

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

# THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

FREE

**A statewide quarterly newspaper published by the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality**

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**Summer 2014**

## President of national preservation group calls Richmond's Shockoe Bottom most endangered historic site in U.S.

**By Ana Edwards & Phil Wilayto**

The New York Times. Washington Post. USA Today. CNN. ABC News. Even Time magazine.

Not to mention the Associated Press story that was picked up by newspapers large and small across the country.

They all carried the news that a well-respected national preservation group has included Richmond's Shockoe Bottom in its annual list of the "11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2014" in the United States.

In fact, "I would put right at the top of that list, from a significance standpoint and an urgency standpoint, Shockoe Bottom," Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, told The Washington Post.

And what did President Meeks say was the threat to this historic neighborhood?

"We see this as a site of conscience and one that shouldn't just be quickly covered up with a baseball stadium," Meeks said.

On June 25, the day after the National Trust story hit the papers, airways and Internet, the Trust and its local affiliate,

Preservation Virginia, held a national press conference in Richmond – in Shockoe Bottom, on the site of Lumpkin's Jail, the most notorious of the half-dozen or so slave jails that once held Black people before or after they were sold in one of the district's 40 to 50 auction houses.

Speaking for the Trust was Germonique Ulmer, the organization's Vice President of Public Affairs.

"It is an honor to be here today in Richmond with you all at Shockoe Bottom," Ulmer told the assembled media and supporters, "a sacred place associated with the suffering and endurance of hundreds of thousands of Africans and people of African descent who were sold into slavery from this location, less than two centuries ago.

"The book and Oscar-winning film '12 Years a Slave' brought to life Solomon Northup's ordeal and ultimate triumph, when he was kidnapped and transported through Shockoe Bottom and sold into slavery.

Ulmer went on to explain why this small area is so historically significant.

"Shockoe Bottom was the nation's

second-largest trading center during the peak years of the slave trade, when this neighborhood was filled with slave auction houses, slave pens and offices of the slave trade. In 1841, Solomon Northup was held here at the notorious Goodwin's slave jail before he was transported in chains to New Orleans.

"The same ugly fate was endured by generations of women, men and children in this place. ...

"There are many reminders here from the slavery era – both below and above ground – that Americans need to understand in order to know the full story of our nation's history."

Ulmer didn't hesitate to take a strong stand on the reason for the threat to Shockoe Bottom.

"As we all can see standing here today," she said, "much of Shockoe Bottom has been razed and paved over, nearly erased and forgotten by the American people. And now, Shockoe Bottom is threatened by incompatible redevelopment plans.

"A few months ago, some local members of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, along with my preservation colleague who is here today, Rob Nieweg, alerted us to the alarming plan for the 'Revitalize RVA' project, which calls for construction in Shockoe Bottom of a 7000-seat, minor-league baseball stadium, a Hyatt Hotel, a Kroger grocery store, as well as retail space, office buildings, apartment buildings and parking garages.

"We understand that the plan also promises to privately raise \$30 million for a slavery heritage museum in Shockoe Bottom.

"While we support the efforts of elected officials to create an economically viable downtown Richmond, and to acknowledge Richmond's true history, we do not believe these eight blocks of Shockoe Bottom – where we see the convergence of history, archaeology and the immensely important stories of endurance and resistance against injustice – is the right place to build a baseball-entertainment district. ...

**See SHOCKOE on PAGE 9**



Photo courtesy Virginia Cop Block

**Devon Thomas, 19, is arrested by Petersburg police after what he says was an illegal beating. He had been videotaping police activity in the neighborhood.**

## Petersburg protesters charge police brutality

**By Whitney Whiting**

About 45 people, most of them African-Americans in their 20s, rallied June 16 outside the Petersburg police station just a few days after a video was posted on social media showing what appears to be police brutality against 19-year-old Devin Thomas. The rally was called by the police accountability group Virginia Cop Block.

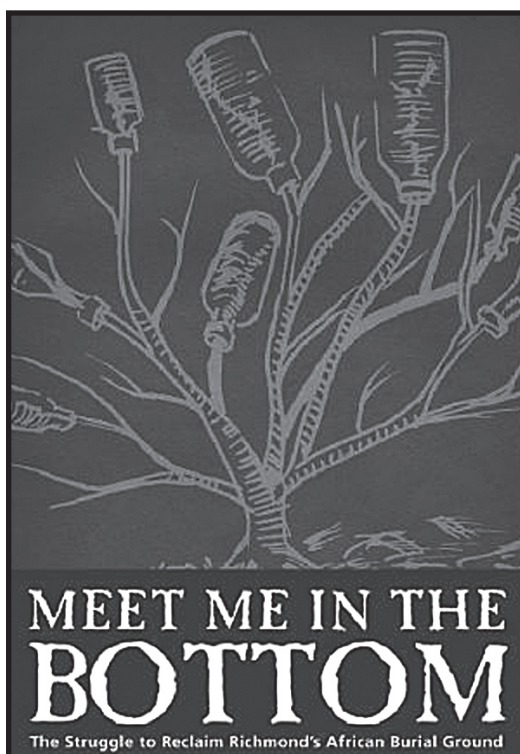
Thomas, who is African-American, says he was standing on the sidewalk June 10 in front of Petersburg East Apartments, filming police officers with his cell phone, when two officers told him to move away. In the video, Thomas can be seen backing up to the door of one of the housing units, as one officer follows him and asks his age. According to Thomas, when he answered that he was 19, the other officer knocked the phone out of his hand and proceeded to assault him.

At that point all that can be seen in the video is the sky, but the audio recorded what seems to have been an altercation of some kind. Still photos taken directly after the incident show the teenager bloodied on his face. He reportedly suffered a concussion.

Two days later, Thomas filed a complaint about the incident. Petersburg police say they are investigating.

It was hot during the rally, but some people stood for up to three hours holding signs and demanding justice, letting the police

**See POLICE on PAGE 4**



### A Defender Forum

Showing the  
award-winning documentary

### Meet Me in the Bottom:

The Struggle to Reclaim  
Richmond's  
African Burial Ground

Produced & Directed by  
Shawn O. Utsey

6:30 pm - Wed., July 16

William Byrd  
Community House  
224 So. Cherry St., Richmond

Free  
(but donations are welcome!)



## 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.



## An obit for Ray Boone

By Phil Wilayto

Raymond H. Boone, the founder, publisher and editor of the Richmond Free Press, passed June 3. He was 76.

The other local media already have carried obituaries on Mr. Boone, how he was born in Suffolk, Va., graduated from Boston University, taught journalism at Howard University, was a vice president of the 13-member Afro-American newspaper chain, a member of the Pulitzer Prize jury for journalists – a post he used to help bring long-overdue recognition to Black and women journalists.

I'd like to tell you about a different Ray Boone – the one I worked for as a Free Press staff writer from April 2001 until December 2003.

As editor, Ray was legendary as a hard taskmaster. (I called him Mr. Boone until I left the Free Press. At 65, I think I get to call him Ray, since he called me Phil. Whatever.)

I remember when a reporter for the Baltimore Sun, a daily, applied for a job as reporter. Ray paid for her travel to Richmond, put her up at the Marriott and gave her one assignment: a story on the arrest of a youth “gang” in Fulton Hill.

She wrote that there were nine gang members – and listed eight names.

She was on her way back to Baltimore that night.

A Harvard graduate student working on his Ph.D. in journalism lasted about six hours.

Ray once showed me a letter he had recently received from a president of Virginia Union University. There was a typo in the first sentence.

“I put it right back in the envelope,” he said. “And that’s where it’s going to stay.”

He was a hard man.

But that hardness came in handy when he was speaking Truth to Power.

A few weeks after 9/11, a young Black man employed at Capital One was arrested and charged with threatening to blow up the building where he worked. He was a Muslim.

Open and shut.

I wrote a series of stories about him, and, after hours, worked with NAACP chief King Salim Khalfani to get people to attend the young man’s court hearings.

One day two gentlemen from Capital One came in the Free Press office to speak with the editor. I don’t know what they said, but that week there was a full-page ad from Capital One in the newspaper. At the time, those ads ran about \$3,000.

Whatever they talked about, Ray never mentioned it to me. And that week we slammed the company again.

The guy got off. Turns out it was all a misunderstanding caused by a co-worker with an over-active imagination.

The guy got his freedom, Ray got his \$3,000 and I got a reason to keep coming in to work.

Here’s something few people know: Ray kept a bobblehead of Cuban President Fidel Castro on a bookcase behind his desk.

“Every once in awhile I turn around and say, ‘How’m I doin’, Fidel?’” and tap his head,” Ray told me.

And Fidel always nodded: “Yes, you’re doin’ fine, Ray.”

Ray and my Dad hit it off really well. My Mom and Dad visited me at the office one day. Dad was wearing a fairly expensive suit

## community news



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**Members of the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Coalition visit Richmond's African Burial Ground. Coaliton Chair Stan Maclin is third from the right. Also shown are former Richmond City Councilmen Chuck Richardson (second from left) and Marty Jewell (fourth from right) and former Richmond Branch NAACP President Warren Kennedy (fourth from left).**

## In Harrisonburg: Successful struggle to rename street for Rev. King

Staff Report

A determined community organizing campaign in the city of Harrisonburg has resulted in the city renaming a major street for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It was not an easy victory.

Situated on Route 81 about 25 miles north of Staunton and home to James Madison and Eastern Mennonite universities, Harrisonburg is a city of about 51,000 people, of whom just 6.4 percent are African-American. All five members of City Council are white.

It was Stan Maclin, founder and president of the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center, who first raised the idea of renaming a street after King. He made a formal proposal to City Council on Feb. 2, 2013.

