest. Moreover, Richmond was the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade, supplying the cheapest possible labor to Southern plantation owners in the form of perhaps hundreds of thousands of enslaved human beings - with both Richmond and the slave owners making immense fortunes in the process.

As you may have noticed, Richmond hasn't taken down its deeply offensive display of Confederate statues on Monument Avenue. In fact, unlike in New Orleans and Charlottesville, not a single local politician has even called for them to be removed. Instead, Mayor Levar Stoney and a host of confused liberals are promoting adding "context" to the statues.

Rest assured, the statues will come down. As the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward Justice."

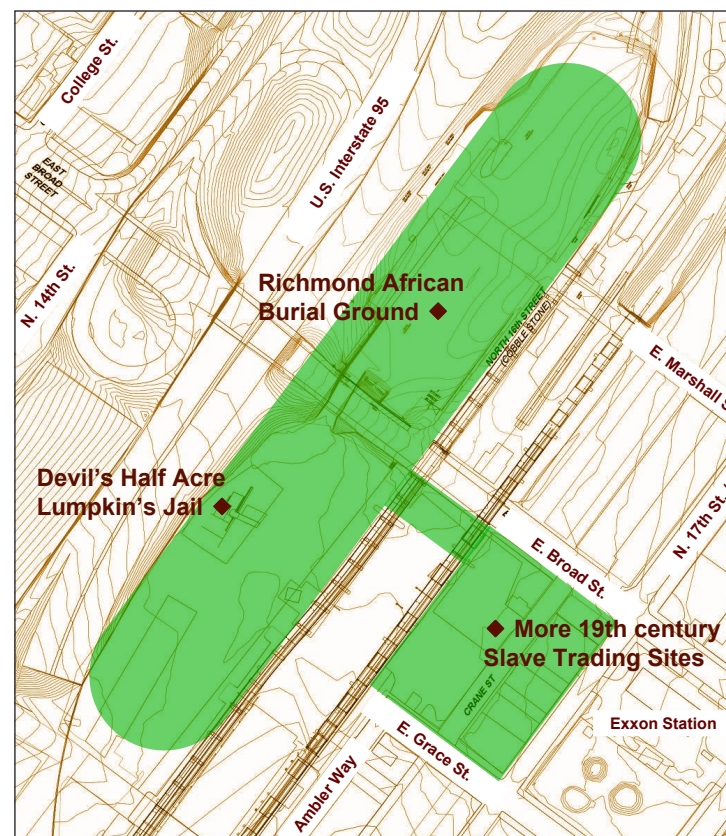
In the meantime, the deeper embarrassment for the City is that the mayor has yet to endorse the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park that could properly tell the story of the suffering, exploitation and resistance that happened there.

Let's be clear: The park would include the "Devil's Half-Acre," once the site of the slave jail owned by Robert Lumpkin, that the City is already committed to memorializing. Also, the African Burial Ground, already reclaimed by a sustained community struggle that forced state-owned Virginia Commonwealth University to remove its offending parking lot. So, all we are really talking about are just two more blocks on the East side of the CSX railroad tracks now mostly occupied by other City-owned parking lots.

The problem, is, those two blocks are coveted by certain downtown "developers" who have been known to be very generous to cooperative politicians.

Mayor Stoney has two important decisions to make: Whether to bow to reactionary neo-Confederates and leave standing the symbols of white supremacy on Monument Avenue, and whether to bow to the developers who are behind the effort to prevent the proper memorialization of Shockoe Bottom.

Stay tuned.



The proposed Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park, in green, would allow a proper memorialization of what once was the epicenter of the U.S domestic slave trade.

