

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

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

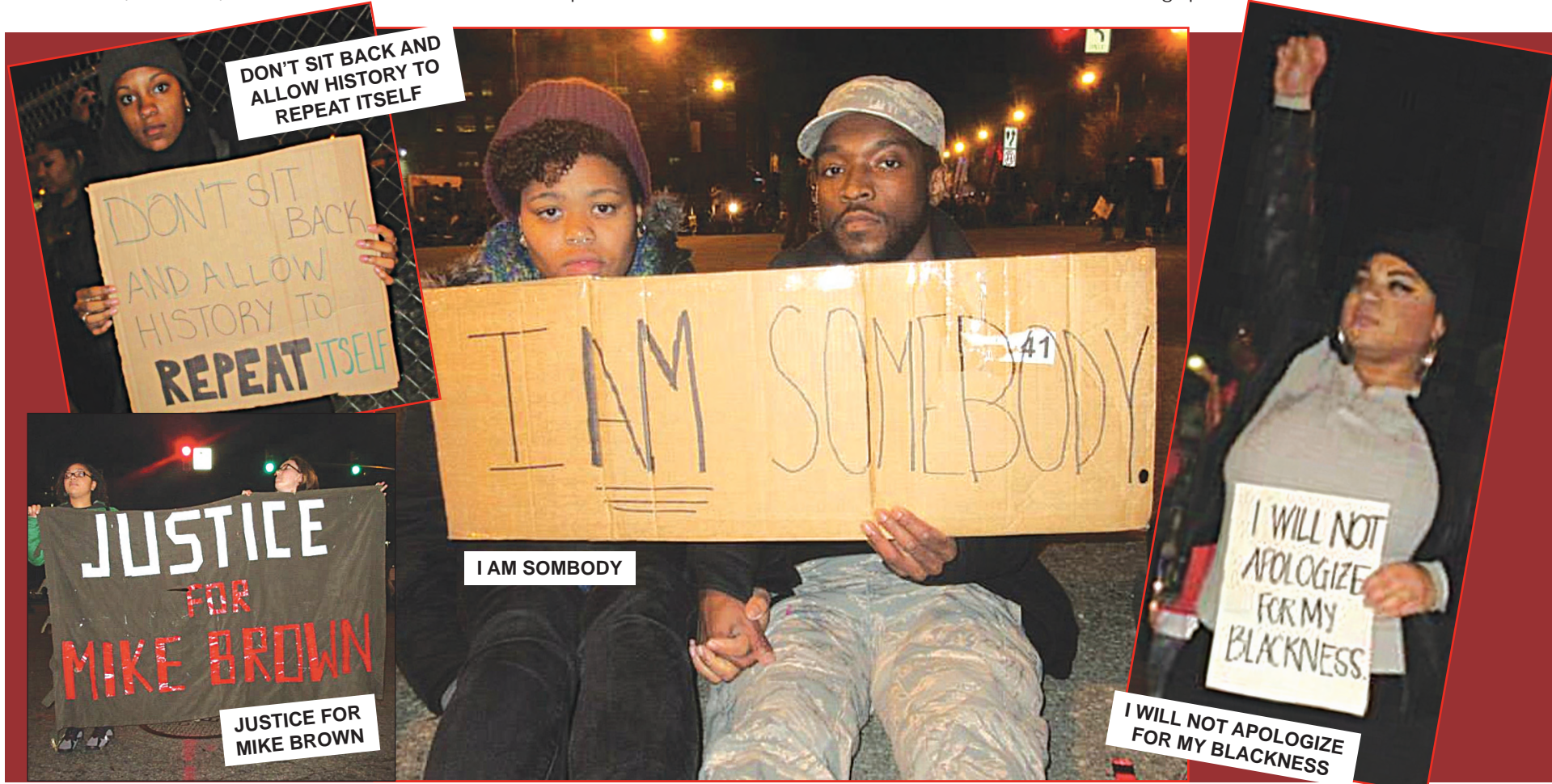
FREE

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Winter 2014



Hundreds of VCU students and community youth hold a sit-in protest at Richmond's major intersection of Broad and Belvedere, blocking traffic in all directions for more than an hour. The Dec. 3 action was one of many across Virginia in which young people are taking the lead in this developing movement.

Photos by Kat McNeal

Across Virginia, youth take the lead:

'BLACK LIVES MATTER!'

Kat McNeal

Late on the evening of Nov. 24, a grand jury released its decision not to indict Darren Wilson, a white police officer, for the August shooting death of unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo. By midnight, 600 people had massed in protest in front of the city's police headquarters.

Meanwhile, on Virginia Commonwealth University's Monroe Park campus, a small group of students, mostly Black women, were calling for an impromptu demonstration shortly after the announcement. The word spread quickly through social media. Within an hour, the group had grown to two dozen.

In righteous anger, they entered VCU's Cabell Library and swept through the first floor, chanting "Hands Up, Don't Shoot!" among the banks of computers and shelves of periodicals.

Intentional disruption in the library is rarely met with tolerance from other patrons, especially so close to the end of the semester, but news of the grand jury decision had traveled very quickly, outrage crackling in its wake. Dozens of students abandoned their books and rose to join the growing crowd outside.