The questioning started right away, especially after the suggestion was made to rename Cantrell Avenue, a major thoroughfare, after the famed civil rights leader.

No one was exactly sure who or what Cantrell was, but it was clear the name had its supporters.

Some said the avenue was named after a Spanish-American who fought in the Revolutionary War and that changing the name would be disrespectful. Some people said it might have referred to William Clarke Quantrill, a Confederate guerrilla leader who became infamous for leading a brutal massacre of pro-Unionists in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1863. Since the street was first named in 1907, a particularly reactionary time in Virginia, as in much of the country, that version of history has some supporters.

And some people said that “Cantrall” was a just a misspelling of the word “central.”

On April 9, nine weeks after Maclin made

his formal proposal, City Council set up a task force to select a street to be renamed. Maclin was appointed chair. A series of marches and meetings and vigils followed, which helped to popularize the idea.

Finally the day came for City Council to vote: Aug. 13.

The tally was four in favor, one opposed, to renaming Cantrell Avenue “Martin Luther King, Jr. Way / Historic Cantrell Avenue.” (The new street signs say “Historic Cantrell Avenue” in smaller letters below the new name.)

January was a month of events culminating in a formal dedication ceremony. A renaming celebration took place Jan. 20 at Memorial Hall on South High Street, along with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and a Unity Walk.

Since then, the organizing committee has reconstituted itself as the Martin Luther King Way Coalition, with Maclin as chair. The group now plans to take on other issues in the city.

On June 20, members of the coalition were in Richmond to meet with local activists, including former Richmond City Council members Sa’ad El-Amin, Marty Jewell, Chuck Richardson former Virginia State Conference NAACP Executive Director King Salim Khalfani, former former Richmond Branch NAACP President Warren Kennedy

While visiting Shockoe Bottom, they heard a presentation by this reporter on the successful struggle to reclaim Richmond’s African Burial Ground.

For more information on the Martin Luther King Jr. Way Coalition, visit:

<http://mlkjrway.org/oldindex.html>

jacket my mother had gotten him. Dad said he didn’t like it – wasn’t his style – but he wore it on that trip to please my mother.

When he and Ray met, Ray recognized the jacket’s brand and was impressed.

“That’s a really nice jacket you’ve got there, Mr. Wilayto,” he said. “You have excellent taste!”

Dad looked down at his threads with a new-found respect.

And after that it was his favorite jacket.

I was long gone from the Free Press when Ray stared down the mayor during Occupy

Richmond, but I recognized it as vintage Ray Boone. It wasn’t just that he wasn’t afraid of a fight – he enjoyed a good fight. It was invigorating to him. And if he took on a cause, he’d hold on till hell froze over.

Like H.L. Mencken once said, “Never get in a fight with a man who buys his ink by the barrel.”

Ray Boone: Cocky as a banty rooster, meaner than a junkyard dog and classier than any stuffed shirt that ever passed through the Bull and Bear Club.

We’re going to miss you, Ray.

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## community news

## Khalfani Recognition & Appreciation Reception

King Salim Khalfani recently left his position as the Executive Director of the Virginia State Conference NAACP. During his 25 years with the NAACP, Salim has been a fearless and effective leader for the liberation of African-Americans.

Friends of King Salim Khalfani will host a "Recognition & Appreciation Reception" June 28 to "allow us to recognize Salim as well as present him with money we have raised which will reflect the importance that he has meant to us during his long tenure with the NAACP.

"We invite you to attend this event and support this effort by making a generous contribution of \$50.00 to \$100.00. There will be entertainment and refreshments."

The event is scheduled for 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 28, at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Richmond's East End. (Address below.)

Checks may be made payable to "King Salim Khalfani Appreciation Fund," attention Cheryl Jarrett, and sent to Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, 1720 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Richmond, VA 23223.

The Recognition and Appreciation Planning Committee is chaired by the Rev. Rodney Hunter, Senior Pastor at Wesley Memorial.

## PUBLIC MEETING

**Sat., June 19  
6:30 - 8:30 pm  
House of Consciousness  
600 W. 35th St.  
NORFOLK**

Members of the family of  
**JERMAINE DOSS**  
will report on the campaign to  
free this wrongly incarcerated  
Norfolk native.

**ANA EDWARDS,**  
Chair of the Sacred Ground  
Historical Reclamation Project,  
and  
**PHIL WILAYTO,**  
Editor of The Virginia Defender,  
will give an update on the  
ongoing struggle to stop a  
baseball stadium from being built  
in Richmond's Shockoe Bottom,  
once the hub of the  
U.S. domestic slave trade.

This meeting is free.  
Donations are welcome.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**The Rev. Dr. Paul Flowers addresses a Moral Mondays of Virginia rally May 19 on Capitol Square in Richmond. Inspired by the Moral Mondays movement in North Carolina, the group has been holding rallies twice a month to press for justice.**

## Moral Mondays movement emerging in Virginia

By S.L. Cumber

It looks like the massive Moral Mondays people's movement in North Carolina is now influencing activists here in Virginia.

Moral Mondays, also known by its more formal name the Forward Together Moral Movement, has been a series of weekly protests at the North Carolina State Capitol in Raleigh, N.C. Led by the Rev. William Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP, the protests have involved tens of thousands of people of all races, genders and ages in marches and rallies to protest the extreme reactionary laws being passed by the state legislature. More than 1,000 people have been arrested for non-violent acts of civil disobedience.

(At the suggestion of the Defenders, Rev. Barber was invited to be the keynote speaker at the 6th Annual Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace and Justice, held Jan. 4, 2014, in Richmond.)

In Virginia, two different groups are organizing under the Moral Mondays name, holding rallies to influence members of the General Assembly on issues important to working-class people in Virginia.

The leaders of one group, known as Moral Mondays of Virginia, include the Rev. Emory Berry, pastor of Fourth Baptist Church in Richmond, who is a member of the board of directors for the Baptist General Convention of Virginia as well as chairman of the board for the Virginia Alliance Against Mass Incarceration; Jesse Frierson, executive director of the Virginia Alliance; Dr. Tammy Hodo, an adjunct professor in Urban, Race and

Education at Virginia Commonwealth University; the Rev. Dr. Paul Flowers, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Mechanicsville; and the Rev. Dr. Charles L. Shannon, III, coordinator of Political & Civic Engagement for the Virginia Alliance.

Dr. Flowers, an Air Force veteran and VCU graduate, states he would like to see more involvement in "letter-writing campaigns, petitions, phone blitzes and other forms of direct action, perhaps in the form of sit-ins or boycotts."

The group is now focused on gathering, sharing and changing the current statistics surrounding unjust Virginia laws regarding disadvantaged citizens who are being ignored when it comes to receiving fair treatment in trying to better themselves in their communities.

The group's three main issues of concern are expanding Medicaid, restoring the voting rights of those labeled as felons and changing the \$200 threshold at which petty larceny becomes grand larceny, a charge that can lead to a prison sentence of up to 20 years. Virginia's \$200 figure has not been raised for several decades. In North Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia, the threshold is \$1,000.

At one of the group's recent rallies, Rev. Berry spoke of the challenges that approximately 400,000 Virginians face in trying to receive needed health care because of the limited monies now offered by Medicaid, which is not sufficient for decent care for many elderly citizens.

The group also shares research about the number of formerly incarcerated people who re-enter the community, only to be reminded of their mistakes and punished once again as jobs, housing and other opportunities are scarce upon the exposure of their past circumstances.

Moral Mondays of Virginia is currently rallying at 6 p.m. on the first and third Monday of each month at the Bell Tower in Capitol Square in downtown Richmond.

For more information, call 804-337-8882 or email: [onemmog@hotmail.com](mailto:onemmog@hotmail.com).

The second Moral Mondays effort is led by the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy and its president and CEO, Marco Grimaldo. That group, which holds its rallies on the steps of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, a half-block from Capitol Square, concentrates on promoting the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia. Similar rallies are being held around the state, Grimaldo told the Defender.

The Virginia Interfaith Center can be reached by phone at 804-643-2474 or by email at [office@virginiainterfaithcenter.org](mailto:office@virginiainterfaithcenter.org).

## TRAP: The fight to maintain abortion access continues

By Kat McNeal

Under continuing pressure from Virginia women and their supporters, Gov. Terry McAuliffe has ordered the Virginia Board of Health to re-examine a number of contentious regulations passed in April 2013 that, if implemented, would force the closing of most of Virginia's 22 women's health clinics that perform abortions.

Collectively known as Targeted Regulations of Abortion Providers, or TRAP, the regulations mandate prohibitively expensive architectural changes for abortion clinics. The tactic, developed by conservative think-tanks in the early 2000s, aims to restrict access to abortion services without having to overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision which established the procedure's legality.

TRAP was advanced in Virginia largely by former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, who instructed the Board of Health to pass the regulations or risk losing his office's representation if there were lawsuits. After a long series of contentious public meetings, the board caved, eventually rejecting even requests for a "grandfather" clause, a provision that would allow existing clinics to avoid closing.

After the regulations were adopted, it appeared that, one by one, nearly every abortion clinic in Virginia would close, leaving an untold number of women without access to care. Those most affected would be poor women, those who live in rural areas where medical services are already limited, and transgender individuals, who can face severe discrimination when trying to access any kind of health care.

When the board members convened June 5 to reopen the matter of the regulations, they found their conference room filled to capacity with roughly an equal number of reproductive rights supporters and opponents. Each side was given equal time in public comment. Those against the regulations emphasized the necessity of access to safe, legal abortions, while those against (primarily representing the reactionary Family Foundation) instead insisted that TRAP somehow pertained to medical safety.

Because of the intense public interest in the fate of TRAP, the Board of Health has decided to extend the mandatory public comment period from 30 days to 45. The form for commenting on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website opened June 16 and will close July 31.

