

*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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Late Summer 2016



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Who will be the next group of politicians to occupy Richmond City Hall? And what are their proposals, if any, for how to move the city forward?

**Support continues to build for a
SHOCKOE BOTTOM
MEMORIAL PARK**

For the latest news, see page 11

***A challenge to all
candidates for
Richmond public offices:***

**A REAL
program
to move RVA
forward!**

As we go to press, no less than eight candidates are running to be the next mayor of Richmond. Twenty-nine are competing for the nine seats on City Council. And 22 are duking it out for the nine School Board positions.

All these electoral hopefuls say the same thing: They're for full funding for city schools, competent management of City departments and, of course, honesty, integrity and transparency at City Hall.

But almost none of them has offered any concrete proposals for how to get there.

And so, in the spirit of civic responsibility, The Virginia Defender is offering a very concrete program: nearly 80 specific ideas covering 18 areas of city life.

We are challenging each candidate to say how much of this program they will pledge to support. Our endorsements in the next Defender will depend on how they respond.

Most of these proposals also would apply to other cities, towns and counties across the state, so we'd love to hear what all our readers think.

regional & national news

A Draft Manifesto for Black Liberation



By Saladin Muhammad

There are many battlefronts of struggle that engage the Black masses in resisting the racist national oppression and working-class exploitation of the capitalist system that places profits over human needs and rights. If organized and connected by a radical program, these many battlefronts would constitute a national Black liberation movement with immense power.

Aligned with the struggles of other oppressed and working-class people, the Black liberation movement could play a leading role in setting a transformative revolutionary direction and a framework for mobilizing the broadest and deepest sources of mass-based transformative power.

The forming of local and statewide Black liberation assemblies to discuss and refine the Draft Manifesto for Black liberation and to plan coordinated actions begins a process of rebuilding the national Black liberation movement from the bottom up and anchored in the communities and organizations of the Black working class.

This studying of the Draft Manifesto and the forming of Black liberation assemblies will help to develop the protest movement that shaped an important national sentiment of Black resistance as a first phase into the powerful movement that must continue to be developed for revolutionary change.

If folks want copies of the Draft Manifesto to study and use to unite battlefronts into local and statewide Black liberation assemblies in Virginia, North and South Carolina, you can contact Sister Annie Dove at: Afdove.8@gmail.com.

Saladin Muhammad is a long-time political activist, founding member of Black Workers for Justice, retired International Representative and founding member of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union and the Southern Workers Assembly.

Victory in the Boston school bus drivers fight!

By Phil Wilayto

The Defender has reported before on the struggles of a feisty union local in Boston, Local 8751 of the United Steel Workers union, which represents the city's public school bus drivers.

The local was founded in the mid-70s during the Boston school busing crisis, in which a racist movement tried to physically prevent the integration of the city's public schools. The bus drivers, led by a core of anti-racist activists, built their union on the basis of resistance to racism, strong ties with the community and solidarity with a wide range of progressive struggles.

[Full disclosure: Back in the 70s, this writer walked the picket line with the drivers during one of their many wildcat strikes which succeeded in beating back company and City attempts to destroy the union.]

On Nov. 1, 2013, four of the union's leaders – President-elect Andre Francois, Vice President-elect Steve Kirschbaum, Financial Secretary-elect Steve Gillis and Grievance Committee Chair-elect Garry Murchison – were unjustly fired by the Veolia Corporation, a private, for-profit company contracted by the City to run the school bus system. The four drivers went for the next two years without a salary while fighting to regain their positions.

During all this time they continued to receive the strong support of the local's members. On April 30, 2015, the members demonstrated that support by re-electing all four fired leaders by a huge landslide in the largest voter turnout in the local's history.

Veolia is a French-based global conglomerate with a record of union busting around the world. Its MO is to privatize government services such as transportation,

energy, environmental protection and water and then proceed to try and break the unions representing the workers, thus maximizing its profits.

In Boston, the company's attacks on the union came at the same time the City government was initiating a massive budget-cutting campaign that called for closing schools, cutting back summer programs for at-risk youth and reductions in union staff and services throughout the system.

Victory in this struggle finally came this past December, when more than 400 union members unanimously ratified tentative agreements negotiated by the local's Team Solidarity, with help from the international union. The agreement called for a new, four-year contract, fully retroactive, with improved wages and benefits – and the immediate reinstatement of the four fired union leaders.

There also were provisions to resolve a backlog of nearly 700 grievances, as well as to protect the integrity of the pension system, plus a Job/Union Security Agreement with the City to guarantee full union and contract rights until 2019, regardless of what entity manages school bus transportation, whether another vendor or the City itself.

These are difficult times for all working people. It's not easy to win any kind of union struggle. But Local 8751 has demonstrated time and time again that it can be done, if the members just stick together, the union develops and maintains strong ties to the community and the rest of the labor movement is ready to show its support.

Congratulations to Local 8751, its members and its battle-hardened leadership!

THE DEFENDERS for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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Email: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com

Web: www.DefendersFJE.blo.gspot.com

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.

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

community news

news u can use

Nurse Hotline

The Capital Area Health Network has a **Nurse Advice Line** that offers free, confidential, professional advice on health-care concerns 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Information is provided by a Registered Nurse (RN), including referrals to appropriate care settings for health problems requiring medical treatment, as well as home remedies, when appropriate. If you or a family member has medical symptoms, concerns or needs medical advice, call any time to speak to a Registered Nurse. 804-420-1286 or 855-231-6132 (toll free).

Free Child Car Seats

The Virginia Department of Health offers free car seats for eligible low-income families, along with car safety seat education: a one-hour class on the importance of car seats and safety, including how to install a car seat. Contact your local Health Department for service times and appointments. Eligibility information, English and Spanish, is available at: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/lhd/west-pied/documents/2014/pdf/Education%20Program%20English.pdf>

Free VCU classes for older residents

Are you 60 years of age or older? You may qualify for a free education at Virginia Commonwealth University. The program is for "senior citizens" – folks 60 or over who have legally lived in the state for at least one year. If your taxable income is not more than \$23,850 (for Virginia income tax purposes) for the year before you start classes, you can take a course for academic credit. If your taxable income was more than \$23,850, you can still "audit" the course – that is, take the course but receive no credit. Either way, you still have to pay for textbooks, laboratory fees, art fees, etc. Other restrictions apply. For more information, see Senior Citizens Higher Education Program at: <http://rar.vcu.edu/registration/senior/>

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

The Virginia Defender**'Free from Fear'**

By Micky Jordan

Southerners On New Ground (SONG) is a regional Queer Liberation organization made up of people of color, immigrants, undocumented people, people with disabilities, working-class, rural and small town, LGBTQ people in the South.

SONG believes that people are bound together by a shared desire for ourselves, each other and our communities to survive and thrive. SONG believe that Community Organizing is the best way for us to build collective power and transform the South. Out of this belief, SONG is committed to building freedom movements rooted in southern traditions like community organizing, political education, storytelling, music, breaking bread, resistance, humor, performance, critical thinking and celebration.

In Richmond, SONG is creating a campaign called Free from Fear. The main goal is to put an end to police profiling, harassment and violence in Richmond. SONG is focusing on this in a few key ways: working to implement a Community Review Board for police accountability, helping facilitate LGBTQ and racial justice police training, and working to change police policies and procedures so they work more for our people.

SONG, along with the LGBT Safety Advisory Group at Virginia Commonwealth University, planned an event called "From RVA to Stonewall: A Trans Listening

"African slavery, as it exists in the United States, is a moral, a social and a political blessing."

-- JEFFERSON DAVIS, *Mississippi slaveowner and president of the Confederate States of America.*

Why does the City of Richmond continue to own and maintain its towering memorial to Jefferson Davis?

That statue – and all the other Confederate-honoring monstrosities on Monument Avenue – should be taken down and moved to museums where they can be displayed in a truthful historical context.

Untill that happens, our tax dollars will continue to pay for maintaining these shrines to the men who defended slavery. And Richmond will continue to tell the world that we think that's just fine.

TAKE THEM DOWN!

From left, Dr. Neal Holmes, president of the Pan-African Unity Movement of Richmond, Va.; the Rev. Rodney Hunter, pastor of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church and president of the Richmond Chapter of SCLC; and speakers Nefta Freeman, Dr. Nguaka Lagoka and Maurice Carney.

Photo by Phil Wilayto

Africa & Diaspora topics of Richmond Pan-African forum

Political developments in Africa and struggles in the African Diaspora were the topics addressed July 29 at a forum sponsored by the Pan-Africa Unity Movement of Richmond, Va.

The featured speakers were Nefta

Session for Law Enforcement." A panel of transgender folks was brought together to share stories about police profiling and violence. Law enforcement present could only listen and were not allowed to respond or ask questions. The stories showed the bias many officers have toward trans folks and how much that bias is deepened with trans folks of color.

SONG is officially launching Free from Fear in September and is working on getting our platform of police accountability to the mayoral and city council candidates.

Micky Jordan is the current SONG fellow in Richmond SONG and works with a group of member leaders and core members on SONG's campaign, workshops and events. He can be reached at: freefromfearva@southernersonnewground.org

Freeman of the Institute for Policy Studies and an organizer with Washington, D.C.-based Pan-African Community Action; Dr. Nguaka Lagoka, director of the Revival of Pan-African Forum; and Maurice Carney, executive director of Friends of the Congo.

The presentations were followed by a wide-ranging discussion among the speakers and audience members, addressing issues on the Continent as well as in the United States.

One question raised was where to find news about current developments in Africa.

Some of the suggestions were:

www.blackagendareport.com

www.imixwhatilike.org

www.pambazuka.org

panafricannews.blogspot.com

<http://saharareporters.com>

Twitter: hashtag any African country

The forum was held at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Richmond's East End.

Attention VCU Students!

As a native of the Greater Richmond area and a student at Virginia Commonwealth University, I find it important to be informed about the issues facing the communities we live in.

Earlier this spring I had the pleasure of meeting the Virginia Defenders. The news and analysis written by the Defenders is important and provides a narrative that is often ignored.

The Virginia Defender is produced by an all-volunteer staff. To other students who may be reading this, the Defender will be distributed on campus by students such as myself and I encourage more students to volunteer.

Having volunteers on campus to distribute will enable more students to be informed about the issues facing our community.

These are important issues and dialogues that should be started. I hope you will join us. To volunteer, please write me at: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

Jessica, VCU

community news

EPA's Lead & Copper Rule: Politicians say, 'Don't Worry!'

By Queen Zakia Shabazz

As I reflect back over 20 years of advocating on behalf of lead-poisoned children and their families, I am filled with varying emotions. I remember getting the diagnosis of my son's elevated blood lead level and thinking, "Elevated blood lead level – that doesn't sound as bad as lead poisoning." In fact that's what he was/is: lead poisoned!

That was in February 1996. Purportedly Zaki was poisoned by lead-based paint. This was determined after a risk assessment and lead inspection of our house. I learned that lead can be a silent killer and we would not have known that he was poisoned unless he had a blood test. We would not have gotten a blood test unless I requested one.