At 11:30, the multiracial crowd of young people, now numbering several hundred, began marching toward downtown. They quickly took both lanes of East Franklin Street. Faces peered out

from apartment windows at the sound of the raised voices echoing off the buildings, chanting "Black Lives Matter!" and "No Justice, No Peace!"

The spontaneity of the march left it with no defined leadership. Nobody seemed to know exactly where it was headed. But by providence or design, the crowd gathered in front of Richmond Police headquarters at 200 W. Grace St.

There speakers addressed the assembly, while police officers watched from the top of the parking deck adjacent to the building. VCU student Shavontae Patrick took the megaphone, quoting Black revolutionary Assata Shakur: "We have a duty to fight for our freedom! We have a duty to win! We must

love and protect each other! We have nothing to lose but our chains!"

The next day, more than 500 people gathered on the steps of the downtown John Marshall Courts Building, demanding justice. After a series of speakers, they marched in the streets to the State Capitol and back.

Then, just eight days later, a grand jury in Staten Island, N.Y., added another link to the long chain of cases in which racist murderers are shielded by the government: there would be no indictment against Daniel Pantaleo, the white police officer whose chokehold on another unarmed Black man, Eric Garner, resulted in his death.

See BLACK LIVES on PAGE 7

SAT. - JAN. 10 - RICHMOND

Virginia People's Assembly
for Jobs, Peace & Justice!

For details, see page 7

To keep the victory over the stadium:

RECLAIM SHOCKOE
BOTTOM!

For our proposal, see page 5

"IT IS OUR DUTY TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM! IT IS OUR DUTY TO WIN!
"WE MUST LOVE AND PROTECT EACH OTHER! WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS!"
— Assata Shakur, Black Panther and former Political Prisoner, protected by the people and government of Cuba since 1984

THE DEFENDERS

for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe in Freedom

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

We believe in Justice

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

We believe in Equality

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

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

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

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

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



Del. Delores McQuinn

After supporting stadium proposal, McQuinn gets \$8,300 from developers

Staff Report

Del. Delores McQuinn lost her bid this summer for state senate, but it wasn't for lack of financial support.

According to the Virginia Public Access Project, McQuinn raised \$43,364 in 2014 in her attempt to win the Democratic Party nomination for the District 16 seat previously held by former Sen. Henry Marsh, who resigned in July to take a high-paying job as the governor-appointed commissioner of the state's Department of Alcohol Beverage Control.

Although she is a state official, McQuinn still chairs Richmond City Council's "Slave Trail" Commission, which is supposed to protect the city's slavery-related historical sites. Despite this mandate, the commission, under McQuinn's leadership, decided not to take a position on the developer-driven plan to build a commercial baseball stadium in the heart of Shockoe Bottom, once the fountainhead of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

And yet, despite the commission's decision to stay out of the debate, McQuinn frequently spoke in favor of the plan – in her role as commission chair. She stood next to Mayor Dwight Jones at his November 2013 press conference at which he unveiled the plan for the Shockoe stadium. McQuinn also spoke and was introduced as chair of the Slave Trail Commission.

So it's interesting that, in her bid for state senate, McQuinn received more than \$8,000 in campaign contributions from key players in the attempt to push the stadium plan through City Council.

(The Richmond Times-Dispatch previously reported the total as \$3,800, but that figure was based on campaign finance reports from July 1 through Aug. 31. The above figure covers all of 2014.)

Here's the tally, according to the Virginia Public Access Project (www.vpap.org/committees/251599/top_donors):

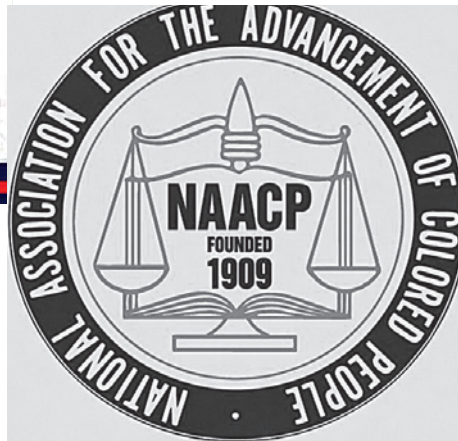
Main Street Realty: \$2,000. A real estate firm run by developers H. Louis Salomonsky and his partner David White, who wanted to build 500 high-rent apartments next to the proposed stadium. Salomonsky went to prison in 2003 for bribing then-Councilwoman Gwen Hedgepeth in another development-related issue.

Dwight Jones: \$1,000. The mayor of Richmond, Jones was the patron of the developer-driven Revitalize RVA proposal that was to have been anchored by the Shockoe stadium. Jones is also president of Venture Richmond, an alliance between the top local business leaders and politicians. The organization paid for the Loving RVA marketing campaign to promote the stadium.

James E. "Jim" Ukrop: \$1,000. The former supermarket chain owner has been a prominent stadium proponent.

Claude G. Perkins: \$1,000. The president of Virginia Union University was one of the few Black leaders in Richmond to publicly support the stadium proposal, sign-

community news



New officers at Crusade for Voters, Richmond Branch NAACP

Two organizations that once were bulwarks of Richmond's civil rights movement have elected new officers.