Those who wish to drag us back to 1972 will be loud – we must be louder. To submit your comment, visit: <http://goo.gl/kIsjM5>.

## Sistah Sinema Highlighting queer women of color in film

The Seattle-based film collective Sistah Sinema, devoted to monthly screenings of films by or about queer women of color, has launched a Richmond chapter. Initiated by local event planner Ayana Obika-Clayborne, the chapter screened its first film, "Fiona's Script," on June 25.

Ticket revenue will be split between the national organization and Ms. Obika-Clayborne's new nonprofit, which provides financial assistance to queer women facing serious illness.

For more information, visit the Sistah Sinema Facebook page ([facebook.com/sistahsinema](https://facebook.com/sistahsinema)) or e-mail Ms. Obika-Clayborne at: [gratituderisingevents@gmail.com](mailto:gratituderisingevents@gmail.com).

Also, see the display ad on the back page.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**Virginia Defender Appreciation Day Cook-out** — To help celebrate the Defender newspaper reaching its 10th year of publication, the Editorial Board hosted a cook-out May 31 for the paper's distributors, writers, photographers tech people and close friends. About 40 people enjoyed meat, veggie and vegan dishes, socialized and congratulated each other for reaching the end of our first decade. Other events will be scheduled for later in the year.



cops, courts & prisons



Photos by Whitney Whiting

Of the 32,500 people who live in Petersburg, 79 percent are Black and one out of every four lives in poverty. The youth are fed up with the conditions they face, including abuse by some police officers.

Police

Continued from page 1

know that abusive behavior is unacceptable. They chanted “Cops are not above the law!” One sign read, “Fire thug cops.”

Some in the crowd were openly expressed their views to the police who were present, saying enforcing a trespassing law in a neighborhood is unjust and implying that the officer made sure the victim was legally an adult by asking his age directly before the assault.

Some people held signs with photos of loved ones they said were killed at the hands

reason people record. If he didn’t record, who knows what else you would have done to him.”

Thomas stated this was the first time he had ever tried to film police.

Some protesters called for more church involvement. Bishop S.H. Bey of the Good Samaritan International Church of Praises said, “Some of the police have gotten out of control. They’re issuing assault rifles in our communities. They’re issuing tanks in our communities. They’re issuing drones in our communities. It’s time for us hold them ac-



Photo by Whitney Whiting

One protester in Petersburg raises a good question: If the problem is just a few bad apples, why does the rest of the department put up with them?

of the Petersburg Sheriff’s Department, asking people to remember their lost loved ones.

After being handed a megaphone at the rally, Thomas’ sister asked, “Why are they trying to make him seem like a thug? He’s not a thug. He graduated [high school] and just got accepted to college. He’s trying to make his life better for his nephew. Why did you do this to my brother? There’s a

countable to the community that’s paying for their services.”

To Thomas, he stated it would be a “gross miscarriage of justice” if no one from the police department made an appearance to address this matter. He said the police chief ought to come out and apologize.

It was rumored that Police Chief Dixon would speak to the crowd, but this never materialized.

THE COST OF WAR

Ever wonder why there’s never enough money for jobs, schools, housing and health care?

As of **June 2014**, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost U.S taxpayers nearly **\$1.54 trillion**. For **Virginia** taxpayers alone, the cost was more than **\$44.7 billion**.

Every hour, **U.S. taxpayers** are paying **\$10.54 million** for war.

To see a running total and what this money could have paid for in terms of health care, housing and education, visit the **Cost of War Counter** at:

costofwar.com

Organizations that offer legal help

The Defenders receive many letters from prisoners asking for legal advice or representation. Unfortunately, we don’t have lawyers or legal experts who can provide that kind of service. But we do have a newspaper, and we are using it this issue to let you know about the organizations that may be able to help. (Information compiled by Kat McNeal.)

Organizations that provide assistance, information or support on criminal law matters

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Virginia

530 E. Main St., Suite 310  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Ph: 804-644-8022  
Email: [acluva@acluva.org](mailto:acluva@acluva.org)  
Web: <http://acluva.org>

Legal assistance in cases of violations of constitutional rights.

The Innocence Project, National Office

40 Worth St., Suite 701  
New York, NY 10013  
Ph: 212-364-5340  
Email: [info@innocenceproject.org](mailto:info@innocenceproject.org)  
Web: <http://www.innocenceproject.org>

Legal representation and assistance for those wrongfully convicted of a crime who can be exonerated by DNA evidence. Contact to receive a PDF to submit your case.

Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project

2000 H St. NW  
Washington, DC 20052.  
Email: [cfiscella@exonerate.org](mailto:cfiscella@exonerate.org)  
Web: [exonerate.org](http://exonerate.org)

To be considered for assistance, you must fill out a questionnaire on their website.

NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund

99 Hudson St., Suite 1600  
New York, NY 10013  
Ph: 212-965-2200  
Web: [naacpldf.org](http://naacpldf.org)

Deals with cases involving obvious racial discrimination.

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women

125 S. 9th St., Suite 302  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Ph: 215-351-0010; toll free: 800-903-0111  
Email: [technicalassistance@bwjp.org](mailto:technicalassistance@bwjp.org)  
Web: [ncdbw.org](http://ncdbw.org)

Assists the legal teams of battered women charged with crimes, but cannot provide direct representation.

National Lawyer’s Guild Prison Law Project

132 Nassau St. #922  
New York, NY 10038  
Email: [studentorg@nlg.org](mailto:studentorg@nlg.org)  
Web: [nlg.org](http://nlg.org)

Offers a Jailhouse Legal Manual free to prisoners ([jailhouselaw.org](http://jailhouselaw.org)); \$8 membership for jailhouse lawyers. Cannot provide representation.

Southern Center for Human Rights

83 Poplar St. NW  
Atlanta, GA 30303-2122  
Ph: 404-688-1202  
Web: [schr.org](http://schr.org)

Representation and assistance for death penalty cases, inmates involved in federal class-action lawsuits.

Organizations that provide assistance in non-criminal matters only

Central Virginia Legal Aid Society

101 W. Broad St., Suite 101  
Richmond, VA 23220  
804-648-1012; toll free: 800-868-1012

Legal assistance for low-income and elderly people in Central Virginia.

Legal Services of Northern Virginia

6066 Leesburg Pike, Suite 500  
Falls Church, VA 22041  
Ph: 703-778-6800;  
toll-free: 866-534-5243

Legal assistance for low-income people in Northern Virginia.

Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund National Office

634 S. Spring St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90014  
Ph: 213-629-2512  
Web: [maldef.org](http://maldef.org)

Takes large class-action lawsuits, gives referrals. Cannot take individual cases or criminal cases. Can handle immigration law.

Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society

227 W. Cherry St.  
Marion, VA 24354  
Ph: 276-783-8300; toll free: 800-277-6754.  
Legal assistance for low-income people in Southwest Virginia.

Virginia Legal Aid Society

P.O. Box 6200, 513 Church St.  
Lynchburg, VA 24505  
Ph: 434-528-4722; toll free: 866-534-5243  
Legal assistance for low-income people in Virginia.

Legal Aid Justice Center

A statewide organization providing legal representation for low-income Virginians  
Charlottesville:

Serving city of Charlottesville and counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson.

1000 Preston Ave., Suite A  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  
Phone: (434) 977-0553  
Fax: (434) 977-0558

Toll-free: 800-763-7323 (clients only)  
International: 1-800-892-1751  
In Mexico, dial 001 first)

Northern Virginia (Falls Church):

Serving cities of Fairfax, Falls Church, Herndon and Alexandria and counties of Loudoun, Fairfax, Arlington, Prince William and Stafford.

6400 Arlington Blvd., Suite 600  
Falls Church VA 22042  
Phone: (703) 778-3450  
Fax: (703) 778-3454

Richmond/Petersburg:

Serving cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Hopewell and Colonial Heights and counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Goochland, Powhatan, Surry, Prince George, Dinwiddie and Charles City.

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Richmond, VA 23219  
Phone: (804) 643-1086; Fax: (804) 643-2059

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no shockoe stadium!



Photos by Phil Wilayto

Opponents of a stadium in Shockoe Bottom hold a vigil May 19 outside Richmond City Hall. After the protest, several of the participants joined the Moral Mondays of Virginia rally on Capitol Square. Linking up our many struggles is the key to success.



This was the view May 19 in front of City Hall. People across the Richmond Region have placed these signs on their lawns and in car and apartment windows. Unlike the pro-stadium “Loving RVA” campaign, funding came from private, online donations.



These Richmonders have found a creative way to suggest Mayor Jones spend our tax money on a better transit system, not on a stadium for developers.

our working lives



Photos by Phil Wilayto

UFCW Local President Mark Federici, center, with moustache, speaks with management and store security as Local members chant in support in the background. The topic? The right of Kroger workers to join the union.

UFCW shows its strength at new Staples Mill Kroger

By Kat McNeal

Almost 200 members and supporters of the United Food and Commercial Workers union descended on the new Kroger Marketplace in Henrico County May 13 to speak to customers and employees and protest what they are calling management’s aggressive anti-union messaging.

The energy was high as shop stewards chanted and marched in front of the store to the beat of a drumline while distributing leaflets and solidarity buttons to curious customers. The drums were provided by members of Pittsburgh’s Local 23, who had driven down that morning to support their union sisters and brothers in Virginia.

Altogether, UFCW represents 208,000 Kroger employees, a majority of the company’s workers. Kroger is the only unionized supermarket chain in Virginia and the company and the union have an agreement that if the majority of workers at a new Kroger store sign membership cards, the company will recognize the union without having to hold an election, a process that under today’s labor law can take years.