"The Confederacy was on the wrong side of history and humanity. It sought to tear apart our nation and subjugate our fellow Americans to slavery. This is the history we should never forget and one that we should never again put on a pedestal to be revered." - New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu on taking down that city's Confederate statues.

community news



VCU WELL PROJECT UPDATE: Members of the of the East Marshall Street Well Project participate in a panel discussion for the IC2RP 0

Family Representative Council give an update on the work The public meeting took place March 28 at the Kontos Medical Building on East Marshall Street in downtown Richmond. Above, from left: -----, -----, Christopher Rasheed, Lillie Estes, Ana Edwards and -----. The well project addresses the issue of the remains of mostly 19th-century Richmonders whose bodies were stolen from local cemeteries and used for medical research and training by the Medical College of Virginia, predecessor to Virginia Commonwealth University's VCU Health system. The remains of the bodies, almost all of which were of people of African descent, were then dropped in a well on MCV property. When they were discovered in 1994, then-VCU President Eugene Trani gave university anthropology staff members one weekend to remove the remains. Bulldozers were used. Trani then ordered the well resealed, along with the rest of the remains. In 2013 the next VCU president, Michael Rao, initiated the Well Project to involve the descendant community in deciding what to do about the well and the remains still buried there. The issue had been dramatized in the 2012 documentary "Until the Well Runs Dry: Medicine and the Exploitation of Black Bodies" by VCU Professor Shawn Utsey. For more information, see: www.emsw.vcu.edu. Photo by meeting participant



Photo by Phil Wilayto

More than 80 people packed Richmond City Council chambers March 27 to advocate for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. The crowd included activists with the Fight for \$15 movement. Shortly after, Mayor Levar Stoney agreed to meet with advocates.

Community pressure convinces Mayor Stoney to meet with Shockoe Bottom advocates

Staff Report

It was the first time any Richmond mayor had agreed to meet with community advocates for Shockoe Bottom.

On April 27, four advocates of a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park took seats at a small conference room table in the office of Richmond's Mayor Levar Stoney. It had taken

nearly three months to make it happen.

When he was running for mayor last fall, Stoney had met with Ana Edwards, Chair of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, and Phil Wilayto, editor of The Virginia Defender newspaper. At that time, Stoney said he supported the "general concept" of a memorial park, specifically a larger memorial than the one-site plan being

USPS disses East End community; Defenders & allies respond

By Phil Wilayto

It was Monday, April 10. I had just gotten back from a trip to D.C. and stopped by the East End post office to pick up the Defenders' mail. We've had a box at the station at 414 N. 25th St. since we started out in 2002.

The station was closed. There had been no advance notice either to the customers or the workers. A sign taped to the front door instructed box holders to pick up their mail at the Montrose Heights branch in Henrico County.

That's 4.5 miles away -just 16 minutes by car, but, according to GRTC public transit, 50 minutes by bus, including 23 minutes of walking, at a cost of \$3.50.

I was, as they say, pissed.

And there just happened to be a TV reporter/cameraman there, recording people's reactions, so I wound up on the evening news ranting about how disrespectful this was to a neighborhood with lots of low-income folks, many of whom don't own cars.

Two days later, a letter was emailed to the Inspector General of the U.S. Postal Service detailing our complaints.

The letter was signed by Dr. Leonard L. Edloe, a longtime local pharmacist, community leader and president of the American Pharmacists Association; the Rev. Rodney Hunter, pastor of nearby Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church and president of the Richmond chapter of

the SCLC; Ana Edwards, chair of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project; and me, as editor of The Virginia Defender.

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, we noted that "the note on the front door, signed by the Montrose Heights manager of customer services, states that 'This change is tentative and will not lead to a formal proposal unless we conclude that it will provide a maximum degree of regular and effective postal services.'

In other words, the branch may never be reopened.

The East End branch is located in a historically low-income, African-American community. Many of the residents who regularly patronize the branch are elderly. Many do not own vehicles. They depend on the branch to receive checks, purchase stamps and money orders to pay bills.

Moreover, this closing follows years of neglect of the building, which is rented from

a private owner who purchased the property two years ago. He was quoted in the Richmond Times-Dispatch as saying "It's like 60 years of deferred maintenance," including major problems with the roof.

Responsibility for this neglect must be shared by USPS management.

In 2015, the building's AC was out for most of an extremely hot summer. It was only when this reporter called the regional USPS office in Baltimore that it was repaired - within two days.

Hours at this branch have been severely reduced. There is no 24-hour access to the lobby where the boxes are located. And, unlike at most city branches, only one postal worker is assigned to staff the customer counter, even though the line of customers often stretches out the door.