The **Richmond Crusade for Voters**, founded in 1956 by Black members of the interracial Committee to Save Public Schools, held its annual elections in November. Its officers for 2015-2016 will be:

President: Regie Ford
First Vice President: Corey Nicholson
Second Vice President: Amelia Lightner
Treasurer: Eula Bazile
Historian: Willie Williams
Sergeant-at-Arms: Rufus Fleming
Parliamentarian: Lisa Nicholson
Communications Director: Rodney Thomas
Recording Secretary: Corey Faulkner
Chaplain: Cassandra Shaw

Over the past year, the Crusade has struggled to attract enough members to its monthly meetings to constitute a quorum. As a result, little was accomplished. This fall, reportedly

for the first time since its founding, it was not able to endorse candidates in an election.

The Crusade meets at 7 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month, usually at the L. Douglas Wilder Library at Virginia Union University, 1500 North Lombardy St.

For information, call Communications Chair Rodney Thomas at (804) 677-8349.

The **Richmond Branch NAACP** also has elected new officers. They are:

President: Lynetta Thompson
First Vice President: Alice Tart
Second Vice President: Walter Johnson
Secretary: Joyce Knight

The Sergeant-at-Arms will be appointed after the first of the year, as will new executive committee members.

The branch meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month, at Club 533, 700 N. Third St.

For information, contact Branch Secretary Joyce Kinght at (804) 410-4567.

ing a full-page, pro-stadium ad that appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch and the Richmond Free Press.

Johnson, Inc.: \$1,000. A marketing firm headed by Kenneth Johnson, who used to produce the now-defunct "Friday's at Sunset" concert series. In a June 16 online commentary for local television station CBS 6, former Democratic Party Chair Paul Goldman quoted "one of my confidential sources" as saying that "Johnson apparently popped up at a secretive confab with other top Shockoe Stadium backers not long ago. These heavy hitters were developing both a new Jones' Shockoe Stadium proposal and a political strategy to sell it to a City Council majority. The source claimed Mr. Johnson told the group he could speak for the Mayor." Not long after that secret meeting, a marketing campaign was launched to try and convince Richmond's Black community that the stadium would be in their best interests. The campaign fizzled after it was exposed in a special edition of the Defender.

Mark R. Merhige: \$500. President of the Shockoe Company real estate outfit and Venture Richmond's secretary.

Jack Berry: \$250. Venture Richmond's executive director. Along with Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce) President Kim Scheeler, Berry issued the initial call for the stadium in an August 2012 op-ed in the Richmond

Times-Dispatch and has been a leading cheerleader for the project. (\$250? C'mon, Jack!)

Burt Pinnock: \$200. A principle with the Baskerville architectural firm who designed the proposal for a slavery history site at Lumpkin's Jail and spoke publicly in support of the stadium project.

Grant Neely: \$250. Mayor Jones' chief of staff.

Charles MacFarlane: \$100. The developer who was supposed to build the Hyatt Hotel near the stadium as part of the overall Revitalize RVA proposal.

The grand total from stadium backers: \$8,300.

That amount kept McQuinn's campaign from going into the red. In 2014 she took in a total of \$43,364 and spent \$37,192, leaving a balance of \$6,172.

Despite the financial support that enabled McQuinn to outspend all her opponents, she lost the Democratic Party nomination to Del. Rosalyn Dance, who went on to win Marsh's former seat in the general election.

Meanwhile, McQuinn retains her position as state delegate from the 70th District, which includes part of the city of Richmond.

First elected to the position in 2009, she ran unopposed in 2011 and 2013.

State delegates and senator seats are next up for election on Nov. 3, 2015.

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community news

Social Justice at Sixth Mount Zion

By Shelli Cumber

A conference on social justice was held Nov. 15 at Richmond's historic Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. The church's mission states: "We take very seriously God's call for us to be a voice of one crying out for those who cannot speak for themselves"

The Rev. Tyrone Nelson, the church's pastor, is a firm believer in social justice and helping the disadvantaged in the Jackson Ward community. A graduate of the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, he reminds us that "Jesus was about justice, as we should be too."

The conference featured three keynote speakers. The first was the Rev. Reginald W. Williams Jr. A native of Chicago, Rev. Williams is a graduate of Florida A&M University and the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology and earned a law degree at the University of Wisconsin. He was called to serve Trinity United Church of Christ as an associate pastor for Justice Ministries under the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright. Rev. Williams is one of the authors of the book "To Serve This Present Age: Social Justice Ministries in the Black Church."

Rev. Williams began his discussion by asking about the difference between charity and justice. In comparing the two, he said charity is reactive to specific material needs, while justice is more proactive: working for changes in systems that create such material needs.

The next speaker was the Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock from historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, where the Rev. Dr. Martin L. King Jr. pastored. Rev. Warnock is Ebenezer's fifth pastor and the youngest ever to be called to serve there. He is a 1991 graduate of Morehouse College, received a doctor of philosophy degree from Union Theological Seminary and is the author of "The Divided Mind of the Black Church."

Rev. Warnock states: "The Black Church was born fighting for freedom. The freedom for which the Black church has fought has always been both internal and external, expressing itself politically and spiritually, embracing Black bodies and souls," due to the Black church "being shaped and characterized by two complementary yet competing sensibilities: revivalistic piety and radical protest."