However, the union says the management of the Henrico store, which opened this April, is violating that agreement by circulating anti-union material to discourage workers from

joining. During the May 13 action, Local 400 President Mark Federici, Local 23 President Tony Helfer and Richmond area faith leaders delivered a letter to the management of the new store demanding the practice end. While organizers spoke to the managers – who reluctantly emerged from their offices only after the delegation had entered the store – about 20 UFCW members, wearing bright



Nearly 200 members of the United Food & Commercial Workers Union converge on the new Kroger Marketplace on Staples Mill Road in Henrico County.

purple or yellow UFCW shirts, stood chanting in front of the pharmacy isle.

Their strong voices, ringing out together, were as impossible to ignore as the beat of the drums outside and quickly drew the attention of curious customers. Some patrons simply ignored the group and continued their shopping, but many others gave signals of support as they passed or stopped to listen. One elderly man enthusiastically high-fived each shop steward as he passed with his cart.

The large, lively crowd remained for an hour and a half, speaking with employees and customers and distributing literature. This action is only one in a series leading up to contract negotiations later this summer between the union and Richmond- and Tidewater-area Krogers.

For up-to-the-minute information on the UFCW’s activities and the efforts of Kroger workers to unionize, see Local 400’s website at: [www.ufcw400.org](http://www.ufcw400.org)



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**Special Defender Report:****WHO RUNS RICHMOND - HOW THEY DO IT****By Phil Wilayto**

Who runs Richmond?

I mean, who *really* runs it?

Is it the mayor? City Council? Greater Richmond Chamber (of commerce)? Evil forces meeting secretly at the Commonwealth Club?

All of the above?

The Occupy Movement taught us one very important thing: About 1 percent of the U.S. population has so much money that it can pretty much control the political process.

We tend to know that in the abstract, but then forget about it in our everyday lives. We see politicians doing things that seem to make no sense at all and we say, "What's the matter with them? Don't they know how wrong – or stupid – or illegal – that is?"

Sure they do.

But they aren't working for us. With very few exceptions, they're working for the people who write the checks. Not the tax checks – we write those. I mean the BIG checks.

Just like in other cities, Richmond's one-percenters are the people who own or run the banks and other financial institutions, the high-power law firms, big corporations, major news media and universities. Plus the big "developers."

Almost all of them are rich white guys who went to the same universities, live in the same parts of town, belong to the same clubs and socialize at the same exclusive events.

Some of them are Old Money, like the Gottwalds, who own New Market Corporation, formerly called Ethyl Corporation, housed in the big, plantation-looking building you see as you drive over the James River from South Side. Some of them are New Money, like the Ukrops, who inherited and then built up their father's supermarket business. Some of them are Very Big Money, like William Goodwin, who with his late partner Beverley W. "Booty" Armstrong owned CCA Industries, a holding company that owns, among many other things, the 5-star Jefferson Hotel.

The one-percenters have their differences, rivalries and personal disputes, but they all agree on one thing: They are the people best suited to run this city.

And this is how they do it:

**Cooperating to control**

Back in 1948, Richmond adopted a system of government in which nine members of City Council were selected in "at-large" elections. That is, all voters in the city could vote for all candidates. The result was that very few African-Americans were elected to City Council, which selected the mayor. The council members who were elected were, for the most part, quite happy with the arrangement and pretty much went along with whatever the 1 percent wanted.

Then in the mid-1970s, under pressure from Richmond civil rights activists, the U.S. Department of Justice ordered the City to adopt a ward system. Now only members of a particular ward, or district, could vote for a candidate for that district. Since the city was very racially segregated, this meant that Black candidates actually had a chance of winning an election.

The result was that in 1977 Blacks were elected to five of the nine council seats – a majority – and selected as mayor Henry Marsh, an African-American who is now a state senator. (Since those early days, Marsh has put together a formidable Black Democratic political machine, now controlled by Mayor Dwight Jones, who recently was selected to chair the state Democratic Party.)

Moving to a ward system was a great democratic victory for the Black community, but it presented a real problem for the city's 1 percent. How were these rich white guys going to continue to control the city if the mayor and the majority of council were beholden not to them, but to their local constituents?

Why, this wouldn't work at all.

Many earnest conversations were held at the Commonwealth Club. That's the 124-year-old, ultra-exclusive men's club located in that big, stately, red brick building at 401 W. Franklin St., which is where a lot of Richmond's most important decisions are made. (And you thought that happened in City Hall!)

**RVA Renaissance**

The result was Richmond Renaissance, an organization launched in 1981 to promote the downtown area – and orient the city's new political leadership.

With a large board of directors (64 members by 1997), RR brought together the city's most powerful bankers, businessmen, media moguls and opinion makers – along with a few key elected officials. The co-founders were the late T. Justin Moore Jr., then-chairman of Virginia Electric & Power Co.; the late Rick Dean, then-chairman of Signet Bank; and then-Mayor Henry Marsh.

The purpose? To allow the new class of Black elected officials to enjoy the prestige and privileges of office while running the city in the interest of the (white) 1 percent.

RR's first big project was the Sixth Street Marketplace, which opened in 1985. That was the infamous boondoggle that nobody wants to talk about. Promoted as a way to "revitalize" downtown, the project was supposed to bring middle-class shoppers back to the city's center, while symbolizing racial reconciliation.

It flopped. As soon as the white middle-class shoppers realized they'd have to share space with low-income Black shoppers, they went back to spending their money in the suburbs. With the well-heeled shoppers gone, the marketplace quickly declined. From its opening to at least 1992, the mall required \$15.5 million each year in city subsidies to survive. The last eight tenants, all food vendors, moved out in 2008.

Other RR projects included the Belle Isle Pedestrian Bridge (we like this one) and the "revitalization" (read "gentrification") of the historically Black Jackson Ward neighborhood, including the Jackson Center office building.

In 1996, Richmond Renaissance merged with two other pro-development organizations: the Central Richmond Association (CRA), begun in the early 1950s, and Downtown Richmond Inc. The new group kept the RR name and its executive director. (From 2001 to 2004 RR's director was Eugene Trani, at the time the Virginia Commonwealth University president who brutally remade much of downtown in VCU's image.)

Another merger came in 2006, with the uniting of other several downtown development and promotion groups, including city-celebrations, Richmond Riverfront Corp. and River District Alliance.

**Vulture Richmond**

The result was Venture Richmond.

A quick read of VR's leadership and board of directors will tell you who really runs Richmond.

- **Chairman and CEO:** Jacqueline McClenney, president of the law firm McClenney Wallace, LLC.
- **Vice Chairman and Chairman of the executive committee:** Mary Doswell, a senior vice president at Dominion.
- **President:** (ta da!) – Dwight C. Jones, Mayor of the City of Richmond.
- **Secretary:** Mark R. Merhige, President of The Shockoe Company, a major downtown real estate company.
- **Treasurer:** Thomas Brown, vice chairman of Rutherford.
- **General Counsel:** John W. Bates III, Esq., a partner at the high-power law firm McGuire Woods LLP.

Interesting, but the real heavies are on the 86-member board of directors. (The complete list is at [www.venturerichmond.com](http://www.venturerichmond.com).)

From the banking and financial institu-

tions field we have representatives from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Union First Market Bank, Bank of America, SunTrust Bank, Xenith Bank, Capital One, Premier Bank (Consolidated Division), BB&T and the Markel Corporation.

Major corporations represented on the board include Verizon, NewMarket Corporation, Altria Group; MeadWestvaco, Owens and Minor and the James River and Universal corporations.

Major law firms include Williams Mullen and Hunton and Williams.

The universities are brought on board by including the current presidents of the University of Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Union University and Reynolds Community College, plus former VCU President Trani.

From the health care field there's Bon Secours Richmond Health System, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield and Retreat Doctors' Hospital.

The media is represented by WWBT 12, Richmond Times-Dispatch and Richmond Free Press.

In addition to Mayor Jones, other government representatives include Richmond City Council President Charles Samuels and Vice President Ellen Robertson, the mayor's Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Peter Chapman, Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Dana Bedden and Virginia Housing Development Authority's Executive Director Susan Dewey.

By January 2013, according to an article in the business section of the Times-Dispatch, Venture Richmond had an annual budget of \$5.6 million, including about \$1.68 million in property assessments, about \$677,000 in contributions, about \$950,000 from event sponsorships and about \$714,000 in "earned income from merchandise or beverage sales at events and from the canal boats."

At that time, the total salary costs for the staff of Venture Richmond was \$822,000, with its top three administrators making \$208,000, \$147,000 and \$131,000. Today the group's executive director, Jack Berry reportedly is paid nearly a quarter-million dollars a year.

With a nine-member full-time staff, Berry oversees and promotes projects located within the geographic area bounded by Belvidere on the west, Interstate 95 on the north, Shockoe Bottom and Tobacco Row on the east and the Manchester area in the south. That area includes Jackson Ward, the financial district, the State Capitol and City Hall and the slavery-related sites in Shockoe Bottom.

Among VR's ongoing projects are the annual Richmond Folk Festival, 2nd Street Festival in Jackson Ward, Easter on Parade along Monument Avenue and RVA Fireworks. It also manages the Canal Walk, Brown's Island and the downtown canal boat cruises, as well as the City's "Clean and Safe" contract with Community Business Group, "a minority-owned firm in Richmond, to keep the downtown sidewalks clean and free of weeds, for which the city pays \$700,000, matched by downtown property owners," according to the RTD.

But VR also actively promotes new projects, like an amphitheater at Tredegar, a proposal strongly opposed by many residents of nearby Oregon Hill (see Scott Burger's Letter to the Editor on page 8) and Mayor Jones' controversial proposal to put a baseball stadium in historic Shockoe Bottom, for decades the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade. Several VR members also were involved in the privatization of Monroe Park.