I'm writing this story on June 7, so that was nearly two months ago.

As far as we have been able to determine, no repairs have been made to the building.

THE DEFENDERS for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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

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

As we worked around these issues, we learned more and more about the connections between jails, jobs, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, 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, two

websites and three Facebook pages. 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 United National 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 provide for ourselves and our families. If we are unable to work, we have a right to support that allows us to live in dignity. 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-supremacists. Women must be free from physical, cultural and emotional oppression. Children must be free from dangers like lead poisoning, asthma and sexual exploitation. Our youth 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. The descendants of those whose blood, sweat and tears paid cruelly for its development have a right to collective reparations and, as people who struggle every day with ongoing inequality, 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 women, its men, 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.

promoted by then-Mayor Dwight Jones.

On Feb. 5, five weeks after Stoney took office, Edwards sent an email to the new mayor requesting a meeting to discuss the memorial park proposal.

Four weeks passed with no response.

Following the March 7 public meeting of the City's consultant on the Lumpkin's Jail/Devil's Half Acre development project, a story in the Richmond-Times Dispatch reported overwhelming public support at the meeting for the memorial park.

Still no response to the request for a meeting.

Then on March 27, more than 80 memorial park supporters packed Richmond City Council chambers, holding signs calling for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

Three advocates addressed council: the Rev. Rodney Hunter, pastor of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Richmond's East End; Robert Nieweg, field attorney for the D.C.-based National Trust for Historic Preservation; and Edwards.

After the meeting, Times-Dispatch reporter Ned Oliver asked Mayor Stoney why he was ignoring the Defenders' request for a meeting.

The resulting story featured the mayor's response, that somehow he'd missed the invi-

tation and would be happy to meet.

The invitation was sent again.

Ten days later, still no response.

Finally, a telephone call to the receptionist in the mayor's office resulted in acknowledgment of the third meeting request. This time, a meeting date was set.

And so it was that, nearly three months after the original invitation, Lynetta Thompson, former president of the Richmond Branch NAACP; the Rev. Rodney Hunter; Edwards and Wilayto were seated at a table with Mayor Stoney and two of his senior policy advisors, Lisa Speller-Davis and Jonathan Baliles.

Mayor Stoney was asked to consider master planning for Shockoe Bottom, to support legal protection of African Burial Ground through an official "Old and Historic" designation and to pause the SmithGroupJJR's process until a "truth and understanding" process could be held regarding the true history of Shockoe Bottom.

The mayor asked for time to think about the information presented.

When the advocates asked to schedule a follow-up meeting, Stoney referred them to Ms. Speller-Davis.

As of presstime, Edwards was in the process of trying to arrange that meeting.

international news



Anti-fascists protest April 10 outside the Ukrainian Embassy in Bern, Switzerland.



Richmond activists show their solidarity with the anti-fascist struggle in Odessa after staging a militant May Day rally and march to City Hall.

International protests support anti-fascist struggle in Odessa

On April 10, anti-fascist activists across Europe and North America took part in a coordinated campaign in support of the anti-fascist movement in Odessa, Ukraine.

On that day, the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Odessa from Nazi occupation, copies of a letter addressed to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko were delivered to Ukrainian embassies and consulates in 20

cities and 13 countries. The letter called on the president to release all political prisoners and end the repression of anti-fascists in Odessa.

The campaign was coordinated by the Richmond-based Odessa Solidarity Campaign, a project of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).

For more information, visit www.odessasolidaritycampaign.org.

no hay fronteras en la lucha de los obreros



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Supporters of undocumented immigrant Delmy Moran Martinez gather outside the misnamed Richmond Justice Center to demand Sheriff C.T. Woody stop cooperating with ICE.

Staff report

Dozens of supporters of immigrant rights converged June 5 outside the misnamed Richmond Justice Center (city jail) to demand that Sheriff C.T. Woody end all cooperation with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, known as ICE.

The immediate issue was the case of Delmy Moran Martinez, who on April 3 was turned over to an ICE agent by jail authorities hours after receiving a release order from a local judge on a non-immigration issue.