The conference continued into the afternoon, when participants were introduced to a young lady who had a rather lengthy and traumatic experience. Kemba Smith was sentenced to 24.5 years in a federal prison for a first-time, non-violent offense. She served six and a half years and gave birth to a son before receiving clemency from President Bill Clinton in December 2000.

Kemba is the author of the memoir "Poster Child," which "chronicles how she went from college student to drug dealer's girlfriend to domestic violence victim to federal prisoner. Kemba shares her story of how making poor choices blinded by love and devotion can have long-term consequences." (www.kembasmith.com)

TRAP DEFEATED!
Victory for abortion access in Va.

By Kat McNeal

The Virginia Board of Health voted 13-2 on Dec. 4 to begin the process of amending the restrictive anti-abortion regulations passed under former Gov. Bob McDonnell – regulations that threatened to shut down 18 of the 21 clinics that perform abortions in the state. The vote came after a long campaign of sustained pressure by feminists, whose work compelled Gov. Terry McAuliffe to order the Board to reconsider the rules.

Passed last year by the General Assembly, the regulations applied by the Board of Health constituted a regressive legislative strategy called Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, or TRAP, for short. The rules defined all clinics performing more than five abortions a month as hospitals and required them to meet the same architectural standards. The board disallowed grandfathering, which would have exempted existing facilities from the medically-irrelevant rules. The decision came after then-Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, a major abortion opponent, threatened board members with legal liability.

The purpose of these types of rules is to restrict access to abortion services, as an alternative to the more daunting prospect of attacking Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the United States. Two of Virginia's 21 clinics have closed because of the TRAP rules and one other was forced to stop offering abortion services.

Individual women and feminist groups throughout Virginia fought valiantly against TRAP and related legislation, including the infamous 2012 bill requiring invasive, transvaginal ultrasounds for women seeking abortions. "Make no mistake: without feminist action, Virginia would be in a completely different state," attests Vicki Yeroian, president of the Richmond chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Their tireless work around the issue was a major deciding factor in the 2014 election of McAuliffe as governor over his opponent, Cuccinelli. Whitney Whiting, a member of Richmond-based Collective X, explains, "The TRAP regulations were very front and center during his campaign."

The regulations will not be simply repealed, because Commissioner of Health Dr. Marissa Levine believes that the board lacks the legal authority to dismiss regulations passed into law. The board's amendment process is expected to take up to two years and will involve at least one more public comment period. Nonetheless, 12 of the state's remaining 18 clinics have been granted temporary permission to continue operating and the decision to amend is a major victory.

Even in the face of such accomplishment, we must remain vigilant. Yeroian explains it this way: "We are at a critical point in time. Just because we won this battle, it does not mean the war has ended. By far, we should be growing as action communities that intersect on a variety of levels for change."



Photo courtesy the William Byrd Community House

The William Byrd Community House moved into the Arents Free Library building at 224 So. Cherry St. in 1947. At the time, the Oregon Hill neighborhood was virtually all-white. Today, the Byrd House staff and client base are predominantly African-American.

Is 91-year-old William Byrd Community House on the edge of collapse?

By Ana Edwards

The William Byrd Community House is in trouble.

For more than 60 of its 91 years, this Richmond institution has provided high-quality, early childhood education with social services to generations of preschoolers, many of whom grew up to be parents and grandparents of today's WBCH students and even educators on staff.

Strengthening its programming to the point that it has national accreditation, the Byrd House is currently the only 4-Star-rated agency of the Virginia Star Quality Initiative in Richmond.

But, like many nonprofits today, it is facing severe financial challenges. Paychecks have been delayed. Some staff have had to find second jobs. The future for this valuable urban resource is uncertain.

Recently, thanks to stepped-up fundraising efforts, some donations are coming in and payroll has been caught up. This is very encouraging news for the historic William Byrd Community House.

In November, the Byrd House reached out to media to assist in getting

the word out about its financial straits. The response was measured, but good, and included many fundraisers initiated by a wide range of stakeholders, from parents and alumni to farmers market vendors and customers, demonstrating that there is support for the agency's work.

This helps to stem the tide until already-awarded funds are received and can maintain the agency's operations until a longer term solution can be found.

Sadly, Byrd House's financial situation is not unusual and unless more is done to stabilize funding for preschools for low-income families, more providers will continue to face the boom and bust of nonprofit funding cycles.

Maybe it's time for an Early Childhood Education Trust Fund.

If you are able to make a donation yourself, please go to www.wbch.org and look for the DONATE button.

The staff, the parents and especially the children will thank you.

Ana Edwards is manager of Library Programs and the Byrd House Farmers Market at the William Byrd Community House, 224 So. Cherry St. in Richmond.

Richmond
Reproductive
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Project

www.rrfp.net

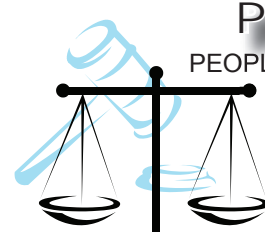
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our working lives



Photo by Guillermo Zamora

The 10 fast-food workers who staged a civil disobedience action to press their demand for a \$15 living wage pose with supporters after their Nov. 20 court hearing.