I learned that our children are still being used as guinea pigs or canaries in the mines. Remember when canaries were sent into mines to determine if the mines were safe? If gases were present, the canary would die and the miners would know to get out immediately.

Today, our children are being used to determine which dwellings are safe and which are toxic. Although we know that houses built before 1978 most likely contain lead-based paint, we still allow families with vulnerable children to live in these ill-maintained houses and don't act until a child is tested positive for high levels of lead in their blood streams.

How backwards is that? Especially when we know that lead poisoning causes permanent and irreversible brain damage, even in low doses.

Chances are that Zaki or any of my other children living in the house, any of the children living in the neighborhood could have gotten poisoned by lead-contaminated soil, lead paint on their walls and even lead in their drinking water. Think of Flint, Mich., where reportedly upwards of 9,000 children have been poisoned by lead leaching from the pipes into their water.

And politicians say, "Don't worry."

In 1991 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) passed the Lead and Copper Rule, which required utilities companies to take water samples at homes in areas that still have lead water service lines, lead plumbing or lead-soldered copper plumbing. Utilities companies were to test in homes for elevated lead levels, but utilities officials were more concerned with the program cost – an estimated \$40 million a year to administer – than they were with the health of Virginia families.

When we compare the water in Flint, Mich., to the water in other cities, we must be aware that the infrastructures of this country's old cities are all the same, built with the same materials. For years we have had instances of schools bringing in bottled

water from other localities because of lead issues: Jersey City, N.J.; the District of Columbia; Baltimore, Md.; and Newport News, Va., to name a few. Most of our older cities are Flints waiting to happen.

Cities with 50,000 or more people that still had some lead water-service lines were immediately affected by the EPA's rule. Richmond was one of 18 localities immediately affected. According to the EPA, approximately 20 percent of lead in drinking water nationwide comes from corrosion of lead service lines between the water lines and the house.

The city of Richmond was to comply with the new rule by doing the following:

1. taking water samples in high risk areas
2. implementing or enhancing corrosion control treatment
3. starting a public education campaign and
4. if the corrosion control program fell short of being effective by 1998, then the lines would have to be replaced.

Localities would have approximately 15 years to replace ALL their lead lines. So by 2013, all of Richmond's lead lines should have been replaced or an effective corrosion control program implemented.

I can't speak for anyone else, but I haven't seen or heard of anyone getting inspections of their water pipes, nor have I seen massive replacement of leaded water lines.

Then the question becomes this: was EPA's Lead and Copper Rule just for the books, or was it actually to be carried out and enforced?

A Nov. 3, 2015, memorandum from EPA Director Peter Grevatt of the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water reads: "It is important for large systems and primacy agencies to take the steps necessary to ensure that appropriate corrosion control treatment is maintained at all times, thus ensuring that public health is protected."

What about the children of Flint? What about the children of Virginia in Richmond, Petersburg, Danville, Newport News? Will we continue to see thousands of children afflicted before they are tested?

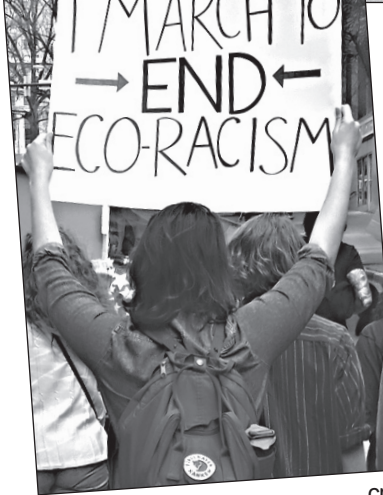
While politicians say "Don't worry."

Queen Zakia Shabazz is Founder and National Director of United Parents Against Lead National, Inc., based in Chesterfield.



With colorful banners, signs and puppets, hundreds of people march on the Virginia State Capitol Feb. 20, stopping in front of the Cary Street headquarters of the Dominion energy corporation. Their demand: a reversal of state permits allowing Dominion to dump toxic coal ash wastewater into the James and Potomac rivers, both of which flow into the already endangered Chesapeake Bay. The dangers seem obvious to experts and the general public alike, but Dominion is the largest non-party donor to state politicians, who rarely deny its requests. The action was sponsored by No ACP (Atlantic Coast Pipeline) and other organizations.

Photos by Phil Wilayto



After a rally on Richmond's Brown island, hundreds of people march on the mansion of Gov. Terry McAuliffe. The July 23 protest demanded an end to gas pipelines, coal ash dumping and offshore drilling. The rally and march were initiated by the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. Next up: A statewide Day of Action on Aug. 18.

No to Dominion - & the pols who serve them!

Anger against Dominion, Virginia's politically powerful electric company, has been rising in response to an increasing number of issues: the company's role in the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, fracking, coal ash dumping, plans for a third nuclear reactor at North Anna – the list goes on and on. Meanwhile, the State Corporation Commission acts more like a PR firm for Dominion than a regulatory agency

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Talk to the Editor!

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2-3 pm

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

is published quarterly on the first Thursday of the month, starting in March. Information for the Community Calendar must be received by the Friday before the publication date. Please include the name of the event, the event sponsor, contact information, time, date, place and any admission charge.

Readers: Be sure to call ahead to make sure the information listed is still current. Note: Listing of an event does not necessarily imply an endorsement by this newspaper.

To place a display ad with more information, or for events with an admission charge of more than \$10, please contact our advertising department at (804) 644-5834 or e-mail DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

ONGOING - RICHMOND

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

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

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

ASWAN MEETING – Third Thursday of the month, 2-4 pm, Legal Aid Justice Center, 123 E. Broad St. ASWAN is Richmond's homeless self-advocacy organization. To be a voting member, you must be homeless or formerly homeless. Non-homeless allies may become advisory members.

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

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

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2016 PLANNING MEETING – First Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8 pm, Diversity Richmond, 1407 Sherwood Ave. A planning meeting for Richmond's 2016 Transgender Day of Remembrance, scheduled for Nov. 20th. Information: <https://goo.gl/Ei2xqo>.

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

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

WMMT'S CALLS FROM HOME – Every Monday, 7-9 pm, at WMMT Hot 88.7 FM. This radio station records messages for prisoners in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia state prisons from 7-9 pm and then broadcasts the messages from 9-10 pm. Call 888-396-1208 to leave a message. For more info: [wmmt.org/calls-fromhome](http://www.wmmt.org/calls-fromhome).

RICHMOND EVENTS

Fri., Aug. 19 – **ARTISTS FOR ACTION** – An all-day event with artists, speakers, art and live music centered around action on climate change. 5-11 pm, Planet Zero, 3 E. 3rd St. FREE. For more info and to RSVP, see <https://goo.gl/S7M7ON>. Sponsored by the Virginia Sierra Club, Spectra Art Collective and Satellite Syndicate.

Sat., Aug. 20 – **26th ANNUAL DOWN HOME FAMILY REUNION** – An annual celebration of African American folklife, featuring music, dance, entertainment, food, vendors, interactive cultural demonstrations, the Juanita Ragland Heritage Market and more. 4-11 pm, Abner Clay Park, intersection of Brook Road. and West Clay Street. FREE. Sponsored by the Elegba Folklore Society.

Information: <http://goo.gl/wO1QdJ>.

Sun., Aug. 21 – **SISTAH SINEMA PRESENTS: "SAVING FACE"** – A showing of the 2004 romantic comedy depicting a lesbian love story set in New York City's Chinese-American community. 2-4:30 pm, Capital Ale House, 623 E. Main St. \$10 AT THE DOOR, \$8 ONLINE. Sponsored by Sistah Sinema, a cinema collective showcasing films by and for queer women of color. For more info and to RSVP, see <http://goo.gl/VFTHno>.

Tues., Aug. 23 – **NAACP CANDIDATES FORUM, DISTRICTS 1-5** – The Richmond Branch NAACP will hold a forum for candidates for City Council seats in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Districts. 7 pm, Third Street Bethel AME Church, 614 3rd St. FREE. Information: Lynetta Thompson at 804-982-8072 or Joyce Knight at 804-228-1827.

Aug. 26 – **WALK FOR CLIMATE RVA** – "Join us as we walk from Manchester to Rocketts Landing to raise awareness for climate change. Over time, climate change will be felt more and more within our community. The tidal James River will face sea-level rise and health issues such as asthma will continue to worsen making outdoor exercise more difficult. The walk will be along the James River on the Virginia Capital Trail and will aim to highlight issues relating to climate disruption that RVA will see more regularly. 5:30 - 7:30 pm. Co-sponsored by the Virginia Chapter and Falls of the James Group of the Sierra Club. Information on Facebook at: "Walk for Climate Change."

Sat. Aug. 27 – **14th ANNUAL HAPPILY NATURAL DAY FESTIVAL** – An annual festival celebrating African identities, sustainable living and holistic health. Features performers, vendors, food, activities and more. 11 am-8 pm, Plant Zero Events & Art Center, 0 E. 4th St. FREE. For more info and to RSVP, see <https://goo.gl/VNxmIY>.

Sat. Aug. 27 – **BECOMING THE CHANGE: IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES FOR UNIFYING COMMUNITIES** – Final session of the four-part Umoja Community Strategies series, roundtable discussions on responding to community violence. 2-4 pm, Peter Paul Development Center, 1708 N. 22nd St. FREE. For more information and to volunteer, see the EventBrite page: <https://goo.gl/tTtly2>.

Sat., Aug. 27 – **PREPAREATHON 2016 AT THE SCIENCE MUSEUM** – Free day of disaster preparedness workshops, presentations and trainings. Register for a workshop and receive a free Preparedness Kit, valued at \$45. 11 am-4 pm, Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 W. Broad St. FREE. For more info and to RSVP, see <https://goo.gl/pUWsch>.

Sat., Sept. 10 – **2016 RICHMOND PEACE FESTIVAL** – Richmond Peace Education Center's annual festival, featuring exhibitors, vendors, youth activities with Art 180, workshops, performers, organizational tabling and more. 11 am-4 pm, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 6000 Grove Ave. FREE. For more info and to RSVP, see <https://goo.gl/vSS9vS>.

Mon., Sept. 12 – **PROMOTING THE SHOCKOE BOTTOM MEMORIAL PARK AT CITY COUNCIL** – Join advocates of preserving and memorializing Richmond's history as the center of the domestic slave trade as we raise the community proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park to City Council. 6 pm, City Hall, 900 E. Broad St.

Fri., Sept. 16 – Sat., Sept. 17 – **AFRICAN FILM WEEKEND** – A two-day film festival featuring short and full-length films curated by Professor Kasongo Kapanga (U of R) and Dr. N. Frank Ukadike (Tulane University). The films this year are: "Price of Love" (2015), a selection of South African short films, "Crumbs" (2015), "Black November" (2012), and "The Shore Break" (2014). Queally Hall, 1 Gateway Road. FREE. Sponsored by the University of Richmond. For more info and the schedule, see <http://goo.gl/8Pt8lR>.