By the end of January, VR had already spent \$32,500 on the pro-stadium "LovingRVA" public relations campaign, complete with a website, billboards, yard signs, stickers, media advertising and events.

That effort has been questioned by critics who ask how an outfit that receives public money can spend money to promote a project largely opposed by the public. (VR's Jack

Berry says the money came from private donations.) And how a group incorporated as a non-profit organization can spend so much money lobbying for city legislation associated with that project.

**A shadow government**

In reality, Venture Richmond has grown into a kind of parallel, unelected city government that pushes a vision of Richmond that favors the wealthy and wishes poor folks would just move out of town. And board members tend to get on board that vision.

Shortly after critics of a Shockoe Bottom stadium pointed out that not one Black organization had endorsed the mayor's plan, Venture Richmond took out expensive, two-page ads in the Richmond Times-Dispatch and the Richmond Free Press. Among the nine organizations listed as supporting the plan were the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia the largely Black Metropolitan Business League and the largely Black Richmond Tenants Council.

Stacy Burrs, President of the Board of Directors of the Black History Museum, and Oliver Singleton, President of the Metropolitan Business League, are both Venture Richmond board members. The Richmond Tenants Council, a paper organization, is basically controlled by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

Also listed as supporting the plan was the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, whose CEO, Michael Zajur, is a VR board member.

Another African-American VR board member supporting the mayor's plan is Burt Pinnock, a principal with the Baskerville architectural firm, which is designing the Slavery Heritage Site proposed for Lumpkin's Slave Jail. Pinnock spoke in favor of the plan during a public meeting hosted by 5th District Councilman Parker Agelasto. Note: The mayor's plan does not include any money for memorializing this site. The \$30 million figure often cited would all come from city and state funding and a private fund-raising campaign that has yet to be launched.

Also on the board is Jean Boone, President of Advertising at the Richmond Free Press, Virginia's leading Black-owned newspaper, hasn't taken a position one way or the other on a Shockoe stadium, a repeat of the paper's position when a Shockoe stadium was proposed in 2003 and again in 2007.

Other VR board members supporting the stadium proposal include former University of Richmond President Ed Ayers and Tim Davey, a vice president of the Timmons Group, a Richmond engineering and technology firm.

Ayers is a noted Southern historian and chair of the Future of Richmond's Past, an alliance of mostly museum directors and university presidents formed to discuss how to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War and slavery. Ayers spoke at Mayor Jones' Nov. 11, 2013, press conference in which Revitalize Richmond was unveiled, saying he was involved in order to ensure the integrity of the historical aspects of the proposal.

**Continued on next page.****THE DEFENDER**

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Richmond Continued from page 6

The Timmons Group was the firm hired by Mayor Jones to conduct a study about how a Shockoe stadium would affect downtown traffic and parking. The firm reported that traffic would be just fine. It then received a \$150,000 city contract to help develop part of the Boulevard aspect of the proposal – the part where the current Diamond stadium is located, giving it a clear financial stake in the plan being approved by council.

The Timmons study did not get rave reviews from the Virginia Department of Transportation. “The preliminary study was very general in nature and it was difficult to draw any conclusions about the interstate interchanges with the fairly limited information provided,” VDOT’s Richmond District Administrator Thomas A. Hawthorne told the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

In a similar way, the mayor hired the financial planning firm Davenport and Company to examine the financial soundness of his plan. Davenport, which is already under contract with the city, found that the finances were very solid.

Dutton Associates, LLC, was hired by Mayor Jones to examine the historic resources of Shockoe Bottom. It also got the Venture Richmond contract to examine the historic aspects of the Tredegar site where VR wants to build its amphitheater. Dutton found the amphitheater would not threaten any historic sites.

Its report on Shockoe Bottom was actually pretty good, detailing many of the slavery-related sites in the Bottom. However, in his presentation to City Council, company partner David H. Dutton “confirmed that his contract with the city does not include provisions for proceeding with the archaeological investigation if the development project goes away,” according to a story in the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

In other words, if Mayor Jones doesn’t get his legacy stadium, he wouldn’t be interested enough in the district’s history to order an archaeological investigation.

What a guy.

Big Bucks to the Big Money

So there are lots of individuals and companies with a finger in the Revitalize Richmond pie. But who stands to get the Really Big Bucks?

The answer is that the big money will go where it has always gone: to the 1 percent, including the notorious Richmond developer H. Lewis Salomonsky.

This is the guy who was convicted in 2003 for bribing then-City Council member Gwen Hedgepeth on a development-related issue. When he got out of prison, his civil rights were quickly restored by then-Gov. Bob McDonnell, allowing Salomonsky to go back to “developing.” He later again became the subject of controversy when his questionable attempt to qualify for millions of dollars in historic tax abatements for one of his projects caused City Council to change the rules for that program.

Salomonsky happens to be Shockoe Bottom’s biggest real estate owner and, with his partner David White, plans to build the 500-plus apartments next to the mayor’s proposed stadium. At a district council meeting on the plan hosted by 4th District Council member Kathy Graziano, White explained that the stadium would allow the developers to charge higher rents for their apartments. So no stadium, no apartments, he said.

The Dynamic Duo also need the stadium for another big reason: A concourse, or in this case an elevated street, would surround the stadium, fulfilling a government requirement that emergency vehicles be able to access the area in the event of a flood.

Now remember, the mayor admits that the planned stadium, Kroger supermarket, Hyatt hotel, 500-plus apartments and parking deck would produce absolutely no tax revenue for the city. None. All that revenue would to to pay off the public debt on the stadium – and the concourse.

The reality is that we would be shelling out \$100 million to build a stadium that would allow private developers to make money. And



**Still leading the way to freedom** — This beautiful new Harriet Tubman mural adorns the corner of West Marshall and Second streets in Richmond’s historic Jackson Ward. The mural was painted by Sir James L. Thornhill, a prolific artist who lives in Jackson Ward, where many of his works can be seen. Thornhill’s other passions include mentoring local school children through art education and helping graffiti artists find new ways to make art through his “Global Arts Initiative.” The quote to the left of Harriet Tubman is from the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. — Photo by John Moser

this scheme of legal graft and corruption is being promoted by Richmond’s shadow government, Venture Richmond. And oh yes – another member of VR’s board is Brian White, a Principal with the SWA Construction company, which is owned by H. Louis Salomonsky.

You see how this works?

The Shockoe Bottom development is just one half of the mayor’s plan. The other half is development on the Boulevard. With the existing Diamond stadium removed, all 60 acres of City-owned land would be open for development. This is where the mayor’s projection of “up to” \$187 million in new tax revenue would come from.

Please note the words “up to.” There are no guarantees. In fact, as of June 22, Mayor Jones has not revealed the name of one developer or business committed to building on the Boulevard. Not one.

There might be a reason for that. The \$187 million figure was based in large part on a Super Target store opening on the Boulevard. But when North Side residents insisted they didn’t want big-box stores in the area, all mention of a Super-Target was quietly dropped from the proposal. But the projection of up to \$187 million in new tax revenue – which was based on there being a Super-Target in the mix – stayed in the proposal.

As the Scottish poet Sir Walter Scott once observed, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.”

Bottom line: All the talk about new tax revenue for city schools is just a promise. But all of the \$100 million in public debt is a legally binding commitment.

Development, RVA style: Out with the poor, in with the rich

Meanwhile, under the guise of “breaking up concentrations of poverty,” Jones is promoting the destruction of the city’s public housing communities, home to some 10,000

people, to be replaced by “mixed-income” neighborhoods. Since he refuses to commit to a “one-to-one replacement” policy for low-rent units, this plan will inevitably mean more homelessness and an increased migration of poor people to the suburbs.

Which is exactly what 1 percenters like Salomonsky want.

On May 10, 2013, WRIR’s “Open Source” host Chris Dovi asked the developer about his views on Richmond’s problems.

Salomonsky: “Right now we have a ghetto of people making between \$30,000 and 50,000 a year and we have a dearth of people making from 50,000 to 100,000 a year. And we need that higher level of education and employment to balance the city.”

But never fear. The big guy went on to paint a rosy picture of the city’s future, cooing that with a future “metamorphosis of minorities moving to the counties for better schools, the empty nesters, both older and younger moving into the city, with no children and the decline in the school system, you will eventually see the city’s tax rate below that of the counties. And on that day the city will be, let’s say 25 to 40 years from now, infinitely wealthier than the counties, but we – it’s still a foot race to get there.”

Wow. Get rid of people making less than \$50,000 a year, including “minorities” with kids in public schools, and the school system will “decline” and save the wealthy folks a bundle in property taxes.

The real problem is, this is exactly the vision that Mayor Jones seems to be pursuing.

Jones has now been in office for six-and-a-half years. He claims to be addressing poverty, but under his reign the percentage of Richmonders living in poverty has increased substantially.

By 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 26.7 percent of Richmonders were living below below the poverty line. Among whites it was 19 percent; Blacks, 31.6 percent; La-

tinians, 41.1 percent; American Indians, 43.8 percent; and Asians, 44 percent.

But the mayor’s priorities have been big development projects like a new city jail, a training camp for a D.C. football team with a racist name, an international bicycle race in 2015 and a pedestrian bridge over the James River.

Meanwhile, the City has had to close its problem-plagued Juvenile Detention Center out of fear that the state would shut it down first.

Several top officials overseeing the Department of Social Services “resigned” after investigators exposed widespread neglect and abuse of children in the department’s foster care system.

The deputy chief administrative officer in charge of finance, Sharon Judkins, was eased out of her position amid reports of widespread problems in her department. Judkins was being paid \$170,000 a year, making her one of the highest-paid employees in city government \$170,000 a year works out to \$81.73 an hour, which we all know is not much money.