'Raise Up 10' get community service, no jail time

Like the Civil Rights demonstrators of 50 years ago, 10 minimum-wage, fast-food workers decided to press their demand for a raise to \$15-an-hour by staging a sit-in.

For more than two hours on Sept. 4, they blocked traffic on the busy Mechanicsville Turnpike outside the McDonald's just north of Interstate 64.

The 10 African-American workers, most of them young, six of them women, were arrested for unlawful assembly and public nuisance, charges that could have resulted in jail time and heavy fines.

Instead, when they went to Henrico County General District Court on Nov. 20, they were each given 30 days community service and told to pay \$92 in fines, plus court costs. So long as they complete their community service by the

next court hearing, scheduled for May 19, the charges will be wiped from their records.

The fines and court charges are being covered by supporters.

"Really what the campaign means to me is just a way to help those of us who are in low-wage jobs," Rolandah McMillan, one of the Raise Up 10, told the Defender. "It's something to do to help ourselves, and help people have a living wage, so we can not be dependent on the public. And it's not just us, it's all over, all over the world. The people are just tired of working and not being able to make ends meet. We're all struggling to make a living."

Richmond was one of 150 cities where similar protests were held Sept. 4, part of a national Raise Up day of action.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Fast-food workers and their allies hold a rally outside a Richmond McDonald's, part of a Dec. 4 national day of protest.

'We can't survive on \$7.25!'

More than 75 low-income workers and their supporters rallied Dec. 4 outside the McDonald's on Richmond's Chamberlayne Avenue, demanding the giant restaurant chain pay its workers a living wage of \$15 an hour. Three dozen of those protesting work at similar fast-food chains or at 7-Elevens and Dollar discount stores.

Union support was strong: the workers were joined by members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW), International Brotherhood of Electrical Work-

Union Holiday Cheer

In another sign of growing union visibility in Richmond, Local 123 of the American Federation of Musicians and the Symphony Musicians of Richmond presented a benefit concert Dec. 11, titled "2014 Holiday Hope." Proceeds went toward providing "Holiday Hope" to families and the elderly in need.

The concert, which cost just \$10 to attend (children were admitted free) was held at the union hall of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 666 on East Nine Mile Road in Highland Springs.

Food was provided by the Central Virginia Labor Federation.

Live Better - Work Union!

The folks who brought you the 8-hour day, weekends, vacations, pensions and - when you have one - dignity on the job.

ers (IBEW), Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the AFL-CIO.

Community support came from members of the Richmond branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); Richmond Branch NAACP; Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality; ALO Community Strategy; Wingnut Anarchist Collective; Collective X and the VCU Student Power Network.

The protest, part of the national Raise Up campaign, was one of hundreds held the same day across the country to press the demand for \$15 an hour.

For more information about the campaign, call 804-357-7688 or check out the Raise Up page on Facebook.

immigration news

Obama finally acts – but is it too little, too late?

Six years after he promised to introduce a comprehensive immigration reform bill, President Barack Obama is finally acting to overhaul a system that has some 11 million people living in fear of being deported.

In a Nov. 20 prime-time speech delivered from the White House, the president announced he would take executive action to shield up to five million people from deportation. The decision will allow many to legally work, but offers no path to actual citizenship.

Immigrant-rights advocates say they will continue to push for greater protections, while Republicans are vowing to block the president's action, especially after they take control of both houses of Congress in January.

The main part of the plan would affect about four million undocumented workers whose children are U.S. citizens. If these workers pass background checks, they will receive Social Security cards and pay income taxes, with deportations deferred. Another one million will have some protection under other parts of the plan.

According to a report in The New York Times, "Mr. Obama's actions will end a pro-

gram called Secure Communities, which advocates had long criticized as a dragnet that swept up many unauthorized immigrants arrested on minor offenses like traffic violations. Local police will no longer be asked routinely to detain immigrants without papers."

At the same time, there will be increased "security" measures on the border (presumably the southern border) and immigration priority will be given to more educated, high-tech workers.

Congressional opponents may be limited in what they can do. Funding for Citizenship and Immigration Services, the federal agency responsible for carrying out most of the president's plan, comes from application fees, not Congressional appropriations.

Meanwhile, immigration advocates intend to push the president to go further with reform measures.

"Five million people will get to feel this country's embrace," the Times quoted Lorella Praeli, director of advocacy for United We Dream, a youth immigrant organization. "But I'm sad there are people who will be left out. For them in particular, I recommit to fight until we see the day that they are protected from deportation."



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Union activists and allies call for a living wage for Walmart workers outside a South Side Richmond Walmart, one of several "Black Friday" events held in Virginia.

Walmart workers demand an end to retaliation for speaking out

As of the end of last year, the super-sized, global Walmart chain was operating 4,177 stores in the United States alone.

On Nov. 28 – the mega-shopping day known as "Black Friday" – there were protests at more than a third of those stores, as Walmart workers and their supporters demanded higher wages for the chain's poorly paid workers, as well as basic respect on the job.

"Walmart workers across the country are calling for change," Tyler Mitchell, an intern with the Making Change at Walmart Coalition, told the Defender while protesting outside Walmart's store off Forest Hill Avenue in South Richmond.