Sat., Sept. 17 – **RECLAIMING OUR DEMOCRACY: 15 YEARS AFTER 9/11** – A day-long community forum exploring how the events of 9/11 and the reaction of decision-makers have affected U.S. democracy, civil liberties and foreign policy. 9 am-5 pm, Tyler Haynes Commons at U of R, 28 Westhampton Way. \$25. To apply for a scholarship to attend, email event@rpec.org. For more information and to buy tickets, see <https://goo.gl/EH0F4H>.

Fri., Sept. 23 – **THE MANDÉ TRIO TO BENEFIT THE RICHMOND-SEGOU HOUSE** – The Virginia Friends of Mali are hosting a concert featuring the Mandé Trio (Kokanko Sata, Assaba Dramé and Lamine Soumano), to benefit the construction of the Segou-Richmond House, a jointly-constructed community center for supporting girls' education near Richmond's Malian sister city, Segou. 8-11 pm, Neighborhood Resource Center of Greater Fulton, 1519 Williamsburg Road. Donate at the door. Sponsored by the Virginia Friends of Mali. For more info and to RSVP, see <http://goo.gl/PGRxc6>.

Fri., Sept. 27 – **NAACP CANDIDATES FORUM, DISTRICTS 6 - 9** – The Richmond Branch NAACP will hold a forum for candidates for City Council seats in the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Districts. 7 pm, Third Street Bethel AME Church, 614 3rd St. FREE. Information: Lynetta Thompson at 804-982-8072 or Joyce Knight at 804-228-1827.

Thurs. Sept. 29 – **MAYORATHON 2016 CANDIDATE FORUM** – A coalition of Richmond nonprofits, in partnership with Richmond Magazine, will hold a forum with Richmond mayoral candidates. 6:30-9 pm, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Boulevard. FREE. Sponsored by the James River Association, Richmond Forward, RVA Rapid Transit, Sports Backers, and Storefront for Community Design. For more information and to RSVP, see <http://goo.gl/uJc5wk>.

Thurs. Sept. 29 – **URBAN ENVIRONMENTS IN AFRICA: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GRASSROOTS SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE** – A lecture with Dr. Garth Myers, presented as part of the University of Richmond's Africa Week. This year's theme is "Africa: the Preservation of the Planet and its Cultures." 6:30-8 pm, the Weinstein Center on the University of Richmond campus. FREE. For more information, see <http://goo.gl/KQH7K2>.

Sept. 23-25 – **WORLD BEYOND WAR CONFERENCE** – A three-day peace conference in Washington, D.C., followed by nonviolent activism training and then a nonviolent action Sept. 26. Speakers include Kathy Kelly, Medea Benjamin, Maurice Carney, Bruce Gagnon, David Swanson, Leah Bolger, Bill Fletcher Jr., Michael McPhearson, many more. Endorsed by The Virginia Defender and the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC). Information: World Beyond War.org.

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

April 21-23, 2017 – **UNITED NATIONAL ANTIWAR COALITION (UNAC) CONFERENCE** – Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad! UNAC's third national conference, uniting all the struggles. Richmond, Va. The national organizing committee is being anchored by the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. To volunteer, email DefendersFJE@hotmail.com. UNAC info at: www.unacpeace.org.

MORE EVENTS AT ACTIVE-RVA

Active-RVA is an online bulletin for community and political events in Richmond. Events and news are listed on three platforms: Facebook (facebook.com/active.rva804), Tumblr (active-rva.tumblr.com) and two Google calendars (active-rva.tumblr.com/calendar). The bulletin was started in 2013 and covers activity relating to Black history, racial justice and anti-racism, the anti-war movement, defeating capitalism, economic justice, elections, environmentalism, feminism and women's concerns, homelessness, immigration, labor and workers' struggles, LGBT and queer concerns, prisoner support, public health, reproductive rights and abortion access, and more. To have an event listed, e-mail activerva@gmail.com or send a message via Facebook or Tumblr. Note that "Active RVA," without a dash, is an unrelated physical fitness initiative.

our working lives



'FIGHT FOR \$15 – & A UNION!'

Thousands of fast-food, laundry, child-care and other low-wage workers and their supporters march from Richmond's Monroe Park along Monument Avenue, Virginia's shrine to the slavery-defending Confederacy. The march ended with a rally at

the statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee. Speakers described today's low-wage service jobs as a continuation of the racism and labor exploitation dating back to slavery times. The Aug. 13 march, one of the largest in Richmond history, was the culmination of a two-day national convention of the Fight for \$15 movement, supported by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

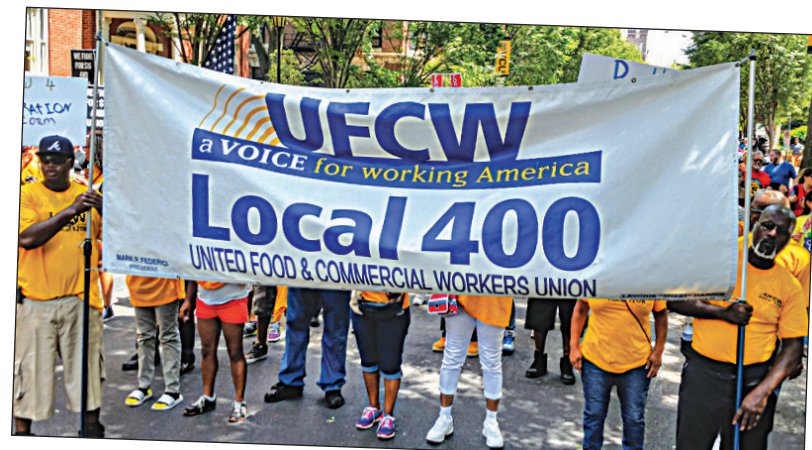
Photos by Phil Wilayto, except



Thousands of workers rode long hours on buses from across the county to attend the conference and march in Richmond.



Marchers carried signs linking the Fight for \$15 with other issues, such as police shootings and immigrant rights.



Many other unions came to show their solidarity with low-wage workers. Above, members of United Food & Commercial Workers Local 400.



The Rev. William J. Barber II, president of the North Carolina NAACP and leader of the Moral Mondays movement, gave the keynote address in front of the Lee statue.



Photo by Ana Edwards

"I can't breathe" were the last words of Eric Garner, a street vender murdered by cops on Staten Island, New York City.

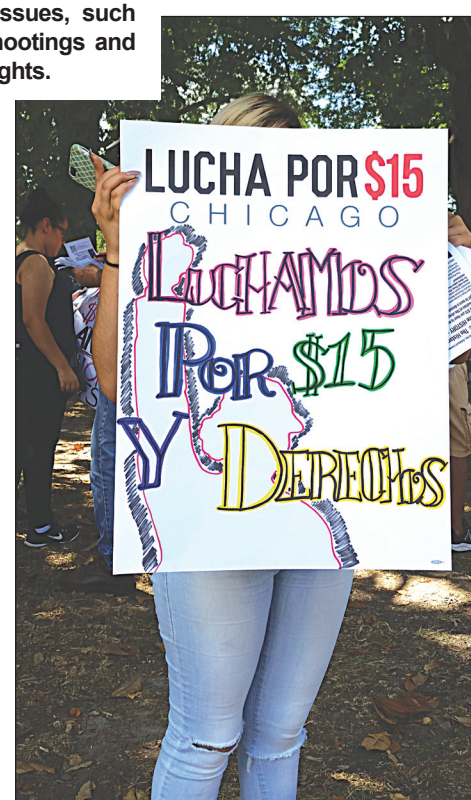


Photo by Ana Edwards

This Latina workers's sign reads "Struggle for \$15 - Chicago - We struggle for \$15 and rights."

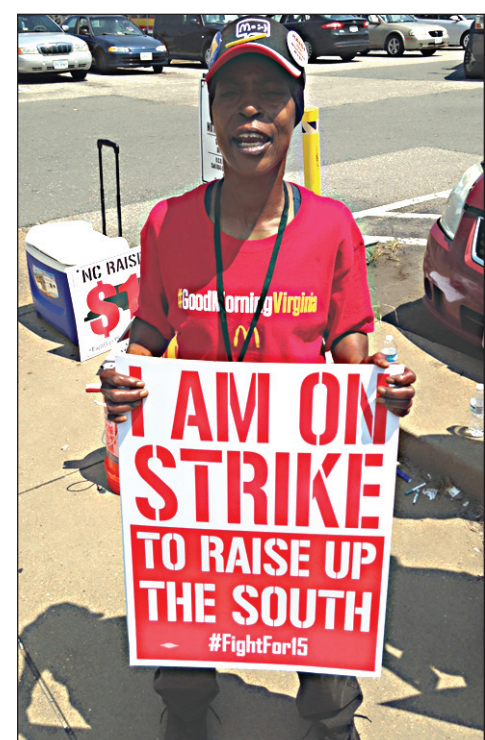


Photo by Chris Gore

On July 21, Richmond workers at the McDonald's on Chamberlayne Avenue held a successful one-day strike. Above, McDonald's worker and strike leader Rolandah McMillan, an organizer with the Defenders

cops, courts & prisons

Prison as an outdated model of punishment

By Askari Danso

What if I told you that last night I got an urgent message, via telegraph, after which I insisted that my wife put on her corset before we jumped in our horse carriage with a kerosene lamp to tend to the emergency?

Oh, and according to the hourglass, this all happened at around 8 p.m.

Would you think that I was crazy? I mean, who the hell travels by horse carriage in 2016 America? Is that even possible?

With all the technological advancements throughout the United States' 240-year history, there's one area where we continue to rely on a 19th century model: Punishment.

The Penitentiary system in the United States was established during the late 18th century in Northern states that were attempting a more enlightened approach to punishment for crime. The idea was that just treating "criminals" punitively wasn't in the best interest of society as a whole.

So with the mission of reforming criminals through penitence, the first Penitentiaries were built.

Virginia didn't get involved in this new corrections approach until 1800 when the Penitentiary House was built in Richmond on the James River.

In 1777, Thomas Jefferson introduced a bill to the new legislative committee responsible for revising the legal code. Ironically, Jefferson was using his newly acquired freedom to consider how to take the freedom of criminals. The bill called for an end to capital punishment and more humane treatment of criminals.

However in 1786, after several years of debate, the House defeated the bill. Apparently James Madison couldn't imagine a world in which horse thieves weren't put to death.

Nevertheless, the bill was successful in getting the states' power brokers to begin considering new methods of punishment. Ultimately this is what led to construction of the "Penitentiary House." Thus we see that the new prison was the substance and symbol of a new penal philosophy.

And so the question that we must ask ourselves is this: "Why is our penal philosophy in 2016 what it was in 1800?"

The first thing we have to examine are the many different scientific developments that have occurred over those 216 years.

The scientific approaches most relevant to examining the impact of incarceration on the human condition are Psychology & Sociology. With these two scientific approaches, scientists study the impact of imprisonment on the mind and behavior and how that affects the prison society and ultimately the larger society.

There are three research studies that I want to focus on for this article. One is psychological, one is sociological and one is both.

The first study was conducted by Dr. Abigail Baird, who studied the brain development and cognitive functioning of adolescents. She learned that teens and early adults lack the ability to limit impulsivity and that the brains of humans aren't fully developed until we reach the age 25.