Martinez, 29, an undocumented working mother of three young children, had been arrested April 1 after allegedly being involved in an altercation with a co-worker. She was charged with aggravated assault, a felony. The "weapons" the five-foot woman had allegedly used in the assault were her hands, feet and

fists, according to the police incident report.

Martinez was held two days in the Richmond city jail until the morning of April 3, when she was issued the release order.

But instead of being released, Martinez was held in jail until that evening, when she was interviewed by an ICE officer.

According to the Richmond publication Style Weekly, she then was turned over to the immigration officer's custody, "spent another night at Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail" and then was transported to an ICE processing center in Midlothain before finally being released.

Martinez is now wearing a monitoring ankle bracelet while waiting for a court date on the assault charge. She also faces possible deportation.

The jail protest was called by the immigrant advocacy and defense organization ICE Out of RVA.

Community remembers a strong, loving warrior

Friends, comrades and admirers of Maceo "Omowale" Deane Jr. gathered May 13 at Richmond's African Burial Ground to pay homage to a much-beloved warrior who has joined the ancestors.

Born July 10, 1952, the now President Emeritus of the Afrikan Ancestral Chamber passed on April 1, 2017.

As is stated on the chamber's website, Omowale "... was a man of great love, wisdom and tenacity whose joy will be carried by the many lives he touched."

The outdoor service included traditional libation and drumming and remembrances by those who knew Omowale during his time on Earth.

Among those who paid respects were Janet "Queen Nzinga" Taylor, Dieyah Rasheed, Monica Esparza and Philip "Muzi" Branch, all longtime friends of the deceased.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

A visual tribute to Maceo "Omowale" Deane Jr. at Richmond's African Burial Ground.

You're invited to the 'Stop the Wars at Home' event

**A NATIONAL CONFERENCE HOSTED BY
THE UNITED NATIONAL ANTIWAR COALITION**

**STOP THE WARS AT HOME & ABROAD:
BUILDING A MOVEMENT
AGAINST WAR, INJUSTICE & REPRESSION!**



**The United National
AntiWar Coalition**

UNAC

Join activists from the many domestic and international struggles as we build unity against the Trump Regime and the underlying system responsible for imperialist wars, poverty, racism, sexism, the oppression of LGBTQ people, attacks on Muslims and undocumented immigrants, environmental destruction and all forms of injustice.

June 16-18, 2017

GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER

403 N. 3rd St., Richmond, VA 23219

UNACPEACE@GMAIL.COM  **518-227-6947** 

“National Conference: “Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad!” - UNAC” 

WWW.UNACPEACE.ORG

WWW.UNACCONFERENCE2017.ORG



You can register at the conference, but space is limited so we advise you to register as soon as possible here:

www.unacconference2017.org

General Admission is just \$35 for the 3 days. \$15 for youth and low-wage workers.

Questions? Want to vounteer?

DefendersFJE@hotmail.com

Dear friends,

This is an invitation to join with hundreds of activists from around the United States and many other countries for a conference called "Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad: Building a Movement Against War, Injustice & Repression!" - June 16-18 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

This will be three days of panels, workshops, discussions, a Saturday evening rally with cultural performances and a Sunday march to Richmond's African Burial Ground to declare UNAC's support for the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

The conference is being hosted by the United National Antiwar Coalition, an all-volunteer coalition the Defenders helped found in 2010.

UNAC's two basic principles are opposition to all U.S. wars and interventions and support for the right of all oppressed peoples to self-determination.

Who's coming? More than 100 organizations, with more than 60 speakers, including:

Ajamu Baraka, 2016 Vice Presidential Green Party candidate; Founder, Black Alliance for Peace

Maurice Carney, Executive Direc-



tor, Friends of the Congo

Glen Ford, Executive Editor, Black Agenda Report

Jaribu Hill, Executive Director,
Mississippi Workers Center for Human
Rights

Margaret Kimberley, Editor & Senior Columnist, Black Agenda Report

Ray LaForest, Director, Haiti Support Network

Joe Lombardo, UNAC Co-Coordinator

Ray McGovern, former CIA analyst; Co-Founder, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

Charo Mina-Rojas, Afro-Colombian activist with the Colombian Ethnic Commission for Peace

A Call for Un

All across the United States, people are rising up against the destructive policies of Donald Trump and Congress. Massive protests took place during Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20. The next day millions of women and their supporters turned out in some of the largest mobilizations seen in decades.