Fortunately, Judkins had a friend in Chief Administrative Officer Byran Marshall – Richmond’s highest paid public official and the mayor’s point man for the stadium campaign – who tried to help her out with a going-away present of \$400,000 in unused vacation pay. That attempted act of generosity is now under investigation by Richmond’s Commonwealth Attorney’s office

Well, at least the developers are happy.

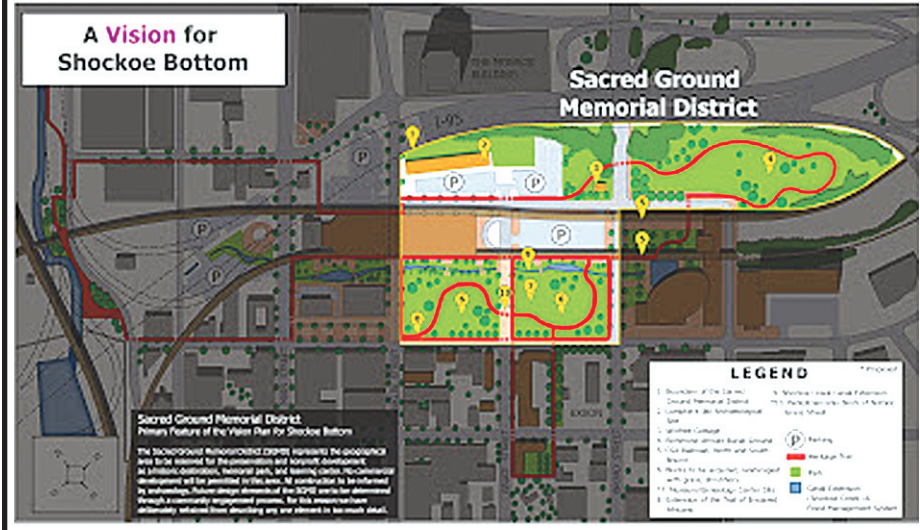
And that’s how Richmond works. The rich 1 percent work with the Marsh-Jones political machine to make sure the 1 percent makes its money and stays on top. The politicians get a little prestige and patronage. And the rest of us get neglected at best and abused at worse.

The funny part of all this is, we don’t have to take it. We can rebel. We can organize. We can change the Way Things Are Done.

Or, we can accept the status quo.

In that case, we will deserve what we get.

There is an alternative to the mayor’s plan



Instead of a stadium in Shockoe Bottom, we’re suggesting a Sacred Ground Memorial District — a park. Then have a real community conversation to decide how this area will be memorialized. Properly done, we could develop a world heritage center that would bring in far more tax and tourist dollars than a minor-league stadium. For a more in-depth look at this plan, see:

[www.shockoebottom.blogspot.com/p/our-proposal.html](http://www.shockoebottom.blogspot.com/p/our-proposal.html)



# In our opinion

## So what do we do now?

This issue of the Defender takes a hard look at who runs Richmond and how they do it. And it’s pretty much the same in every other city and town. (Recommended summer reading: “Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988” by Clarence N. Stone.)

So what do we do about it?

Already in Richmond people are looking toward 2016, when the offices of the Mayor, City Council and School Board will all be up for grabs.

In the past, some local incumbents have gone unchallenged. That’s not likely to happen this time around. The protracted struggle over the mayor’s proposal to put a baseball stadium in historic Shockoe Bottom has opened up a lot of people’s eyes to how business is really done in the River City. And they’re not happy. Nope, not at all.

Richmond is a Democratic town, so inevitably there are a few Republicans who hope to gain from the voters’ disgust with the Dems. But hysterical appeals to fears about God, Guns and Gays have probably won over about all the Democrats and independents ready to move to the right.

The Libertarians made a respectable showing in their recent run for governor, but a party that doesn’t believe in public education, libraries or the Environmental Protection Agency will always have limited appeal.

What’s missing here is a real alternative from the Left.

The U.S. is the only industrialized country that does not have even a labor party. Building a third party in a country dominated by a very powerful 1 percent is a daunting task. But fortunately, it’s not necessary to spend decades building one in order to influence elections.

The Left should take a good, hard look at the Tea Party movement. Those folks meet, decide on a set of principles and goals and then use them as a litmus test for any politician interested in their votes. Sometimes they run candidates, sometimes they just threaten to run. And they have an effect. An evil, thoroughly reactionary effect, but an effect nonetheless.

One view on the Left is that we need to pick one or two basic principles and stick to them. Don’t get all worried about the things that divide us, just stay with what we have in common.

That lowest-common-denominator approach inevitably leads to abandoning the needs of people of color, women, the LGBTQ community, immigrants, unions, the youth, the elderly – in effect, the majority of the population. That’s no way to “broaden” a movement.

Instead, we need to recognize the urgent need for ALL of us to fight against racism, sexism, LG-BTQ oppression and so on. Solidarity is the glue that will hold our movement together. And, unlike almost all the liberal nonprofits, we need to take up the issue of war and military spending. That’s where all our money is going. And we owe it to the rest of the world.

Out of all the many organizations, coalitions and alliances we have here in Virginia, the one that has done the best job of uniting people across lines of race, gender, sexual orientation, age – while also addressing the issue of war – is the Virginia People’s Assembly for Jobs, Peace and Justice.

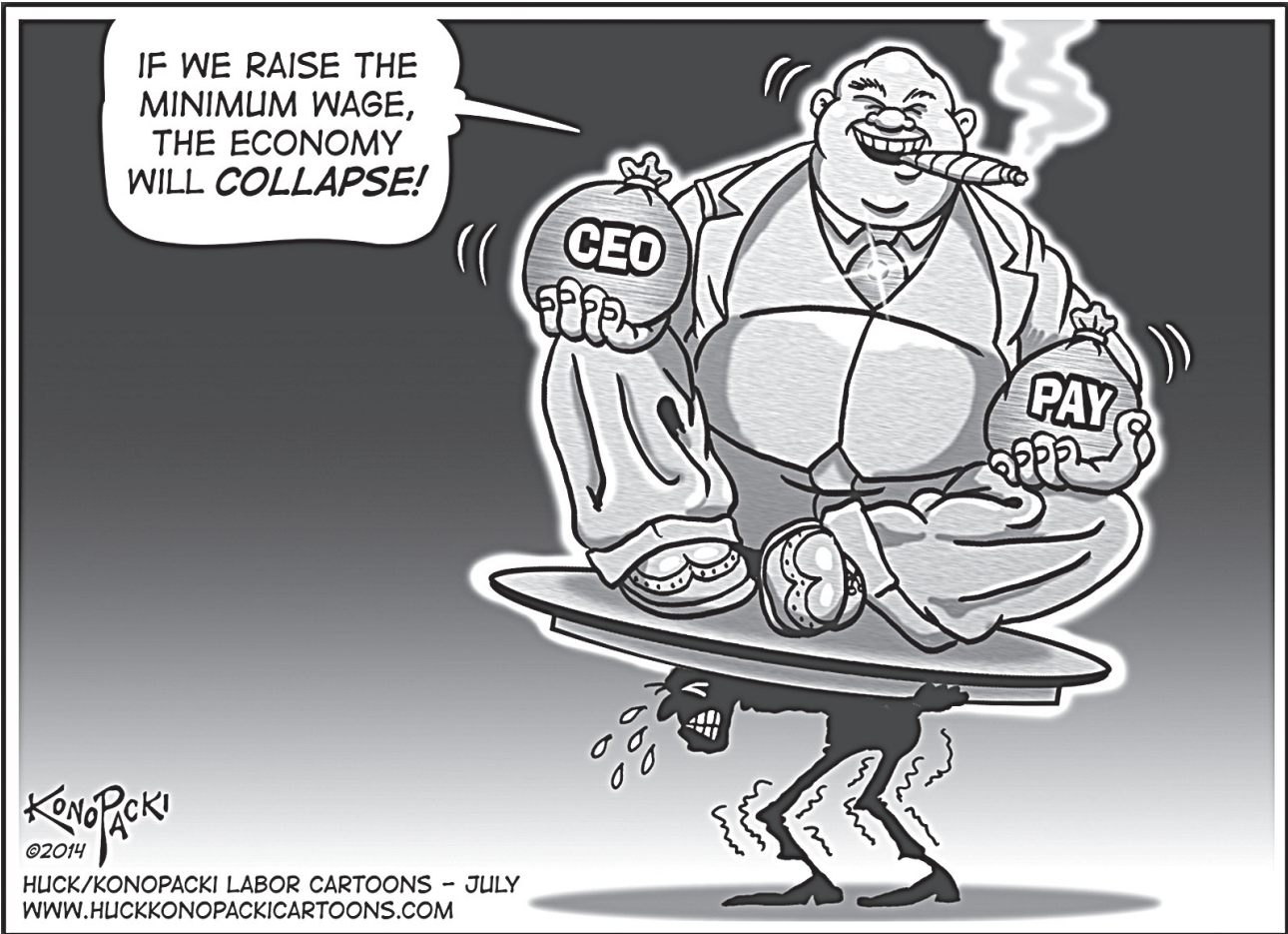
The VPA will soon start preparing for its 7th annual conference, which in the last two years brought together hundreds of activists from around the state for networking, education and planning.

This year the Defenders will be raising a proposal for a 2016 electoral campaign, based on the VPA.

There are no guarantees in life, and we might work really hard and not show any gains, at least at first.

But if your house is on fire and there’s only one way out, you’d better be prepared to run through the flames.

More on this soon.



## Letters to the Editor

### City lacks transparency

I am writing to urge The Virginia Defender to examine and report on the developments in the Shockoe Stadium, Monroe Park, Tredegar, and Pear Street schemes that are before the Richmond City Council. I have included Monroe Park because there is still strong opposition to privatizing the Park and this issue is not going away.