"Walmart workers went on strike on Black Friday for an end to illegal retaliation," he said. "Walmart has retaliated against employees for speaking out for better wages, fair scheduling, and safer job conditions."

Mitchell said there were protests at several Virginia stores, including three in Richmond, two in Fairfax and one each in Ashland and Sterling.

The protests were part of an organized campaign called Our Walmart, made up of current and former Walmart employees. That campaign is also part of Making Change at Walmart, which is backed by United Food and Commercial Workers, the union that represents Virginia Kroger workers.

"There was also a national strike day this June, then other protests, like writing letters to Walmart corporate leaders," Mitchell said.

Charles Brown is a Walmart worker in Newport News who is active with Our Walmart. The 27-year-old truck unloader has been with Walmart for four years.

There was no Nov. 28 protest at his store, so he and three other store employees – two

Blacks, two whites – went to Washington, D.C., to join actions there.

"D.C. has a living-wage ordinance that mandates \$12 an hour, but Walmart only pays \$8.45," Brown said.

The four drove up on Thanksgiving Day to the Walmart Supercenter on D.C.'s Georgia Avenue, where they and other protesters presented a letter with their demands to the manager.

The next day, Black Friday, the four joined a protest at another Supercenter, on H Street.

"This time, they shut us out," Brown said. "We didn't get to talk to the manager. They shut the doors and the customers were either shut in or shut out. They pretty much shut down the store for over an hour, until the rally was over."

Mitchell said more actions at more Walmarts will be coming in the future.

According to the 2014 Fortune Global 500 list, Walmart is the world's largest company by revenue. With 2.1 million workers, it also is the world's biggest private employer.

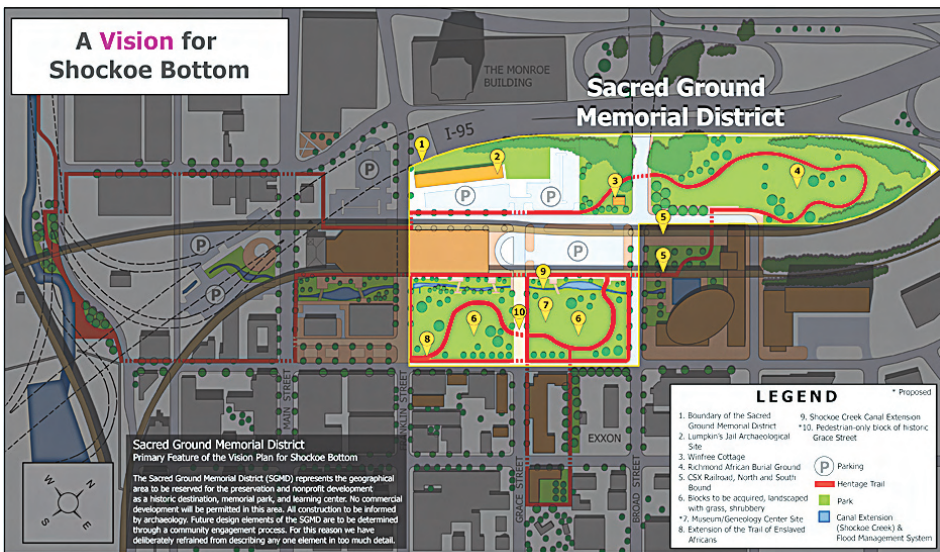
Walmart is controlled by the Waltons, the richest family in the United States and one of the richest in the world. This one family has as much wealth as 42 percent of U.S. families combined.

Meanwhile, Walmart workers in the U.S. make so little money that many qualify for public assistance – at a cost of \$6.1 billion a year to U.S. taxpayers. Basically, the public is subsidizing the billionaire Walton family's workforce.

In Virginia, Walmart's 41,950 employees receive \$226.5 million in public assistance, according to an Americans for Tax Fairness report quoted in Forbes magazine.

For more information on the Our Walmart campaign, visit <http://forrespect.org>.

reclaiming our sacred ground



The Defenders are suggesting that this conception of a Sacred Ground Memorial Park could be a starting point for a Community Conversation about how to reclaim and properly memorialize the sacred ground of Shockoe Bottom.

A proposal for how to reclaim Shockoe Bottom

By Ana Edwards

Victory in the effort to stop a stadium from being built in historic Shockoe Bottom was long in coming, but it's only a first step.

The next phase is no less important: community engagement.

The Virginia Defender newspaper and the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project plan to co-host a series of nine "Community Conversations on The Future of Shockoe Bottom" in the months leading up to April 3, 2015, historically known as the day the Union Army, led by Black troops, marched into Richmond, ending Confederate rule and nearly 200 years slavery in the city.

Liberation Day 2015 will also be the centerpiece of a weekend during which the Future of Richmond's Past coalition will host three days of educational and commemorative activities that focus on the "Fall of Richmond: The End of the Civil War and Beginning of Freedom."

The Community Conversations will be the Defenders' contribution to a collaborative strategy launched, in part, by the selection of Shockoe Bottom as one of Virginia's and this country's 11 most endangered historic sites by Preservation Virginia and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Following up on the National Trust's focus group sessions and retreat in September 2014, and using the resulting "Guiding Principles" as a tool for greater public engagement and input, these nine conversations will allow Richmond residents, particularly its Black residents, to consider and offer alternative preservation and development ideas for what is recognized as an irreplaceable site of conscience.