From solidarity vigils to clashes in the streets, the people are defiantly saying we will not accept the ultra-reactionary policies spewing forth from the White House.

No wall! No ban! No deportations! No more police murders! No attacks on reproductive freedom! No Dakota Pipeline! No oppression of lesbians, gays, bisexual and trans people! NO WARS!

But the reactionary policies keep coming, while the Democratic Party is trying to position itself as the only viable opposition - the same party that chose as its standard-bearer one of the most despised presidential candidates in recent years, leaving voters with a choice between a racist, misogynist, xenophobic, billionaire bully and a Wall Street-serving war criminal.

There must be an alternative to the neoliberalism of

the Democrats and the nation

We need an independent body to monitor both the economic needs of the country and the escalating attacks on immigrants, women, union members, Muslims, the physically disabled, youth, students, the elderly

And we need to EN
promoted by both major
wars in the Middle Ea
waged during the Obam
against Iran and North K
administration.

If we can build that up, we can unleash the power of the people to make a real difference.

But first we have to know the lines of race, gender, geography, issues. We have to see the form of oppression. We have to see government, under both Democrats and Republicans, is doing in our name to control other countries and how that

Home & Abroad!' conference in Richmond!



Saladin Muhammad, Black Workers for Justice
Malcolm Suber, Take Em Down New Orleans
David Swanson, Co-Founder & Director, World Beyond War
Gail Walker, Executive Director, IFCO / Pastors for Peace
Ann Wright, Ret. U.S. Army Colonel, former diplomat & now active member of Code Pink and Veterans for Peace
Kevin Zeese, Director, Popular Resistance

And we'll have Virginia activists as well, including:

Adeeb Abed, Founder & President, Arab American Association of Central

Virginia

Saba Abed, Co-Founder, Ibn Rushd Cultural Center

Askari Danso, Virginia Prisoner Leader; Co-Host, Sankofa Radio; Columnist, The Virginia Defender

Ana Edwards, Chair, Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project

Rebecca Keel, Southerners On New Ground (SONG)

Lee Robinson, All African People's Revolutionary Party (GC)

Adria Scharf, Director, Richmond Peace Education Center

Carolina Velez, ICE Out of RVA

Whitney Whiting, A leading Community Activist in the campaign to stop the Atlantic Coastal

Pipeline

And a Representative from Raise Up Fight for \$15

Plus speakers from many other countries, including Canada, Colombia, the Philippines, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Ukraine and Venezuela.

Space is limited, so please register as soon as possible on the conference website:

www.unacconference2017.org

If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer to help at the conference, just let us know at:

DefendersFJE@hotmail.com

More than 100 organizations will be represented at the conference, including:

350.org
 Active-ORVA, Richmond VA
 African Awareness Association, Richmond VA
 All-African People's Revolutionary Party (GC)
 African People's Socialist Party
 ANSWER Coalition
 Appeal for Redress
 ATTAC - Hungary
 Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Philippines
 BAYAN Filipino Alliance - USA
 Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace, NY
 Black Solidarity with Palestine
 Black Agenda Radio
 Black Alliance for Peace
 Black Agenda Report
 Black Youth Project 100
 Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network
 Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI)
 Chicago Alliance Against Racism & Political Repression
 Coalition for Justice, Blacksburg VA
 Code Pink
 Colonie des Pionniers de Développement CPD
 Committee Against Plutonium Economics
 Committee to Open the 28 Pages
 Community Organizing Center for Mother Earth
 Community Public Radio with Don DeBar, CPR News
 Democratic Society of America - Richmond
 Denver Peace Council
 Earth Rights Institute
 Electric Nomad Dance, Richmond VA
 Family of Jermaine Doss, Wrongfully Incarcerated Virginia Prisoner, Norfolk VA
 Friends of the Congo
 Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Weapons in Space
 Global Women's Strike
 Green Party of New York
 Haiti Support Network
 Hands Off Syria Coalition
 Ibn Rushd Ibn Rushd Cultural Center, Richmond VA
 ICE Out of RVA, Richmond VA
 IFCO / Pastors For Peace
 Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond
 International Action Center (IAC)
 International League for People's Struggle
 International Longshore & Warehouse Union
 Ithaca Catholic Workers
 It's Our Economy
 IWW Richmond
 Jacksonville Progressive Coalition, FL
 Justice for the Jax5 Case
 Knowdrones.com
 Literary Academy for Dalit of Nepal (LAD- Nepal)
 Lynne Stewart Organization
 Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI)
 Middle East Report & Information Project
 Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights
 Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal
 Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO). Vancouver, Canada
 Movement 4 People's Democracy