Yet right now Virginia prisons are full of 16-to-24-year-olds serving exorbitant sentences

with no chance of early release.

I came to prison when I was 18 years old with a 53-year sentence without the possibility of parole. I am now 36 years old and have spent half my life in prison. Now we know that my brain wasn't fully developed when I and others like myself committed our crimes. If the science reveals that my brain wasn't fully developed when I committed my crime, why aren't I at least able to be "reviewed" for early release?

Much psychological research has shown that long stays in prison cause "Institutionalization," the process by which inmates are shaped and transformed by institutional environments in which they have lived.

When this process occurs in a correctional setting, it's oftentimes referred to as "prisonization."

After 18 years of incarceration, I have definitely been prisonized. I've gotten so used to eating at the same times for 18 years that I feel hunger pains whenever the meal is late.

Also, I've gotten so used to eating on the clock that, if I were to get out today, you'd be appalled watching how fast I'd eat if we dined together.

Also, I catch myself always trying to remain "On Point" while maintaining control over my emotions – so much so that I've lost my ability to emote properly. I've questioned whether or not I've become callous in here. There are so many more examples I could use, but this article has limits.

From the Sociological view, prison has proven to be corrosive to those people endowed with absolute authority.

Philip G. Zimbardo conducted a social experiment at Stanford University in the early 1970s that illustrates how our social location can affect our behavior and views. The experiment took place in a mock prison where volunteers signed up to play the roles of both guards and inmate.

The experiment was scheduled to last two weeks, but had to be halted after only six days due to the amount of abuse the students "acting" like guards were inflicting on students "acting" like inmates.

Zimbardo learned that these roles brought out the worst characteristics in man. I've been to three of Virginia's Supermaximum Security prisons. Two of them, Red Onion and Wallens Ridge, have reputations for being among the most violent prisons in America.

However, these prisons aren't violent because of the prisoners. The staff at these prisons torture prisoners there routinely with impunity. Earlier this year, prisoners at Red Onion began a hunger strike to protest abuses by staff.

The warden at Buckingham Correctional Center was a Sergeant at Wallens Ridge early in the Millennium when several officers were being investigated for the possible murders of some prisoners. In one case a prisoner was alleged to have been found dead in his cell after a supposed suicide. Abuses were happening so frequently that other states who were paying Virginia to house its prisoners began to take them back for fear that they would be liable for Virginia's abuses.

These are just a few of the Scientific developments that prove America's use of

Prison for punishment is an outdated model that needs to be abolished.

Using this antiquated system, the United States locks up more people than any other country in the world. We must demand that our government stop funding institutions of torture

with our tax dollars while closing schools and starving out poor children whose parents rely on welfare.

Support Prison Abolition Now!

Askari Danso in a prisoner in the Virginia Department of Corrections. This is the first of several columns he will be writing for the Defender.



'Gabriel Breaking Chains in Virginia'

The image above, titled "Gabriel Breaking Chains in Virginia," depicts Gabriel, an enslaved blacksmith born in Henrico County, who in August of 1800 led what many historians describe as the most extensive and well-planned attempt at a slave rebellion in U.S. history. The image was created by internationally renowned sculptor **Mevin Edwards** as a fund raiser for the Defenders' **Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project**, which is chaired by Ana Edwards, his daughter.

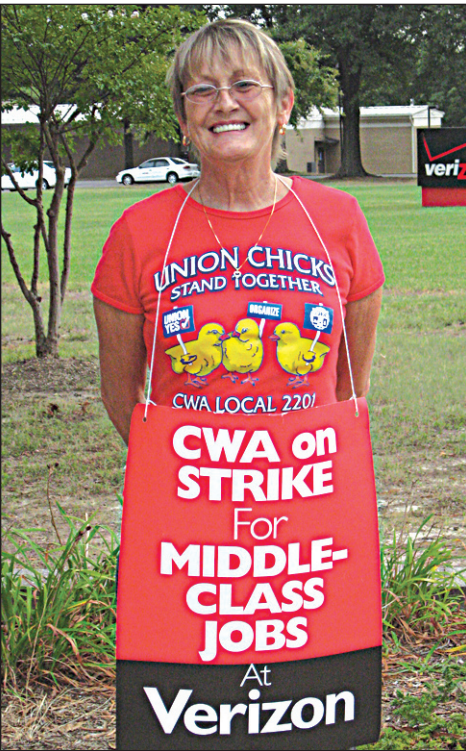
We have a limited number of copies, printed on 12" x 16" heavy-weight clear matte stock, suitable for framing. They are available from the Defenders for a suggested donation of \$50. For information, please call 804-644-5834 or email DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

We decided to show it first on this page instead of "Reclaiming Our Sacred Ground" because Askari Danso's column mentions Richmond's old Spring Street Penitentiary. When that prison opened in 1800, one of the first people incarcerated there was Gabriel.

A REAL program to move RVA forward

SHOCKOE BOTTOM

* Implement the Community Proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. (See story on page 11.)



Photos by Phil Wilayto

Verizon workers make decent wages because they have a union and are willing to fight.

JOBS

* \$15 minimum for all City workers and workers of contractors and sub-contractors.

* Summer jobs program for high school dropouts and former City Jail inmates: \$15/hour for 20 hours a week for 10 weeks = \$3,000. Start with eliminating the mayor's security detail: \$500,000 = 166 jobs. Reduce the mayor's pay to \$100,000; take the extra \$25,000 plus \$23,000 in "deferred compensation" and you have another \$48,000 for another 16 jobs. Total: 182 jobs. Challenge corporations to match. Goal: 1,000 jobs = \$3 million. Stipulate that these new jobs cannot replace City workers. Instead, provide new services: to the elderly, the homebound, disabled. Train workers to perform home repairs, painting, yard work, light carpentry, etc.

* Start observing federal Section 3 requirements to hire local workers for federally funded projects.

* Lobby the General Assembly to eliminate Virginia's prohibition against municipalities negotiating collective bargaining agreements with public employees.

EDUCATION

* Full funding of RPS.

* No charter schools.

* End the Schools-to-Prison Pipeline: Stop referring disruptive students to law enforcement.

* Work with VCU to develop a program to recruit students from RPS.

HOUSING

* Force absentee landlords to maintain property.

* Take over abandoned homes and rehabilitate for low-rent housing.

* Establish a policy of One-to-One Replacement of all RRHA housing: If one low-rent unit is eliminated, another of equal or lower rent must be made available.

* Hands off the trailer parks. Work with the residents to improve the trailers and eliminate health and safety problems.

* Work for rent control.

* End the abuse of Historic Property tax breaks.

HOMELESSNESS

* Year-round, all-weather, 24/7 homeless shelters. No one should have to be outdoors in the rain, snow, heat or storms.

* Reopen the Conrad Center.

* Stop arresting homeless people for being homeless.

* No shutting down of homeless encampments.

* Fund small group homes with services for those who need them.

HEALTH CARE

* Test all City water pipes for lead, including pipes leading into schools and private residences.

* Annual testing of all city children for lead poisoning, starting at birth.

* Open more community health clinics, staffed by nurse practitioners, nurses and community health education workers.

* Direct City lobbyists to work for the state expansion of Medicaid.

POVERTY

* See JOBS, HOUSING, EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE above.



"Fight for \$15" workers outside a McDonald's on West Broad Street this past March.

TRANSPORTATION

* Immediately establish a City shuttle bus and van service to bring workers in low-income communities to jobs in the counties.

* Expand GRTC routes to include underserved areas of the city.

* Increase City subsidies to GRTC to reduce the standard fare from \$1.50 to \$1.

* Expand the GRTC CARE and CARE Plus service for people with disabilities.

IMMIGRATION

* Declare Richmond a "Safe Community" – off limits to ICE.

* No asking of im-

migration status by police during traffic stops, arrests or detention.

* Pressure the Richmond sheriff to not turn over undocumented inmates to ICE.

FOOD

* Promote City-owned community gardens.

* Promote community farmers' markets, including mobile markets, in food deserts.

* Make sure these markets take SNAP benefits.

* Use the markets to educate about nutrition, cooking, home gardens.

* Make nutrition education part of the RPS curriculum.

POLICE

* Support the creation of an elected Community Police Review Board - with power to subpoena and suspend officers.

* Promote a law that City police must live in the city.

* Eliminate the present requirement to hire off-duty police in order to get a parade permit.

* Reopen the August 2015 fatal police shooting of Keshawn Hargrove.

CRIME

* See JOBS and EDUCATION above.

* Promote racially integrated community watch committees.

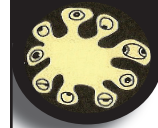
* More street lights and better maintenance of existing ones.

* Promote a needle-exchange program.

* Work for decriminalization of

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To try and put ourselves on a more stable financial footing, we are reviving our **DEFENDER SUPPORTER PROGRAM**. Folks who want to support our work pledge to make a monthly contribution. Each person sets the amount they want to contribute and can change it at any time. Please consider making a donation. No amount is too small. (Or too big!) To set up a monthly contribution, **click the "Donate" button at: www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com**. One-time contributions are also appreciated! **OR send a check or money order** payable to "Defenders" to:

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Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project

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rrfp.net



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The Virginia Defender offers this concrete program for improving Richmond in a way that benefits all its residents, particularly those who traditionally have been ignored and marginalized. We will base our endorsements in the next issue on how the candidates respond to these specific proposals.

simple drug possession and the legalization of marijuana.

- * No jail sentences for people unable to pay court costs or fines.
- * Work with parents unable to pay child support by providing City-funded jobs at living wages, not jail time.
- * Arrest landlords who fail to maintain their rental properties.
- * Arrest bosses who fail to pay earned wages, including overtime.



As in other cities, police shootings and jail deaths have been issues in Richmond.

CITY JAIL

- * Establish an elected Community Review Board that would regularly tour the jail and interview inmates, in private, about conditions and policies in the jail and evaluate the food served to inmates for nutritional value and quantity. Be available to enter the jail on a moment's notice in response to charges of brutality.
- * Work to eliminate the isolation cells.
- * Work to provide all inmates with

adequate supplies of soap, toothpaste and toilet paper.

- * Work to eliminate the daily charge to inmates; eliminate the charge for medical services; expand the jail's GED program; expand re-entry programs, especially in regard to housing, job training and job placement.
- * Outside, independent investigations into all deaths in the City Jail under the current sheriff.
- * Change the name of the "Richmond Justice Center" back to "Richmond City Jail" – at least until there is real justice in Richmond's criminal justice system.

CITY SERVICES

- * No more closings of fire stations.
- * No closing of post offices or reduction in hours.
- * Fund necessary vacant City positions.
- * Fully fund services such as leaf collection and snow removal.

ENVIRONMENT

- * Promote green City buildings and green practices in all new construction in the city.
- * Decrease City use of fossil fuels.
- * Provide tax breaks for homeowners who agree not to use lawn fertilizers.
- * No dumping of raw sewage into the James River, the Richmond area's source of drinking water.

TAXES

- * Promote a modest real estate tax for the more than 1,000 Richmond nonprofits and places of worship, excluding

all-volunteer institutions.