At this stage, this process is still only a proposal. We welcome your input. Updates will be provided on the conversations and Liberation Day 2015 at www.ShockoeBottom.blogspot.com.

Contact us at (804) 644-5834 or DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

Wronged ancestors honored at VCU well ceremony

By Ana Edwards

It wasn't much of a burial.

Early one morning long ago at the Medical College of Virginia, a man took out the trash, dumping a last batch of human bones into an old well. A cement cap was placed over it and sealed. Whether he uttered any final words of respect or remembrance is not known, but the man returned to his other labors. The site and its contents were forgotten.

On Nov. 19, more than a century later, a long-overdue ceremony was held to honor the memory of the people to whom these bones had belonged and for whom the desecration of their bodies after death, on this same site, was merely a continuation of the powerlessness imposed on their lives, both enslaved and free.

Some 200 people, led by members of the Elegba Folklore Society, walked from the Hermes A. Kontos Medical Sciences Building in the 1200 block of East Marshall Street, across the courtyard to the Egyptian Building. There they began the open house and ceremony to honor the lives of those whose remains were discovered in 1994, but were again kept in the dark until a 2012 documentary by Virginia Commonwealth University professor Shawn Utsey brought their story to light.

These were the bones of Black – and a few white – men, women and children whose grave-robbled bodies were used to teach human anatomy to white medical students from the early years of 19th century through the beginning of the 20th.

VCU's Black Awakening Choir opened the event with a single acapella rendition of "Amazing Grace." Welcome remarks were made by Sheldon Retchin, the outgoing CEO of VCU Health Systems; East Marshall Street

Well Project Planning Committee Co-chair Rev. Eli Burke; archaeologist Joanna Wilson Green of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; and VCU Associate Vice President Quincy Byrdsong. The final speaker was VCU President Michael Rao.

The audience then returned to the courtyard, where Elegba's founding director, Omi-lade Janine Bell, accompanied by two dancers and three musicians, conducted a traditional libation pouring and mourning ceremony.

Original music by local jazz composer Ashby Anderson was broadcast in the main conference room of the Kontos building, which was lined with educational exhibits; a projection of a 3-D digital map of 1850s Richmond; and private areas for providing feedback by video, blog or on comment cards included with the program brochure.

There was also an altar, draped and laid with roses, that held two copies of an album of photographs documenting the remains recovered from the well.

The surprise announcement was that VCU will begin a memorial scholarship for "students who commit to serving the human health needs of underrepresented communities" and that "the life-changing and life-saving work of these students will be the legacy of the people lost in the well a century and a half ago."

It was a good start to what will still be an emotional journey for many, but it was Byrdsong who, while providing the history, overview and goals, set the expectation level for the East Marshall Street Well Project with this statement: "How we proceed, starting tonight, will determine the legacy of these people."

To learn more or to get involved, visit: <http://emsw.vcu.edu>.

cops, courts & prisons

RIHD's Mobile Justice Tour (MJT)

By Queen Nzinga

Justice is briefly defined as "the administration of rewards and/or punishments in a fair and equitable manner." Thanks to a growing number of committed individuals and community organizations, the hope of realizing TRUE justice for all is coming into fruition.

The RIHD Mobile Justice Tour is fast becoming a means to attain that end.

In early 2013, Richmond City Councilwoman Michelle Mosby, along with Richard Walker, formerly incarcerated and now-director of Bridging the Gap in Virginia, presented a resolution to City Council titled "Ban-the-Box."

This resolution was designed to remove from the initial employment application any inquiries into a person's criminal background and to defer those inquiries until the interview process. By removing the "box," where you check off if you have ever been convicted of a felony, those individuals who happen to be formerly incarcerated are given a more equitable opportunity for employment.

Present at that council meeting were Lillie "Ms. K" Branch-Kennedy, founder and executive director of Resource Information Help for the Disadvantaged (RIHD), and Kim Allen, former president of the Richmond Branch NAACP. The two decided to collaborate on ideas about how to get Ban-the-Box information out to the public, thus creating the impetus for the Mobile Justice Tour (MJT).

The MJT began its first multi-city tour in the spring of 2013. In addition to Richmond, Ban-the-Box legislation now has been adopted in Alexandria, Charlottesville, Danville, Fredericksburg, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach and the counties of Arlington and Fairfax.

This Re-Entry Initiative, an ongoing effort of the MJT, is primarily concerned with the Ban-the-Box issue and promoting a simplification of the process for the restoration of civil and voting rights.

According to The Sentencing Project, Virginia currently has approximately 350,000 disenfranchised formerly incarcerated

– more than 7 percent of the adult population, including one in five African-Americans. (2010 figures.) There is currently no appeal process if an individual, despite having completed all the criteria, is denied restoration.

While promoting the above issues, the primary purpose of the third MJT is fighting/working to end the trend of mass incarceration and correcting injustices that remain uncorrected in Virginia. To accomplish this, the third tour is promoting a Legislative Initiative dealing with sentencing disparity and the five years of unfair jury trials.