I grew up in Church Hill and attended Bellevue Elementary and Henderson Middle schools and I have a strong connection to the Richmond Community. I now live in Oakland. Yes, I pay 9% sales tax (not on food), CA income tax and high real estate tax. But there are ethics and open government laws in my city that give me confidence (most of the time ) that my taxes are going to good use.

Richmond’s City Council and Mayor repeatedly claim the City’s problems are financial. The City schools’ problems are financial. Not so. The City’s problems are rooted in a lack of confidence in the decision-making of City officials. Whether or not good or bad decisions are being made, City decisions are made now in pre-meeting conferences, non-public meetings with developers, and in shadowy quasi-government bodies, like EDAs. No one can be sure how a decision was made or will be made in the future.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Because I feel a strong connection to Richmond and the friends, schoolmates, and family in Richmond, I urge The Defender to “follow the money” and examine the decisions that City officials are making. Do these decisions increase public participation? Are they responsive to residents’ needs and do they create confidence in the laws that protect residents? Who is benefiting the most?

Many places in the U.S. are not burdened by the history of the Civil War and slavery. These places have strong public participation and very good public services, like schools, transit, roads and housing. When I visit, I still experience Richmond’s history as a dark cloud. Many Richmonders from every background accept the belief that the City has always been corrupt, and therefore it always will be. This belief means giving up on many hard-working, smart and gracious people and the beautiful place we all love.

The best, and only solution I can think of, is to get this history out in the open. Why does the City still honor the Con-

federacy in so many names of streets and buildings? What is the purpose of Monument Avenue? Why is so little known about the Underground Railroad, slave jails and burial grounds and Southern abolitionists? I am certain that the City Council and Mayor, who will lead a community dialogue on the history of slavery and bring Richmond’s residents into the process, will be a powerful force for both healing and prosperity – beyond belief.

Pierce Powell  
OAKLAND, CA

### Venture Richmond, the mayor & Tredegar

The administration of Mayor Dwight Jones is laying siege to the city’s oldest and most historic resources. One of the city’s oldest neighborhoods, Shockoe Bottom, is targeted for a mammoth, 28-foot hole for a stadium at ground zero of the nation’s slave trade. Monroe Park, the city’s oldest, was given away for \$1 per year for 30 years to a conservancy owned by VCU and the Mayor’s cronies. And the city’s James River and Kanawha Canal, built under the direction of George Washington in 1785, is now slated to be irreparably damaged for yet another city amphitheater.

The canal has been listed on the Na-

tional Register of Historic Places since the 1980s, but that did not stop Venture Richmond from proposing to lower the canal banks to a level below the historical level of water in the canal and to remove half the historic towpath. Mayor Jones serves as president of Venture Richmond, which sought to tamp down concern over the obvious destruction of the canal by promising a thorough Section 106 review under the auspices of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. But the day after receiving final approval of the City Planning Commission for the amphitheater, Venture Richmond withdrew from the promised Section 106 review.

Many slaves and immigrants sacrificed their lives to build the canal and damage to it is completely unnecessary. Obvious alternatives, such as putting the main Venture Richmond stage on Brown’s Island, which Venture Richmond rents from the city for \$1 per year, were not even considered. In addition, the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association has many concerns about noise, parking and crowds. Venture Richmond has not responded to any of these community concerns.

Another group, Better Government Richmond, has questioned the process that Venture Richmond used to push this proposal through the City’s Urban Design Committee and Planning Commission.

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**We welcome letters, while reserving the right to edit for clarity, length and style. To submit a letter, an item for the Community Calendar or to place an ad, contact:**

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Like the Shockoe stadium proposal, the amphitheater plan does not appear to be in accordance with the City’s Downtown Master Plan, which seeks to protect and promote historical assets.

So now we await the bulldozers, which in a day will do permanent damage to the 230-year-old canal and make it difficult to rewater the canal between Tredegar and Maymont. The citizens demand accountability, respect and that the Mayor end this siege of our historic resources.

Scott Burger  
RICHMOND

*Scott Burger is an Oregon Hill resident and longtime Richmond activist who serves on the executive committees of the Sierra Club Falls of the James and Better Government Richmond.*

### Police abuse in Carytown?

Early evening on June 22, local grocery shoppers were treated to a vulgar display of excessive force by the Richmond Police Department. All of the details are not known to me, as I was one of the shoppers who, upon exiting the Kroger, saw an elderly black man being detained by the police.

Employees of the store were speaking with an officer and the man, who was presently being sat on the curb. Now, because we have seen the Richmond Police Department overreact and overreach on many an occasion, I have made it a habit to stand and witness, if not film, these incidents.

Myself and perhaps a dozen other people in the parking lot now looked on nervously as cop cruiser after cop cruiser pulled up on the scene. The man was now surrounded by four officers. This was clearly overkill and was causing this previously calm man to become very agitated. The man to my left was already filming on his phone.

All of a sudden, the man being detained tried to remove himself from the situation. But as he got up, he was immediately tackled and his face violently pressed into the asphalt. “Stop resisting!” we heard the familiar refrain from the officers. One cop now had his Taser pointed at the man’s back, who was being held on his stomach by no less than three grown men. Apparently the man being pinned to the ground was not docile enough, so the Taser was put into use.

My stomach came up in my throat as the man screamed for help. Those around me

watched angrily and helplessly. We all wanted to help this man, but knowing this would result immediately in each of our arrests made us hold back.

Now the man was subdued and lay silent on the ground. More officers showed up. A van. An ambulance. People around me began to give the police a piece of their mind before storming off in disgust. The man was handcuffed, strapped to a gurney and taken away in the ambulance.

This scene repeats itself all over our city. The RPD shows itself over and over again to be reactionary, always ready for a fight. This incident could have been resolved peacefully and with grace. But instead, we are reminded that the Richmond Police Department is incapable of these things.

While excessive force by the police in Richmond and Virginia as a whole is nothing new, what was new to me was the almost universal reaction of the people around me. These were everyday people out during their Sunday grocery shopping, not anti-police activists. Yet there was general concern and almost everybody stopped to see if this man was in trouble. Not in legal trouble, but was he in danger? People filmed. People argued with the police to not be so unnecessarily rough. This is the culture I want to see in the city.

Be wary. Not of each other, but of the police who show they cannot handle the power they’ve been given. Watch out for one another. Stop. Witness. Film.

Ben Crabtree  
RICHMOND

### Shockoe Bottom has real potential for tourism

I was just in Bermuda, where the primary exhibit in the National Museum (indeed, most of the first floor) is about slavery, and where almost every historic site I visited somehow connected with the issue.

African culture is deeply woven into a great deal that the tourists encounter, enjoy, and pay for. The most impressive cultural offering to visitors is the Bermuda Gombey Dancers, who portray the African traditions which survived the onslaught of slavery.

When one considers that 80 percent of the tourists going to Bermuda are Americans, one sees that the Bottom can indeed be a real draw!

Randolph Bell  
RICHMOND

### Shockoe Continued from page 1

“With the full engagement of the community, especially the region’s African American and descendant communities, the appropriate commemoration of Shockoe Bottom can help to expand understanding and inspire hope. A positive result depends upon the meaningful involvement of the public, of our preservation partners and of our national audience.”

As everyone who is still warm and breathing now knows, Richmond Maryor Dwight C. Jones is trying mightily to convince City Council to approve his \$200 million Revitalize RVA development plan, a key part of which involves building a minor-league baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom.

And he’s trying to do this as this former capital of the slavery-defending Confederacy approaches the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War and the end of more than 150 years of slavery in Richmond.

So who is this Mayor Jones? Some dyed-in-the-wool Southern racist and Tea-Party-backed Republican extremist?

No, he happens to be a locally prominent, Northern-born, African-American Baptist minister and newly-elected chair of the Virginia Democratic Party.

And he has the support of newly-elected Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe, who – just one week after taking office in January

– took the apparently unprecedented step of coming to a meeting of Richmond City Council and weighing in on a local issue: expressing his support for the mayor’s “development” plan.

And while Mayor Jones tries to deflect criticism of his stadium proposal by saying there also will be \$30 million for commemorating the Shockoe Bottom slave trade, he neglects to mention that that money is not included in his development proposal.

No, \$5 million would come from City Council, \$11 million from the state legislature and the other \$14 million from a private fund-raising campaign that has yet to be launched. Further, both City Council and the General Assembly have stated that any contribution they make toward memorializing the slave trade is not dependent on or connected in any way with a Shockoe Bottom baseball stadium.

Mayor Jones originally unveiled his Revitalize RVA proposal last Nov. 11 at his own press conference in Shockoe Bottom, setting off a firestorm of outraged opposition that has absorbed the city’s attention ever since.

On May – just minutes before City Council was to vote on the plan, the mayor removed it from the council’s agenda, after five of the nine council members – a majority – had publicly declared their intention to vote no.

Mayor Jones has since repeatedly

## Jones, Marsh, McQuinn: Worshipping the Shockoe Stadium Golden Calf?

By Paul Goldman

Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones, State Senator Henry Marsh and State Delegate Delores McQuinn would all agree I have talked one-on-one with more people about the Shockoe Baseball stadium than all three of them combined – indeed, the most of anyone in Richmond. Due to my “watchdog” role for WTVR, both on-air and in columns for their website, it is perhaps easier for people to talk to a “familiar face,” as it were.

Famed reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein said “follow the money” in explaining how they uncovered former President Richard Nixon’s Watergate conspiracy. My WTVR columns first exposed and explained the no-bid, backroom, secretive, legally suspect nature of many aspects to Jones’ Shockoe Stadium deal. Does the Woodward and Bernstein journalistic maxim apply here too?

This I leave for others to speculate. I prefer facts provable beyond any reasonable doubt.