- * Eliminate the 1% city meals tax enacted in 2003 to pay for Center Stage.
- * Eliminate all city taxes on take-out prepared meals, which disproportionately affect low-income people.
- * No evictions of elderly, disabled or unemployed homeowners unable to pay their property taxes.



Through walk-outs, marches and rallies, RPS students, their parents and teachers have succeeded in making the schools a top issue in this year's election campaigns.

PEACE

- * No City cooperation with military exercises.
- * Replace JROTC in city schools with nonmilitary youth organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.
- * Lobby the General Assembly to forbid the Virginia National Guard from being used in foreign wars.
- * Lobby the General Assembly to close the Virginia Israel Advisory Board, the only state agency established to promote trade with a particular country.

DEALING WITH CITY SITES HONORING THE CONFEDERACY

- * Immediately stop all City funding for maintaining the statues of slavery-defending traitors on Monument Avenue.
- * Promote the removal of all City


and State-owned statues of slavery-defending traitors on Monument Avenue and their transfer to any museum willing to take them and display them within a truthful historical context.

- * Replace these statues with monuments to true Richmond heroes, such as Gabriel, Gabriel's wife Nan, Mary Bowser, Elizabeth Van Lew, Solomon Northup, Madison Washington, John Mitchell Jr. and Oliver Hill.

* Rename all City-owned buildings, roads, bridges, schools, etc., now honoring Confederate traitors after Richmonders and other Virginians who fought for freedom, justice and equality.

- * Change the name of the James River (named after the English king who "gave" Indian land to his rich colonizing buddies) back to its indigenous name, the Powhatan.

* Stop naming jails, courthouses and detention centers after Black civil rights figures.



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The Virginia Defender challenges all Richmond candidates to respond to these proposals and tell us which ones they will pledge to support.

no hay fronteras en la lucha de los obreros there are no borders in the workers' struggle

Richmond trailer park residents fight the City - and win!

By Phil Wilayto

Trailer park residents in South Richmond were both surprised and concerned when City inspectors started showing up in their communities with armed police escorts, inspecting their modest homes and threatening criminal court action and large fines for alleged violations of the City's housing code.

The fact that the inspectors were speaking only in English, in communities where some 70 percent of the residents speak only Spanish, added to the tension.

The targeted communities were Rudd's Trailer Park and Mobile Towne Mobile Home Park, both along Route 1 (which some people still call the Jefferson Davis Highway.)

A lot was at stake here. Making the ordered repairs means severe challenges for folks who already are financially stressed. Moving away also is a challenge. While the trailers are called mobile homes, in reality many are not capable of actually being moved, so a repair order means either a costly bill or abandoning the trailer and the

financial investment it represents.

In response, residents joined together with a newly formed coalition of some 20 churches and nonprofits led by the Legal Aid Justice Center. The Mobile Home Park Coalition recruited volunteers and raised money to make repairs on the trailers.

It also filed a federal lawsuit against the City of Richmond, and later 14 complaints with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

According to a HUD statement released Aug. 6, "The complainants, who are current or former residents of mobile home parks in Richmond, alleged that, due to their national origin, the City imposed unreasonable and legally unjustified requirements that they had to meet to avoid condemnation of their homes; intimidated and harassed them by conducting intrusive inspections with armed police escorts and threatening criminal court action and large monetary fines; and failed to provide meaningful access to residents who have limited English proficiency."

The lawsuit resulted in a settlement announced in May of this year. Without

admitting any wrongdoing, the City agreed to:

- pay \$25,000 to 33 plaintiffs;
- pay \$15,000 for safety repairs; and
- change how the city will approach safety inspections in mobile home parks.

The complaints made to HUD were settled in August, when the City agreed to:

- pay an additional \$30,000 in damages to affected residents;
- conduct outreach to the Spanish-speaking community;
- identify funding that mobile home park tenants can use for repairs to their units; and
- hire a "fair housing compliance officer" to oversee the implementation of the settlement and development of a non-discrimination policy.

"This agreement helps ensure that all residents in Richmond, regardless of where they live or what ethnicity they are, have equal access and enjoyment of their home," said Gustavo Velasquez, HUD assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity, in a statement released Aug. 4. "HUD will continue to work with local governments to create and protect housing opportunities for Hispanic families and

others with limited English proficiency."

Residents of trailer parks are among the most vulnerable of Richmonders. They are generally poor, many do not speak English and they lack political power.

But the case of the residents of these two mobile home communities shows that, when low-income folks organize and fight back, and gain the support of allies, they can succeed against great odds.

And in doing so, they have helped maintain the supply of low-cost housing in the Richmond area, which benefits all poor and working people.

People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination can contact HUD at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TTY). Additional information is available online: www.hud.gov and <http://espanol.hud.gov>. Housing discrimination complaints may also be filed at www.hud.gov/fairhousing or by downloading HUD's free housing discrimination mobile application, which can be accessed through Apple and Android devices

ODESSA Continued from page 14

Mark Toner was asked by Russian media about the May 2 memorial. Toner answered that, "The most important thing to stress here is that we would obviously support any commemoration of this event ... and we would certainly condemn any threats in the run-up to these events."

Even though the U.S. has been implicated in the right-wing coup of February 2014, this was an important development in terms of bringing international attention to the May 2 memorial.

Meanwhile, back in Odeessa, tensions were rapidly escalating

A showdown with the fascists

The pro-coup organization Maidan informed Odeessa's city council that it planned to hold a rally on May 2, also in Kulikovo Square, for the "military-patriotic education of youth" – complete with machine guns and fireworks. Another organization, the Brotherhood, called for a mass violent attack on those attending the memorial.

On the government's part, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the Ukrainian equivalent of the FBI, announced that a cache of explosives had been found in Odeessa and supposedly had been linked to anti-Maidan activists. Council of Mothers President Victoria Machulko was ordered to report for questioning at 8 o'clock on the morning of May 2. She was detained until 10 p.m., forcing her to miss the memorial. Odeessa authorities also announced they had received information about a bomb threat at Kulikovo and had closed the square – until midnight on May 2.

Although some 1,500 local and regional police had been mobilized to keep order during the memorial, Provincial Governor Mikheil Saakashvili, who regards Odeessa Mayor Gennadiy Trukhanov as too pro-Russian, called on President Poroshenko to send in the National Guard. In response, Poroshenko sent 300 troops – members of the neo-Nazi Azov Regiment that has been accused of wartime atrocities in the rebel Donetsk province.

At the Odeessa Airport, German journalist Saadi Isakov, arriving to attend the memorial, was held for 20 hours in a room with no water or bathroom facilities before being deported. Polish journalist Tomasz Maciejczuk reportedly was blocked on April 29 at the Dorogusk-Jagodin border control point. German journalist and documentary filmmaker Ulrich Heyden was also refused entry.

And there were reports that the Azov Regiment was setting up roadblocks around Odeessa, stopping and questioning vehicles approaching the city.

The UNAC delegation arrived on the evening of May 1. For whatever reasons, there were no problems at the airport.

While the UNAC delegation was in Odeessa, Defender Ana Edwards and UNAC Co-coordinator Joe Lombardo coordinated a support team that was in constant contact with the delegation members.

The memorial is a success!

Whether it was the presence of the thousands of Odessans who defied the fascists to attend the memorial; the massive mobilization of the police, whose political loyalties were unclear; the presence of the international observers; UNAC's international

support campaign, or a combination of all of these factors, the day passed without serious problems.

At 4 p.m. the Mothers' Council arrived, to the cheers of those who had come earlier. The official ceremony was marked by speeches, songs and the release of white doves and 300 black balloons. By 6 p.m., the official end of the memorial, some 3-4,000 people had visited the site.

The neo-Nazi organizations also were present. Right Sector held a demonstration that morning in downtown Odeessa and then staged a march of some 75-100 members through the memorial gathering itself. Azov members and others jeered the bus carrying the mothers to the memorial, with some displaying the Nazi salute. Something hit the side of the bus, in which the UNAC delegation also was riding. But clearly a decision had been made at some higher level to let the memorial proceed without serious incident.

On to Brussels

The next day, Gagnon and Tremblay stayed behind to gather more information for articles and a documentary video. This writer was asked to travel on to Brussels, where Victoria Machulko was to speak before a meeting of the European Parliament about the memorial, the ongoing situation in Odeessa and the Mothers' Council request for an international investigation. This writer also addressed the meeting, supporting Machulko's remarks.

Ukraine in a crisis

While May 2 has come and gone, the danger to the activists in Odeessa has not.

Organizations like Maidan, Right Sector, Azov and Bandera, named after a prominent World War II Nazi collaborator, participated in the right-wing coup that brought a pro-Western government to power. They now have some influence in that new government and want a lot more. Centers of anti-fascist resistance like Odeessa stand in their way and the fascists are determined to try and cower them into submission.

Thanks to draconian economic "reforms" demanded by the International Monetary Fund, the majority of Ukrainians are seeing their living standards plummet.

The Ukrainian government has no answer to these problems. On the contrary, under pressure from the IMF, it can only offer more austerity. As the population gets more restive, wealthy oligarchs are funding the various fascist organizations to keep dissent under control. It's a classic case of the rise of fascism in the midst of economic crisis. How this all plays out in Ukraine may well portend the future of Eastern and Southern Europe.

Odeessa Solidarity Campaign

To continue its support of this important anti-fascist struggle, UNAC has launched the Odeessa Solidarity Campaign. Readers can help by going online and signing the Council of Mothers' petition for an international investigation into the massacre at the House of Trade Unions:

www.odessasolidaritycampaign.org

This report is excerpted from a longer piece first published in Counterpunch.

reclaiming our sacred ground

Update on Shockoe Bottom

By Ana Edwards

It was on Aug. 15, 2015, that the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park was unanimously endorsed at an open, citywide meeting held in Richmond's East End.

A year later, lame-duck Mayor Dwight Jones continues to pursue his own, much narrower plan to memorialize just one of the nearly 100 sites that once made Shockoe Bottom the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

The mayor's plan for Lumpkin's Jail – which was never put to a community vote – leaves out Richmond's African Burial Ground and all other historical sites. Lumpkin's Jail, however, is part of the Memorial Park proposal, which also includes the Burial Ground and two blocks east of the CSX railroad tracks where slave jails, trader offices and supporting businesses were located.

Further, not one of the five private companies originally solicited by Mayor Jones to develop his plan is Black-owned. The community plan calls for Black businesses and workers to receive first consideration for contracts and jobs.

The community plan allows for appropriate commercial, retail and residential development in the rest of Shockoe Bottom, but would protect this historic district from inappropriate development. Significantly, the mayor's plan would leave the rest of Shockoe Bottom open to any kind of development – a great gain for the developers who are known to be very generous to elected officials who support their real estate plans.

While the mayor goes ahead with his plans for Lumpkin's Jail, the community plan continues to gain wide support. The Richmond Times-Dispatch has adopted an editorial position favoring a larger memorial than just one jail site. So have all eight candidates running for Richmond mayor.