National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy
 New Abolitionist Movement
 Nodutdol
 Nuclear Free Takoma Park Initiative, MD
 Odessa Solidarity Campaign
 Pan-African News Wire
 Pan African Revolutionary Socialist Party - Va. Chapter
 Party of Communists USA
 Peace Films
 The Peace Report
 People's Opposition to War, Imperialism, & Racism (POWIR), FL
 People's Organization for Progress (POP), Newark NJ
 Popular Resistance
 Prince George's People's Coalition, MD
 Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia (PCN), Colombia
 Racial Justice Rising, Greenfield, MA
 Raise Up Fight for \$15 (Southern Region)
 Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC)
 Richmonders for Peace in Israel & Palestine
 Rochester Peace Action & Education
 Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, Richmond, VA
 SankofaRadio
 Showing Up for Racial Justice SURJ - Richmond
 Smiles Africa International Youth Development Initiative
 Social Forum of Eastern Europe & Cooperation Between East & South, Wroclaw, Poland
 Socialist Action
 South Asian Fund for Education, Scholarship & Training (SAFEST)
 Southern Christian Leadership Conference - Richmond Chapter
 Southern Human Rights Organizers' Conference (SHROC)
 Southerners on New Ground (SONG), Richmond, VA
 Sugar Shack Alliance
 Syracuse Peace Council
 Talk to the Editor, Richmond, VA
 United Parents Against Lead National
 United Steel Workers Local 8751, Boston MA
 Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones & End the War, NY
 U.S. Friends of the Soviet People
 U.S. Peace Council
 Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity
 Veterans For Peace
 The Virginia Defender newspaper
 Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality
 Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, Richmond VA
 Women Against Military Madness, Minneapolis. MN
 Worker's World Party
 World Beyond War
 Zoom In Korea, New York City, NY

Unity & Action!

onalist-populism of Trump. ent movement to address of poor and working people s on the Black community, s, LGBTQ folks, refugees, and mentally challenged, y, Mother Earth - all of us. D THE WARS that are parties, from the ongoing ast and Northern Africa na years to the threats ore coming from the new

United movement, we can e people in ways that will ow each other, across the ography, age, culture and sitize ourselves to every ave to understand what the emocrats and Republicans, ur sisters and brothers in at affects us here at home.

We need to come together in an action-oriented conference where we can meet each other, learn from each other, support each other, strategize together and leave with a coherent plan for united, effective action.

That's the purpose of the conference "Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad: Building a Movement Against Wars, Injustice & Repression," to be hosted by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) June 16-18 in Richmond, Virginia.

We can do this. The alternative is to keep protesting while the Democrats - funded by the same big banks and corporations as the Republicans - reposition themselves to co-opt our movement and smother it under another sorry choice between the lesser of two evils.

We don't have to choose between cancer and a heart attack - we can decide to live. We don't have to be divided - we can choose unity. We don't have to accept defeat - we can resist and win!

Join us June 16-18 in Richmond, Virginia, as we help forge the broad united front that can mount a real resistance to wars, injustice and repression!

In our opinion

Alex Mejias for the 70th

Back in 1977, a federal civil rights lawsuit filed by Richmond community activist Curtis J. Holt Sr. succeeded in changing the city's at-large voting system for City Council to a larger council with its members elected from nine wards. The result was Richmond's first majority-Black council, which then elected Henry L. Marsh as Richmond's first Black mayor.