In 1994, then-Delegate Jones and Senator Marsh went to extraordinary lengths to PREVENT DEVELOPERS, RICHMOND’S MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL from building the Shockoe Bottom baseball stadium now proposed by Mayor Jones! House Joint Resolution 198, introduced on Jan. 25, 1994 by Jones and backed by Marsh, would have made it “necessary to preserve the rich historical background of the east end of Richmond” before any shovel got put into the ground. <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?941+ful+HJ198>.

In 2005, then-Mayor Doug Wilder assigned me to review a proposal Shockoe Bottom stadium pushed by many of the same interests now backing Mayor Jones. I concluded the proposal –before getting to the “history” aspect – failed not only an honest financial analysis, but flunked the “smell test” due to certain “sweetheart” and no-bid contractual maneuvering. Wilder killed it. Jones, Marsh and McQuinn applauded his action.

Since I served as State Democratic Party Chairman, and once had to bring legal action against the Party to protect the voting rights of African-Americans in Richmond, you may be thinking: “Come on, PG, don’t tell me political flip-flops are a surprise?”

Of course not. But the historic, financial and economic development facts relevant to a Shockoe Baseball stadium have not materially changed since 1994 or 2005. The average Richmond public school building was built in 1955. The Diamond was built in 1985. Mayor Jones refuses to put the same energy behind a plan – backed by Gov. McAuliffe, and Senators Kaine and Warner - to modernize Virginia’s oldest K-12 locality facilities as he is doing to build a new 100 percent publicly funded minor league ballpark.

This is no typical flip-flop.

(1) The proposed lease of land to the Economic Development Authority – controlled



by the city’s politicians – violates Section 9 of Article VIII of the State Constitution. <http://constitution.legis.virginia.gov/>.

(2) The proposal to give out the stadium construction contract on a no-bid basis – letting those running the EDA pick whomever they want – violates Section 15.2-4902 of the Code of Virginia. <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+15.2-4902>.

(3) The proposed no-bid contract clause guaranteeing a huge ownership interest to an unnamed entity whose identity is kept secret by the agreement’s terms violates the federal constitution, as may other similar-type provisions in different documents. <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/488/469/case.html>.

(4) The proposal has been cleverly reworked to thwart the people’s referendum right to reject the more than \$100 million in total stadium public financing costs provided by Section 7B.05 of the City Charter. [http://www.richmondgov.com/CommissionCharter/documents/Charter\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.richmondgov.com/CommissionCharter/documents/Charter_booklet.pdf).

(5) The proposal manipulates the EDA law in order to bypass the competitive public bid law intended to protect the public treasury on such huge projects where open competition could save money and there is sufficient time for a fair, open and transparent process. <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+15.2-4900>

#### CONCLUSION:

Based on the record, Jones, along with Marsh and McQuinn, had ALWAYS PREVIOUSLY OPPOSED the VERY SHOCKOE STADIUM PROPOSAL they now champion, claiming it unfair to the people and businesses in their legislative districts.

Many thousands of Richmonders have thus asked me the obvious question: Why did they change? I answer by starting to go through the above facts.

But before finishing most say: “Paul, I kinda suspected that.”

As baseball great Yogi Berra observed, “some things are too coincidental to be a coincidence.”

*Paul Goldman is a political commentator and former Chair of the Virginia Democratic Party.*

promised to reintroduce the proposal, insisting that some council members and members of the public didn’t really understand it yet.

Meanwhile, stadium opponents are promoting an alternative plan for the Bottom, one that includes economic development but would support an eight-block Sacred Ground Memorial Park and heritage tourism site instead of a ballpark. (See page 7.)

Vice President Ulmer finished up her press conference remarks by saying, “To many of you in the audience, who have dedicated countless hours to this worthy cause – thank you. Your efforts have helped to elevate the importance of this place in immeasurable ways.

“We hope the National Trust’s designation of Shockoe Bottom as one of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2014 and as one of our National Treasures – where the National Trust is making a deep organizational investment to secure their future – will prove to be powerful tools for continuing to raise awareness and will help rally resources and support to save this endangered site – so that for generations to come we can learn the hard lessons of what happened here at Shockoe Bottom.

“May the legacy of our ancestors be remembered and live on here forever.”

For more information, visit:

<http://www.preservationnation.org>



## international &amp; antiwar news

# A statement by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)

## NO MORE U.S. WAR ON IRAQ! UNITY STATEMENT & CALL FOR ACTION

Again and again, the U.S. government chooses the disaster of war that creates a never-ending cycle of tragedy. Today's escalating crisis in Iraq is a direct result of the illegal U.S.-led invasion and occupation of that country.

The U.S. government used the false pretext of eliminating "weapons of mass destruction" to mask a grab for power and oil. The result was the brutal murder of more than a million Iraqis, the deaths of thousands of U.S. soldiers, the creation of millions of refugees, over a trillion dollars spent and the destabilization of an entire region.

Today, the U.S. government considers sending more ground troops, renewed air strikes, drone attacks, Special Ops forces, privatized troops, arms shipments and other covert operations, while it is hard-pressed to identify its allies and its military and political aims.

We say No! Military intervention has not worked to bring peace; the bitter cycle must end.

### We call for:

- Immediate withdrawal of all U.S. military and non-military forces from Iraq
- No military intervention – troops, bombs, drones, covert operations, arms
- Money for Jobs and Education, Not for War and Incarceration
- Say No to War in Iraq actions – vigils, demonstrations, rallies, forums, media, petitions, lobbying President Obama and Congress
- Emergency day-after actions if the US.. starts air strikes

This statement has been endorsed by scores of organizations, including the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. To add your name or your group's name, please visit: [www.unacpeace.org](http://www.unacpeace.org)

## UNAC Demands: 'US Hands off Ukraine & Venezuela!'

The United States government is the main instigator of the present crises in both countries.

The hypocrisy of Secretary of State John Kerry's statement on Face the Nation that, "You just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pretext," is beyond belief. What about the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, or regime change in Libya, or the threats to bomb Syria and attack Iran?

The US has waged a massive propaganda campaign of misinformation, distortion, and outright lies and the national media has taken the State Department's "facts" and disseminated them without question or challenge. News about the US/EU role in creating the current crisis is buried.

The US is the only country that has its troops throughout the world in over 120 countries. It sends drones and special operations forces to kill anyone and anywhere it chooses and uses its vast economic power to undercut any government that will not submit to its policies. Although there is lip service to concerns about democracy and sovereignty, the reality is that the US acts in the interests of preserving its imperialist power and wealth.

Ukraine and Venezuela are not exceptions to this rule of imperialist intervention. For 20 years, \$5 billion was invested in Ukraine to support the opposition and to create tens of thousands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to move the country more towards the US and EU and their policies. In an intercepted phone call between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine, she discusses who the US wants to be the head of the new illegitimate government, and lo and behold, the US pick, Arseniy Yatseniuk, is named as the interim Ukrainian leader. This is clearly outside intervention in the affairs of a sovereign country that would not be tolerated if directed at the US or its allies.

What are the real objectives and why is Russia so alarmed? Could it be the US-NATO campaign to militarily surround Russia and bring neighboring countries into the western military and financial orbit? Might it be that the largest supply of natural gas in the world is in Russia and the pipelines go through Ukraine, or that global warming is opening the Arctic to oil drilling and Russia borders the Arctic? It is clear that Russia will not passively sit by while the Western-backed coup, led by violent fascist forces and local billionaires, overthrows a democratically elected government and installs a puppet regime on its border.

Confederate flags and fascist symbols go up in Kiev City Hall

By treaty, Russia can have 25,000 troops in Crimea. To protect its military base there and to protect the people in the Eastern and Southern parts of the country, where the coup is not supported, Russia has moved some troops to the Ukrainian border and into the Crimean peninsula. Many in the east and south are fearful of the new coup government and the neo-Nazi and nationalist forces that led the street demonstrations.

The escalating threats of military and economic aggression towards Russia should not be taken lightly. Washington's recklessness and disregard for humanity have resurrected the worst vestiges of cold war politics. They have created a dangerous situation that can generate a real war with an adversary with a powerful military of its own.

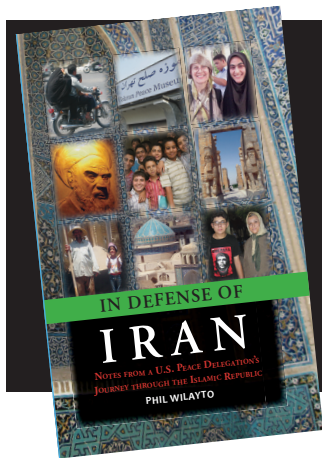
The US is similarly intervening in Venezuela. There, the US government wants a return to policies which brought the benefits of that nation's oil wealth to a privileged few. The Bolivarian Revolution has been supported by a majority of Venezuelans in election after election. Yet the United States persists in violating the sovereignty and self-determination of the Venezuelan people. In 2002, the US supported a coup against the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. During this coup, Chavez was forced onto a US military plane to be taken out of the country. The Venezuelan people and military were able to rescue Chavez and defeat the coup. However, the US has continued to intervene in Venezuela causing the government of Nicolas Maduro to expel three US officials for trying to organize students for anti-government protests.

As long as the United States is committed to aggression, the whole world is endangered, just as Ukraine and Venezuela are. Libya fell, Syria is under attack, there is a "pivot to Asia", and Africom controls the military in almost every African nation. We must demand that our government stop its policy of imperialist domination which generates conflict throughout the world.

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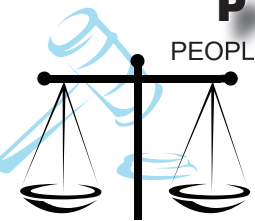
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