Local organizations endorsing the community plan include the Richmond Branch NAACP, Richmond Crusade for Voters, Alliance for Progressive Values, Falls of the James chapter

of the Sierra Club, Richmond chapter of Coming to the Table, Richmond Peace Education Center and Preservation Virginia.

Prominent local individuals include Richmond historian Elizabeth Cann Kambourian; author Gloria Taylor Edwards; John Mitchell, great-grandnephew of John Mitchell Jr., the Fighting Editor of The Richmond Planet; John Moeser, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond; noted Richmond pharmacist Leonard Edloe; Pamela Bingham, direct descendant of the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel; and Viola O. Baskerville, J.D., former member of Richmond City Council and the Virginia House of Delegates.

Some national endorsers are Vera Williams, founder and president of the Solomon Northup Foundation ("12 Years a Slave"); Douglas R. Edgerton, Ph.D., author of "Gabriel's Rebellion;" National Trust for Historic Preservation; (national) Historians Against Slavery; and the Center for Design Engagement at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

At the invitation of the Sacred Ground Project, a five-person team from the UMass Center for Design Engagement came to Richmond from May 31 through June 4 and held two public meetings at the Storefront for Community Design, plus presentations at two area high schools. The goal was to solicit ideas for refining the community proposal. Those ideas then were unanimously adopted at the final public meeting, held at the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia.

The next step is to present the refined plan to Richmond City Council at its regularly scheduled meeting on Sept. 12. Lynetta Thompson, president of the Richmond Branch NAACP, will make the presentation during the public comment section, which begins at 6 p.m. in council chambers at Richmond City Hall, 900 E. Broad St. We urge you to join us.

After that, the plan is to encourage as many people as possible to attend upcoming forums for candidates for Richmond mayor, City Council and School Board. (See the Community Calendar on page 5.) At all these

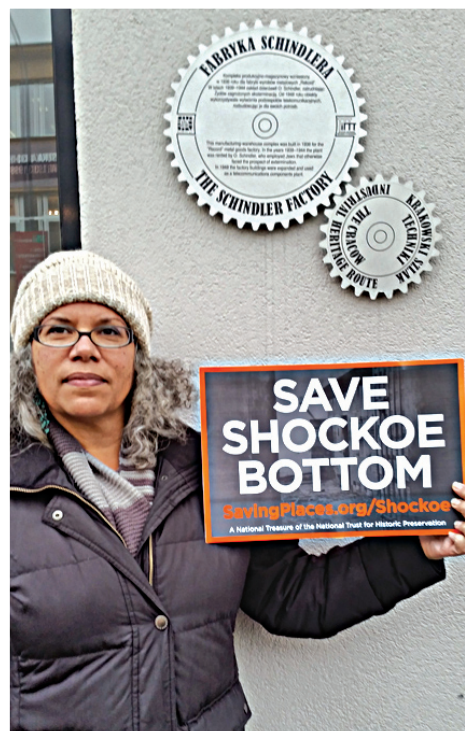


Photo by Phil Wilayto

Sacred Ground Project Chair Ana Edwards stands in front of the Schindler Museum in Krakow, Poland. Earlier on March 15, she had a meeting with the museum's director, Monika Bebnarek. The two women discussed similarities between the Schindler site and Shockoe Bottom.

forums, please ask the candidates this one simple question: "With a yes or no answer, do you support the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park?"

We need to make sure that Shockoe Bottom remains a major election issue.

The Defenders will continue to promote the plan at community events such as the Down Home Family Reunion, Happily Natural Day and the Second Street Festival.

In January we will have a new mayor and (hopefully) many new council and school board members. These will be the elected officials who will decide the future of Shockoe Bottom.

So this is our appeal to you: The only way the community will win a proper memorial for Shockoe Bottom is if we stay engaged and insist that Richmond adopt the plan that has won overwhelming public support.

Please come out to City Council on Sept. 12 and the various candidate forums. Tell your friends about the Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. Endorse the proposal on the Sacred Ground website (below) and encourage your friends to do the same.

Together, as always, we can win.

Ana Edwards, a descendant of enslaved Africans sold from Richmond in the 1800s, chairs the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project.

COMMUNITY PROPOSAL

www.sacredgroundproject.net/p/blog-page.html

ENDORSE THE PARK

www.sacredgroundproject.net/p/loading.html

MEMORIAL PARK DESIGN CHARETTE

www.sacredgroundproject.net/p/blog-page_6.html

SGHRP at ANSAH

The Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project will be participating in the next annual national conference of **ASALH**, the **Association for the Study of African American Life & History**, to be held in Oct. 5-9 in Richmond.

Ana Edwards will present on these panels:

"Hallowed Places & Obscured Spaces: Community Partnerships & the Preservation of African American History Sites in the National Park Service's Second Century"

Wed, Oct 5, 4-6:30 p.m., Richmond Marriott Hotel, Salon F.

This Opening Plenary Session "will explore the National Park Service's work with communities to preserve African American history sites, highlighting the service's goals during its centennial anniversary."

The scheduled speakers are: Emmanuel Dabney, NPS; Eola Dance, NPS; Ana Edwards SGHRP; and Ajena Parker, NPS Maggie Walker Site

"The Struggle for Historical Memory in Richmond, Va., and the Forging of an Activist/Academic Alliance"

Fri, Oct 7, 10-11:45 a.m., Greater Richmond Convention Center, B17

"No southern city devotes greater public space to memorializing illustrious slaveholders than does Richmond, Virginia. Its Monument Avenue features enormous equestrian statues of Robert E. Lee (67 feet in height), Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis, and J.E.B. Stuart.

"For this reason the Avenue has become a site of seemingly endless contestation between racially biased neo-Confederates and advocates for African American history and racial justice, foremost among them an activist/historical preservation organization, the Defenders for Freedom, Justice and Equality (DFJE).

"As an antidote to Monument Avenue's implicit racism the (DFJE) has proposed a expertly designed Memorial Park in Richmond's Shockoe Bottom District to honor the at least 300,000 enslaved blacks who were uprooted and forced from that site into the Deep South via the internal slave trade.

"Once constructed, the Memorial Park will give citizens rich opportunities to learn about Richmond's historical involvement with slavery, and to come to terms with it.

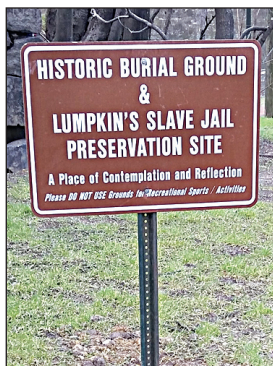
"Thus far the City has not agreed to fund the Park, a stance that the DJFE and its allies are seeking to reverse with sustained campaigns to generate public support.

"The purpose of our panel is to explore the question how academic specialists, in this case a political scientist, a historian and a film maker/psychologist can apply their scholarship directly to advance the work of the DFJE and its campaign for funding for its Memorial Park.

"Chairing this discussion will be a noteworthy public historian and also participating will be the Director of the DFJE."

Chair: Talitha LeFlouria, Florida Atlantic University

Discussants: James Stewart, Macalaster College, Historians Against Slavery; Monti Datta, Political Science, U of R; Shawn Utsey, Psychology / African American Studies, VCU; Ana Edwards. Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality



The good, the bad ... & the inexplicable

This spring, the City of Richmond upgraded two of the entrances to the African Burial Ground, once covered by a parking lot owned by Virginia Commonwealth University and reclaimed after a years-long community struggle. Above left, the stairs, lighting and walkway leading down to the cemetery from East Broad Street. There's also an upgrade to the tunnel under Broad Street leading to the site of Lumpkin's Jail. So why does the City still refuse to acknowledge that this is was a cemetery used overwhelmingly for enslaved and free Africans? Instead, the "Slave" Trail Commission continues to use these generic signs, at right, that describe the cemetery as simply "historic." A Commission brochure describes the site as "the final resting place of some of Richmond's earliest citizens." Really?

Photos by Phil Wilayto

In our opinion

Answering the bosses

The massive national march for a \$15 minimum wage held Aug. 13 in Richmond was surely one of the largest labor actions ever in Virginia. (See story on page 7.)

The coverage by the Richmond Times-Dispatch ran 901 words – more than a third of which were arguments against a \$15 wage.

Kim Scheeler, CEO and President of ChamberRVA (formerly the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce) was quoted as saying, “If you increase the minimum wage above \$15, ultimately all it does is increase the costs of goods and services. Eventually \$15 becomes worth the same thing as \$7.25 was before.”

Nicole Riley, Virginia director of the National Federation of Independent Businesses, added this: “If employers are required to pay \$15 an hour, they’ll have to make up the difference someplace else – by reducing hours or getting by with fewer workers or raising prices, for example.”

In other words, getting paid more is bad for workers.

Arguments against raising workers’ wages go back at least to the emergence of unions in the mid-1900s.

Arguments against those arguments go back to Karl Marx, who laid them out in his pamphlet “Value, Price and Profit.”

If wages go up, won’t prices follow? Not necessarily, Marx explained. There’s no law of nature that says capitalists have to raise their prices when wages rise. They do it to maintain their level of profits. But capitalists compete against each other, and consumers will buy from the companies offering lower prices.

But wouldn’t higher wages mean business owners would have to cut hours, hire fewer workers or maybe close down altogether?

That depends, Marx said. There are some things that everyone needs, such as food, clothing and shelter. Higher wages would mean workers would have more money to spend on those necessities, so those sections of the economy would expand, resulting in some companies hiring more workers. At first those products might cost a little more, but competition between the companies would eventually bring them back down again.

On the other hand, makers of luxury items like yachts, Mercedes and diamond rings might suffer, resulting in some layoffs or plant shutdowns. But overall, the economy would expand, because more people buy necessities than luxuries.

But what about start-ups and small businesses that can’t afford to pay \$15 an hour?

Well, if the only way you can make a living is to pay your employees less than a living wage, maybe you shouldn’t be in business. (Marx didn’t say that. We did.)

Even among his fiercest critics, Marx is still regarded as offering the greatest insights into how capitalism actually functions, and in “Value, Price and Profit” he was making a purely economic argument.

Here’s a political one:

Years ago, you could graduate from high school, or even drop out of high school, and still find a decent-paying job in manufacturing. Those days are gone. Since the mid-Seventies, corporations have decided to increase their profits by moving their factories to low-wage countries.

Young people today who can’t afford college have to take what they can get, mostly jobs in the service industries, which pay rock-bottom wages for part-time work with few benefits. This forces many low-wage workers to work two or even three part-time jobs, which doesn’t leave a lot of time for developing other skills.

Meanwhile, the average McDonald’s worker would have to work full-time for four months to make as much as Micky D’s CEO makes in an hour. *

The biggest reason some people don’t support this fight is that they look down on the person who hands them their Big Mac and don’t think they deserve more than \$7.25 an hour. (For proof, just read some of the disgusting online comments on the RTD story on the march.)

We need to start caring more about each other – as workers – and less about the billionaires who are living high off our labor. Supporting the Fight for \$15 is an excellent good way to start.