The city's virtually all-white corporate establishment, accustomed as it was to controlling city government - as well as pretty much everything else in Richmond - freaked out.

Its solution was to strike up a partnership with the new Black political class. The vehicle was Richmond Renaissance, an alliance in which it was understood that the white corporate and banking establishment would continue to control the city's economy, while African-Americans could have City Hall - and all the relatively limited benefits that come with it.

In time, Richmond Renaissance morphed into Venture Richmond, which modestly describes itself as a "downtown booster" group. But if you look at the list of its board of directors on the organization's website, you'll find a virtual Who's Who of the city's corporate elite - plus just enough Black politicians to facilitate mutually beneficial dialogue.

Over the years, what became known as the Marsh Machine has undergone some changes. Mayor Marsh went on to become Senator Marsh, winding up his political career with an appointment to a six-figure position on the state's ABC board provided by Gov. Terry McAuliffe, the de facto head of Virginia's Democratic Party.

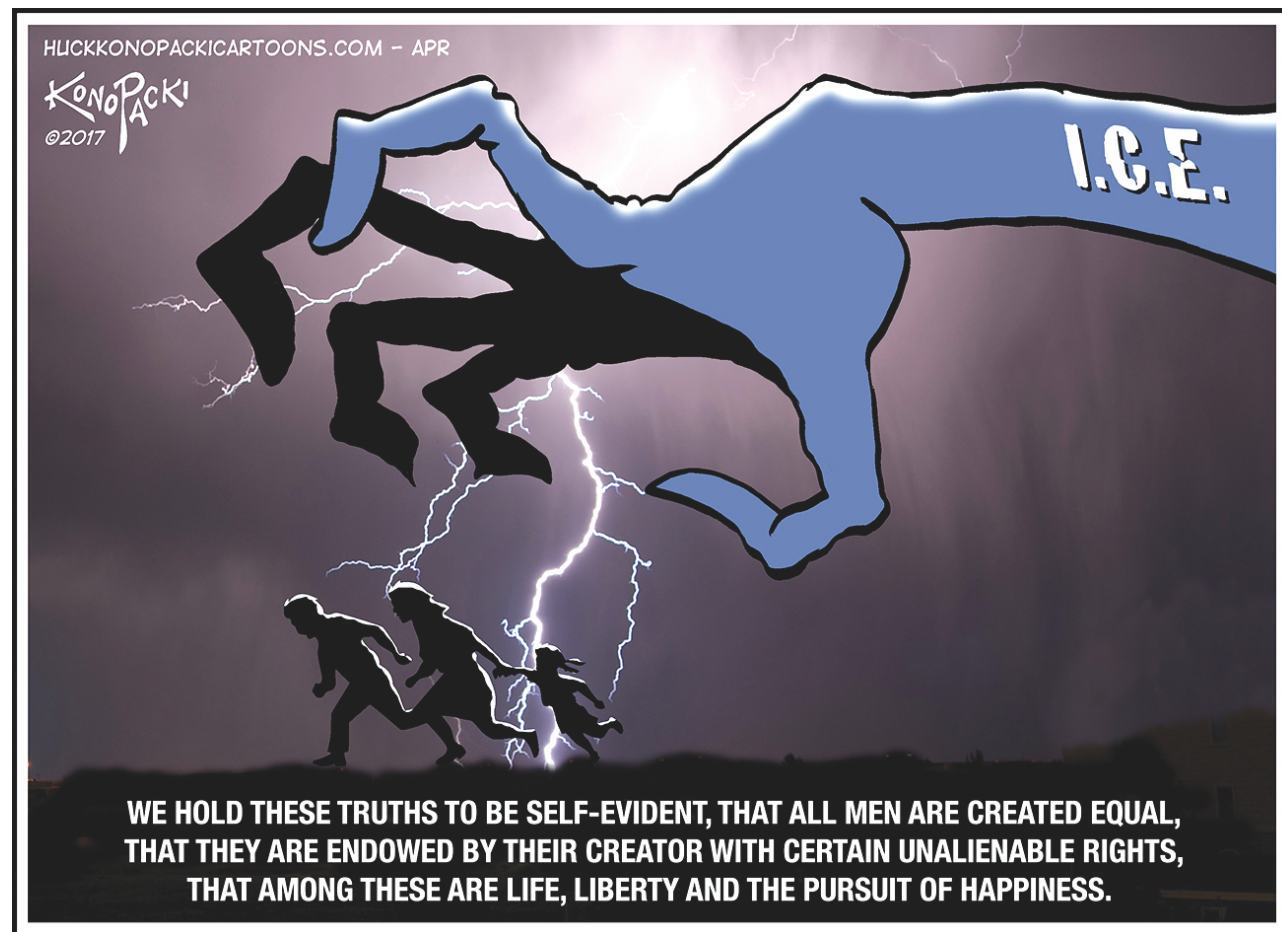
Marsh was later succeeded as mayor by former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder (of painful memory), who then was immediately followed Mayor Dwight Jones, who favored the pomp and circumstance of a much higher office, pushing the limits of fiscal legality and cozy ties to the city's developers.