* **Huffington Post - 13/12/10**



Letters to the Editor

Southern history burden

I want to congratulate the young Andrew Morey from Easthampton for his decision to take down the Confederate battle flag after learning of its hurtful symbolism to so many. When I was his age, I found myself also reconsidering the meaning of a flag I had grown up with as a native white southerner, a “Rebel.”

When I went to the University of Virginia in 1964, I became a different kind of rebel. I joined an activist student group and ultimately served as chairman of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), which organized students on predominantly white campuses to join the movement against racism.

Anxious to assert our Southern credentials, we created a button that displayed black and white hands in a handshake across the background of the Confederate bars and stars.

We were trying to say we believed the South had great potential if it would only dispense with the curse of racism, or what C. Vann Woodward called “the burden of Southern history.” We also later refashioned it into a peace symbol.

But we were making the same mistake others have made in claiming the Confederate flag was merely a symbol of Southern heritage, or even Southern white heritage.

It was, in fact, only the flag of the elite planter class who seceded in order to preserve slavery. We dug deeper and learned the history of our South not taught us in high school.

We learned that Appalachia sent more volunteers into the Union army than any of the northern states.

We learned about Angelina and Sarah Grimke, daughters of a South Carolina slave owner who broke the law by teaching slaves to read and became leading advocates of the abolition movement. We learned of the Free State of Winston, a county in northern Alabama that seceded from the Confederate States of America and where the men spent much of the war in a Confederate prison for

refusing the CSA draft.

We learned of the white anti-slavery publishers Elijah P. Lovejoy and Cassius M. Clay. And we learned of the many slave revolts, behind-the-lines sabotage and outright resistance by men and women who would refuse to be any longer enslaved.

These, too, were all southerners. They were the southerners we chose to identify with, our historical antecedents. That Confederate flag being waved in our faces by those opposing basic human rights for African-Americans was not our flag.

Anyone who thinks they are honor-

ing Southern heritage by flying that flag might think twice about what heritage they are honoring.

It is only the heritage of the planter class and later of the KKK and those opposing the civil rights movement. It is their flag, not ours. To fly that flag is to identify with those forces of racism and oppression, both of the past and present.

Yes, you have the First Amendment right to do so, but know that the message of that symbol is racist in its every thread.

Tom Gardner
AMHERST, MASS.

Tom Gardner is a professor of communication at Westfield State University

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Richmond Branch NAACP on the move!

By Lynetta Thompson

Recently there have been many devastating tragedies that have taken place throughout our county. Black men are still being shot by police officers, with very little accountability. There have been retaliation shootings against police officers. Accountability within our Police Department is a must in order to build a better relationship between the community and law enforcement.

It is important that we stand up stronger than ever before and work harder to unite the Richmond Branch NAACP so we can show leadership and direction.

The Richmond Branch has filed a civil rights complaint against the Department of Transportation's Greater Richmond Transportation Company. We believe the GRTC Pulse (Bus Rapid Transit) project, as it is presently being implemented, violates Title VI and discriminates against low-income residences by not providing adequate access to the transit system. Large segments of our communities are underserved by the public transit system.

Before filing this complaint with the Department of Transportation, we met with GRTC CEO David Green. We expressed our concerns about the \$80 million dollars budgeted for this project, with none of the money being allocated to provide connectors in our underserved communities. We also are expressing our concerns and providing our input to the Richmond Transit Network Planning committee. We encourage each of our members to attend the ongoing public meetings, provide insight and urge others to participate.

We also signed on to taking part in the Civil Rights Complaint that will be filed by the Legal Aid Justice Center against the Richmond Public School System. We are still looking for children who may have been suspended three to five times within a single school year or suspended for more than 10 days at one time within the school year to file with our complaint. We also are looking for children who have been directly affected by their school's suspension policy.

We also need to plan a campaign promoting educational workshops with elementary and middle-school students. This campaign will target our churches for resources, seeking to recruit retired educators willing to be mentors and coaches for our children. "Theme NAACP Educational Campaign – Re Teach Our



Children from Cradle to Career." I believe this to be a wonderful project.

Over the past months I have been attending the Juvenile Justice Reform task force meeting. This task force is chaired by the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran. The state of Virginia is building a brand new Juvenile Justice Detention Center in Chesapeake. We are seeking a seat at the table while they are planning, in order to voice our concern regarding what we view as fuel to the youth prison pipeline.

We are advocating for more community-based correctional centers, as opposed to facilities that continue to mirror adult institutions. We also are setting up meetings that will target more procurement opportunities for Black contractors, as well as nonprofit restorative justice programs within our communities.

We are still in need of volunteers to help register voters. On July 19 the Supreme Court heard arguments from the Republicans' attorney and Gov. Terry McAuliffe's attorney on the legality of the governor's blanket Executive Order restoring civic rights to ex-offenders.

It is more vital than ever that we take this opportunity to hit the pavement and get as many of these individuals registered to vote. We must not take for granted that many of these individuals are our family and friends. Let's get them registered. Let's be the change we want to see in our movement for justice and equality.

Lynetta Thompson is president of the Richmond Branch NAACP. This opinion piece is based on the President's Report to the July Executive Meeting of the Richmond branch.

Israeli leaders don't mince words

By Mark W. Siegel

The nation of Israel was rocked by an explosion in the month of May. The blast was not in the form of a rudimentary rocket fired from Gaza, nor was it a Palestinian suicide bomber in Tel Aviv. In contrast, this explosion took the form of mere words – words spoken by the Israeli Army's chief of staff, Maj. General Yair Golan.

Speaking on Holocaust Remembrance Day, the general opined that, "It is scary to see horrifying developments that took place in Europe as a whole, and in Germany in particular, some 70, 80 and 90 years ago and finding evidence of those trends here among us, in 2016."

He went on to say, "It must bring us to some soul-searching as to responsibility of leadership and the quality of our society. It must lead us to fundamentally rethink how we, here and now, behave toward the other. There is nothing easier than hating the stranger, nothing easier than to stir fears and intimidate."

Just days later, the Defense Minister, Moshe Ya'alon, stood by the general's remarks, saying, "I fought with all my might against manifestations of extremism, violence and racism in Israeli society, which are threatening its sturdiness and also trickling into the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), hurting it already."

Not to be left out, former Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak added, "What has happened is a hostile takeover of the Israeli government by dangerous elements. And it's just the beginning. There are no serious leaders left in the world who believe the Israeli government."

It speaks volumes when such high-profile Israeli military leaders, who are dedicated to protecting Israel from external enemies, point to Israel's internal policies as a primary threat.

One would expect that the above leaders' remarks would prompt a discussion in the American media, the U.S. Congress and the pro-Israel lobby regarding the wisdom of providing over 3 billion dollars in military aid to Israel each year – far more than the United States gives to any other nation. One would think that, even among those who love Israel, some might question whether U.S. aid actually encourages those self-destructive forces that are eroding Israel from within.

Sadly, the media, Congress, and pro-Israel groups are not interested in a discussion. Instead, they are blindly consumed by a desire to shield Israel from the spotlight of internal dissent that, if broadly exposed in the U.S., would place Israel in an unflattering light. Conversely, however, these same groups are quick to chastise American critics of Israel's policies when they emit from academia, Christian church denominations or the Boycott/Divestment/Sanctions (BDS)

movement. These justice-seeking groups face accusations of anti-Semitism and are subjected to silencing efforts through anti-BDS legislation in Virginia and other states. These silencing efforts are encouraged by Jewish Federation Councils and other staunchly pro-Israel organizations. Ironically, the justice-seeking groups are simply pointing to the very same destructive policies that the aforementioned Israeli leaders find troubling.

For months, the U.S. and Israel have been locked in negotiations for a new aid package to replace the current package that expires in 2018. The U.S. is offering Israel the largest aid package ever – around 4 billion dollars. Unfortunately, aid to Israel has become less about Israel's security and more about politics. U.S. lawmakers need the pro-Israel lobby for political survival, and the pro-Israel lobby needs U.S. lawmakers who hold the purse strings.

The reality is that Israel does not need U.S. aid to maintain a qualitative advantage over its hostile neighbors. It has exponentially greater military capability than all potential enemies combined. Israel makes billions of dollars from its own weapons exports and will not release a complete list of client states, as some of those clients are repressive regimes.

One stumbling block in the current negotiations is the provision that Israel buy the bulk of the military hardware from U.S. manufacturers. Israel doesn't like that caveat. They are not satisfied with the largest aid package ever. They are not satisfied with being the only country that receives U.S. aid in a lump sum at the beginning of the year so that they can earn interest while the U.S. pays interest on the debt. Israel wants to fuel its own sizable military-industrial complex through the aid in order to reap even greater profits at the expense of U.S. taxpayers.

It is also significantly discreditable to Israel that foreign buyers of Israeli arms and surveillance equipment cite the appeal of those weapons as being "battle-tested" against restive occupied peoples.

Recent events have made it abundantly clear that, not only must massive aid packages to Israel be scaled back, but the efforts of the BDS movement have been vindicated – vindicated by prominent Israelis themselves who have seen the light.

Mark W. Siegel is retired from the CIA and a member of *Richmonders for Peace in Israel & Palestine*.

Richmonders for Peace in Israel and Palestine is a diverse community committed to working together and with others to support a just and lasting peace that ends the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. We meet monthly to discuss issues of interest. If you would like to join us, please contact us at FPME.RVA@gmail.com.

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Eyewitness Odessa: Anti-Fascist Resistance in Ukraine

By Phil Wilayto

Despite the threats of violence by half a dozen neo-Nazi organizations, the people started arriving early in the morning – thousands of them.

There were young students who would have looked right at home in Richmond's Carytown or Shockoe Slip; sad-eyed old women in dark shawls; groups of hymn-singing Orthodox Christians sprinkling holy water as they walked toward the locked gates of Kulikovo Square.

They stayed well into the evening, surrounded by 1,500 local and regional police officers, 500 members of the National Guard and hundreds of members of fascist, paramilitary organizations who had vowed to murder them if they dared show up on that sunwashed day of May 2.

Three of us had arrived the night before from the United States: Regis Tremblay, an independent documentary filmmaker; Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space; and this writer.

All of us are affiliated with the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), which had been asked by the Council of Mothers of May 2 to join them on May 2, along with human rights activists from France,

windows.

Although the massacre of May 2, 2014, had been recorded by multiple cellphone cameras, with some videos clearly showing the faces of the perpetrators, not one person responsible for this horrific crime has ever been brought to justice.

The problem isn't that there haven't been any investigations. There have been several, the latest by a special panel of the European Council, which released its report in November 2015.

All the investigations ended with the same a complaint: the Ukrainian government had refused to cooperate.

U.S. backs 2014 coup

That government came to power in February of 2014 in a violent coup in which the U.S. government has been heavily implicated. Fascist organizations such as Right Sector played



Defying government hostility and threats of violence from neo-Nazi organizations, some 3-4,000 people gather for the second anniversary of the May 2, 2014, massacre of 46 progressives at Odessa's Kulikovo square. The murders took place when a fascist-led mob set fire to the House of Trade Unions, in the background above. The Ukrainian government, allied with the fascists, has refused to cooperate with international investigations. Despite extensive video evidence, none of the perpetrators have ever been brought to justice. Some are still active in Odessa.