While Jones left office in January under a multitude of clouds, his legacy lives on. His foremost protege, Del. Delores McQuinn, continues to promote Jones' plan for a small but expensive memorial on the site of the slave jail owned by Robert Lumpkin, while opposing the broader and less expensive Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park - a position that happens to accommodate the developers' profit-motivated plans for the Bottom.

As chair of City Council's "Slave" Trail Commission, Del. McQuinn has made significant contributions to preserving and memorializing Richmond's slavery-related history. Her projects have included upgrading the "Slave" Trail (increasingly referred to as the Trail of Enslaved Africans) and establishing the Reconciliation Statue at 15th and East Main streets.

Tarnishing that legacy, however, was McQuinn's public and vigorous support for Jones' promotion of a Shockoe Bottom baseball stadium, a project that would have directly benefited downtown developer H. Louis Salomonsky, who later donated the legal limit of \$2,000 to McQuinn's 2016 failed run for state senate.

Earlier, then-City Councilwoman McQuinn opposed the successful community effort to force Virginia Commonwealth University, a powerful state institution, to remove its parking lot that was desecrating Richmond's African Burial Ground - a site the City's signage still refers to as a "Historic Burial Ground," gutting it of its significance as the last resting place for many of the city's enslaved and free people of African descent.



The pattern has been clear: the Marsh-Jones-McQuinn machine has done many good things for Richmond's Black community - except when it means challenging the city's white corporate elite. When confronted with that elite's opposition, the response has been compromise, accommodation or surrender.

It's past time for a change. What we need in our elected officials is integrity, efficiency and transparency. Those qualities have not been evident in the machine's operation. From failing to push for real investigations into suspicious police shootings to misleading the Church Hill community about the viability of the Chimborazo swimming pool to her failure to properly oversee

the City's lead-abatement program, McQuinn has failed to meet the minimum requirements of an elected official.

For these reasons and more, we are endorsing McQuinn's challenger in the June 13 primary that will determine the Democratic nomination for the Virginia House of Delegates, 70th District, a position now held by Del. McQuinn and before her, Dwight Jones.

Alex Mejias, 39, is a seven-year resident of Richmond's Church Hill neighborhood, where he is active in volunteer community service.

An attorney, he is a graduate of the University of Virginia with a degree in Religious Studies and the UVA School of Law. He has worked at the Legal Aid Justice Center, the Washington Lawyers'

Committee for Civil Rights and the National Senior Citizens Law Center.

He also founded Businesses for Black Lives, a conversation between local business leaders and law enforcement around issues of race and policing.

Alex supports the movement for a \$15 minimum wage, raising Virginia's grand larceny threshold from its current \$200 to \$1,000 and is actively involved in an effort to provide bail money for indigent defendants.

Alex Mejias also has endorsed the Community Proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

On June 13, we encourage our readers, friends, allies and supporters to vote Alex Mjias for the 70th District nomination.

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We welcome letters, while reserving the right to edit for clarity, length and style.

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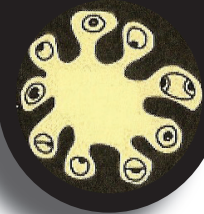
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