Photos by Phil Wilayto



Members of the Council of Mothers of May 2 attend the memorial wearing shirts with the images of their murdered sons.

Spain, the Netherlands and other European countries.

The massacre at Kulikovo Pole

May 2 was the second anniversary of the massacre at the House of Trade Unions in Kulikovo Pole (field, or square) and Odessans were gathering at the scene of the crime to lay flowers, release white doves and black balloons and pay their respects to those who had died when an enraged mob of fascist-led thugs set fire to the five-story union building, trapping them inside.

At least 46 people, most of them young, died of burns or smoke inhalation. Some were shot or beaten to death after escaping the building, several by jumping from

key roles in the violence that overthrew the government of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, who was eventually replaced by pro-U.S., pro-NATO, pro-European Union and pro-International Monetary Fund President Petro Poroshenko.

After the coup, Right Sector and other organizations began attacking opponents of the coup, especially in cities in Eastern Ukraine.

On March 16, rather than continue as a part of a Ukraine now dominated by a right-wing government, the people of the southern peninsula of Crimea voted overwhelmingly to secede and rejoin Russia, which it had been part of from 1783 until 1954, when Soviet Premier

Nikita Khrushchev, a Ukrainian, "gave" it to Ukraine by administrative decree. In the following years, the Crimean people tried several times to rejoin Russia.

In Odessa, on May 2, pro- and anti-coup forces clashed in the streets, leading to the massacre at the union hall, described as one of the worst instances of civic violence in Europe since World War II.

Every week since this horrific tragedy, family members, friends and supporters of those who died, organized as the Council of Mothers of May 2, have gathered at Kulikovo to lay flowers and remember their dead, often while being harassed by right-wing extremists. Thousands attended the first anniversary memorial on May 2, 2015.

UNAC's support campaign

Before travelling to Odessa for the second anniversary memorial, UNAC drew up a statement calling on the governments

of Ukraine, Odessa and the United States to ensure the civic rights of those attending the event and supporting the Council of Mothers' call for an international investigation.

Within weeks, the statement had been endorsed by more than 180 human rights organizations and prominent figures from 24 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. (See: www.unacpeace.org)

On April 25, that statement and the list of endorsers was delivered to the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, D.C., by Defender Ana Edwards, representing UNAC, and Ray McGovern, a former CIA analyst and now prominent anti-war activist. A press conference followed. The statement and endorsers list also was sent directly to the U.S. State Department and the city government of Odessa.

The following day, at a State Department daily press briefing, Deputy Spokesperson

See **ODESSA** on page 10



These members of fascist organizations have just realized that the bus stopped at an intersection is carrying relatives of those killed at the House of Trade Unions.

Defenders & UNAC support movements in Europe against poverty, racism, fascism & war

The Defenders are best known for our community work in Richmond, but we also are a founding member of the United National Antiwar Coalition.

In March, Defenders Ana Edwards and Phil Wilayto represented UNAC at a conference in Wroclaw, Poland, called the Social Forum of Eastern Europe & Cooperation Between East & South.

The gathering brought together leftists from some 20 countries in Eastern Europe and North Africa, as well as China and Russia.

Edwards was asked to speak about the struggle to reclaim Shockoe Bottom on a panel on "Ethno-Nationalism." Wilayto was one of three speakers at an outdoor rally

following a militant antiwar march through the streets of downtown Wroclaw. (A report on the conference is posted at www.unacpeace.org.)

During the conference, the Defenders met with members of the Council of Mothers of May 2 from Odessa, Ukraine, and their president, Victoria Machulko. That's when the Council asked UNAC to come to Odessa as international monitors for the second anniversary memorial of the massacre of May 2, 2014, which was being threatened by fascist organizations. (See story on page 14.)

After the conference, Edwards and Wilayto traveled south to the Polish city of Krakow, where Edwards met with Monika Bednarek, executive director and chief curator of the Schindler Museum, which tells the story of the Nazi takeover of the city and the heroic efforts of German industrialist Oskar Schindler that saved 1,200 Jews from the Nazi death camps.

Then there was a visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp, now also a museum.

After the May 2 memorial in Odessa, Wilayto was asked by the Council of Mothers to attend a meeting of the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, where Machulko and others were to testify about the 2014 massacre. Wilayto spoke about UNAC's international support campaign for the May 2 memorial.



This March 12 protest through the streets of downtown Wroclaw, Poland, was a defiant rejection of the militaristic agenda of most European governments. Photo by Phil Wilayto

Next, UNAC organized a speaking tour for Council supporter Maria, who spoke about the massacre at the Left Forum conference in New York City, a house meeting in Washington, D.C., and a community forum in Richmond.

Then it was back to Warsaw for Wilayto, where the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was to hold its Summit meeting. Two anti-NATO conferences were held during the Summit. Wilayto spoke about Odessa at the gathering sponsored by the World Peace Council and at an outdoor rally following the march sponsored by the coalition No War, No to NATO. (See the report at www.unacpeace.org.)

During the Summit, UNAC initiated or supported anti-NATO protests in New York City,

Minneapolis, Los Angeles and San Francisco. There also was a protest in Vancouver, Canada. (See MAWO report below.)

UNAC and the Defenders have helped spread the word about all these efforts through interviews with or articles in the online version of Counterpunch magazine, the Canadian magazine Fire This Time, David Swanson's Talk Nation Radio, Iran's PressTV, Russia's Sputnik radio and RTR TV and Polish television.

With its Odessa Solidarity Campaign, UNAC is continuing to support efforts by the Council of Mothers to get an international investigation into the massacre of May 2, 2014.

To follow and support this work, see:

www.odessasolidaritycampaign.org

An Open Letter from Iranian artists to the president of France

[Editor's Note: The Defender received a copy of this Open Letter from Habib Ahmadzadeh, an Iranian artist friend we met during our 2007 visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran.]

Dear President Hollande,

On behalf of the people of Iran, we are writing to express our deepest sorrow in response to tragic events that in recent months have unfolded in your country.

Please accept our condolences. We share your pain and sorrow for the loss of innocent lives due to the heartless actions of terrorist groups. We convey our sympathy to the people of France and stand in solidarity with the families of victims of such barbaric acts.

We in Iran understand the horror of terrorism, as we have experienced it in firsthand and for a long time. In our country, thousands of civilians have been targeted by terrorist groups, such as the Mujahidin-e-Khalq (MEK). Similar to ISIS, MEK also stands for violence and the destruction of precious lives in order to achieve its "goal" and "win."

In fact, we are saddened and hurt to learn that Turki bin Faisale Al Iskander, the Saudi official, recently entered Paris only to openly support the MEK. This group, led by Mariam Rajavi, is responsible for the lives of 17,000 Iranians alone, as well as numerous non-Iranians, throughout years of terrorist activities.

Sadly, in the eyes of many observers, friendships and collaborations of Saudi officials with terrorist groups and organizations are not anything new. For decades, directly or indirectly, Saudis have supported groups such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISIS and now is openly supporting the MEK.

While we deeply sympathize with the people of France and share their pain, we also believe this is the time for the international community to revisit the consequences of wrong policies toward states and non-state actors who overtly or covertly have supported terrorism.

In solidarity,

A Group of Iranian Artists
TEHRAN

MAWO says 'Canada OUT of NATO!'

By Alison Bodine, MAWO Chair

The anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) in Vancouver, Canada, answered an international call to action from European anti-war and anti-NATO groups to organize against the two-day NATO Summit that took place this July in Warsaw, Poland.

On July 9, the opening day of the summit, MAWO held a rally in downtown Vancouver and launched a petition campaign addressed to the government of Canada. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, demanding that Canada immediately withdraw from NATO and remove all Canadian troops and military equipment from Europe and all NATO missions.

Protesters and people passing by gathered to hear rally speakers denounce NATO and the developments taking place at the NATO Summit. Speakers included Coast Salish Elder and long-time social justice activist Kelly, MAWO Executive Committee member Azza Rojbi and MAWO Chairperson Alison Bodine. Protesters also were able to connect with a similar action held in New York City as part of this International Day of Action via a phone report from Joe Lombardo, Co-chair of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), one of the groups that organized that protest.

NATO is an increasingly dangerous tool of imperialist intervention. This is the military body that dropped more than 14,000 bombs on Yugoslavia in 1999, that conducted much of the military occupation in Afghanistan and bombed

Libya into chaos in 2011. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw, NATO's next military action was decided upon: NATO is now stationing four battalions of 1,000 troops each on Russia's borders in Eastern Europe, flexing its military muscles and saber rattling against Russia.

It is critical that peace-loving people in Canada join with anti-war and peace activists and organizers in the United States and respond to NATO's actions, especially as Canada is playing a key role in this latest move by NATO. Canada will be commanding one of the four battalions and committing at least 450 troops, six CF-18 fighter jets and armored vehicles, as well as continuing to deploy naval frigates which have been operating in the region for the last two years.

MAWO is an antiwar coalition of 50 groups and organizations formed in October of 2003. It organizes a monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign in busy downtown Vancouver. In addition to the No to NATO! Canada Out of NATO! campaign and petition, MAWO has other, ongoing campaigns, including against imperialist intervention in Syria and Iraq, imperialist war and occupation in Afghanistan, the U.S.-backed Saudi Arabian bombing of Yemen, and the \$15 billion arms deal between the governments of Canada and Saudi Arabia.

For updates on MAWO's work, which also includes educational forums, cultural nights, music and film events and conferences, visit www.mawovancouver.org or follow MAWO on twitter @mawovan

**NO TO WAR & OCCUPATION!
YES TO SELF-DETERMINATION!**

Republic of Mali

By Madani Sissoko

On July 20, 2016, the Malian nation paid its final tribute to the 17 Malian soldiers who died after an attack by terrorists against the garrison at Nampala, in Ségou Region. The ceremony was presided over by President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who, standing before the coffins of the 17 soldiers to salute their bravery, said the nation would never forget their ultimate sacrifice.

But the Head of State also took the opportunity to evoke the weaknesses that hamper our army and prevent it from being fully operational against terrorist groups that are swarming across our territory. The Head of State surprised Malians when he declared that he had often told Mali's technical and financial partners that what Mali most needs to handle the security crisis are helicopters.

These remarks by IBK are surprising, inexplicable, unjustifiable. They are unjustifiable because the Malian people elected their president to the highest office in the land in order that he should make all decisions necessary for our security.

We are a free and sovereign country. Are we to understand that IBK has to wait for others to give approval before he can equip our military so it can defend itself against an enemy that is far better equipped? How can we understand that the army still has not been supplied with operational resources such as helicopters?

And where is the support from the forces of MINUSMA? How is MINUSMA using its renewed and strengthened mandate, which was approved with such a lot of noise and fuss? And what has happened to Operation Barkhane?

After the Nampala tragedy, it is time for the president to show some leadership and to take his army in hand, for the 17 dead soldiers of Nampala are 17 too many.

Madani Sissoko is a City Councilman, President of the Sister Cities Committee and Mayoral Candidate in the City of Segou, Republic of Mali in West Africa.



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