From 1995 to 2000, juries were not informed prior to deliberation that parole had been abolished in Virginia. This led to more extreme terms of incarceration as jurors incorrectly assumed that those convicted would only serve a fraction of the time imposed. Sentencing disparities resulted in harsher sentences for the poor and people of color. Because sentencing guidelines are discretionary, judges are not mandated to follow them. The MJT advocates that judges must give a detailed written explanation for departing from the guidelines.

The MJT has addressed packed venues across the Commonwealth. Community response has been overwhelming! One speaker of note is Oludare Ogunde, the president-elect of RIHD, who shares his wealth of knowledge and personal experiences and accomplishments he accumulated while being detained in the Virginia prison system. The MJT also provides information about how to become proactively involved in planning and effecting positive change.

The Mobile Justice Tour will conclude its third 15-city tour at the 7th Annual Virginia Peoples Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice, scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 10 in Richmond. (See story on page one.) Ms. K will participate in a panel discussion on prisons and prison-related issues.

For more information about RIHD and/or the Mobile Justice Tour and the schedule of upcoming locations, please visit www.RIHD.org or email RIHD23075@aol.com.

Update: Ashley Williams

Ashley Williams, the young Richmond mother who was accused of allowing her two-year-old son D'Sean to starve to death, is appealing her conviction in the case that attracted wide community interest.

Her attorney, David Hargett, appeared on her behalf Sept. 9 before the Court of Appeals of Virginia.

"The initial judge of the Court of Appeals denied us, so I demanded a three-judge panel," Hargett told the Defender. "They had a hearing where I argued the merits of her appeal. That court denied us and so we then petitioned to the Virginia Supreme Court."

"That appeal is currently pending. They will allow me to come and argue for 10 minutes why they should take up the appeal, my best guess is sometime in February or March. That decision is made behind closed doors. If it's a thumbs-up, they will grant us a review. If they deny it, then we're done."

"If they grant it, then there will be a round of briefs and full-blown arguments by both sides before the seven-member court. But that would be many, many months later."

Williams was found guilty in May 2013 of murder and felony child neglect. Family members and at least one medical expert argued that D'Sean suffered from severe health conditions that affected his ability to process food. Williams was sentenced to five and a half years in prison.

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

Ashley Williams is being held in the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women in Troy, about 60 miles northwest of Richmond.

Her projected release date is Dec. 1, 2017.

Update: Jermaine Doss

Wrongfully incarcerated Norfolk native Jermaine Doss may be getting a new ally in his fight to win his freedom: the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project.

Doss was convicted in 2000 of being involved in the murder of Norfolk businessman James Webb. Sentenced to life plus 38 years, he has always maintained his innocence. The only evidence against him was the testimony of the man who admitted shooting Webb, Nathaniel McGee.

McGee later tried several times to retract his testimony, saying he was pressured by the authorities into falsely testifying in order to avoid the death penalty. Jermaine says he was framed by a crooked cop, Norfolk Detective Glenn Ford – who is now serving a 12.5-year sentence for extorting defendants and then lying about it to the FBI.

Jermaine has exhausted his legal appeals and his extremely supportive family has run out of money to pay for attorneys. On May 21, with the help of the Defenders, he submitted a request for a full pardon to Gov. Terry McAuliffe. It usually takes at least a year to get a response. More than 1,000 people have signed a petition asking the governor to set Doss free.

This summer, Doss asked the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project to look into his situation. The project referred his case to its affiliated clinic at the College of William & Mary's law school, where a student is currently reviewing his files in order to recommend to the Innocence Project whether it should get involved.

According to its website, the project "is a non-profit organization dedicated to correcting and preventing the conviction of innocent people in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia." If it decides to take on a case, it provide pro bono investigative and legal help.

In our opinion

Reclaim Richmond's
African Burial Ground!

No Stadium in
Shockoe Bottom!

Free Ashley Williams!

Free Jermaine Doss!

End Inhumane Conditions in
the Richmond City Jail!

Money for Jobs, not for War!

Build the
Virginia People's Assembly
for Jobs, Peace & Justice!

Dear friends,

This is a simple appeal for money.

The Virginia Defender is wrapping up its first decade of publishing. Over the past 10 years, we think we've made some real contributions in the struggle for Justice. If you agree, please help us continue.

We're an all-volunteer effort. Of the 30 or so people who write, publish, distribute and fund raise for the paper, none of us takes a dime for ourselves. We pay no office rent, because we work out of a spare bedroom. We have no paid staff. Our only big expense is raising \$1,000 each issue to pay the printer. So we sell ads and pass the hat at Defender meetings. If we come up short, we put the difference on a personal credit card – and pay the interest for years to come.

Right now we're carrying about \$3,000 in credit card debt. We're asking you to please make a donation to help us pay this down. Large contributions are very welcome, but every bit helps.

(See below for the details.)

You can also volunteer to work with the Defender. We are always looking for writers, photographers, advertising salespeople, distributors, computer technicians and more. Don't have experience? We train! (Except for the computer techies.)

We could spend a lot of time holding fund raisers, but we think it's more important to stay in the streets. If you agree, please send us whatever you can. We're willing to do the work, but we can't carry the financial burden ourselves.

Help us strengthen the Defender for the next 10 years of struggle.

In Solidarity,

Ana Edwards & Phil Wilayto

Editorial Board of The Virginia Defender

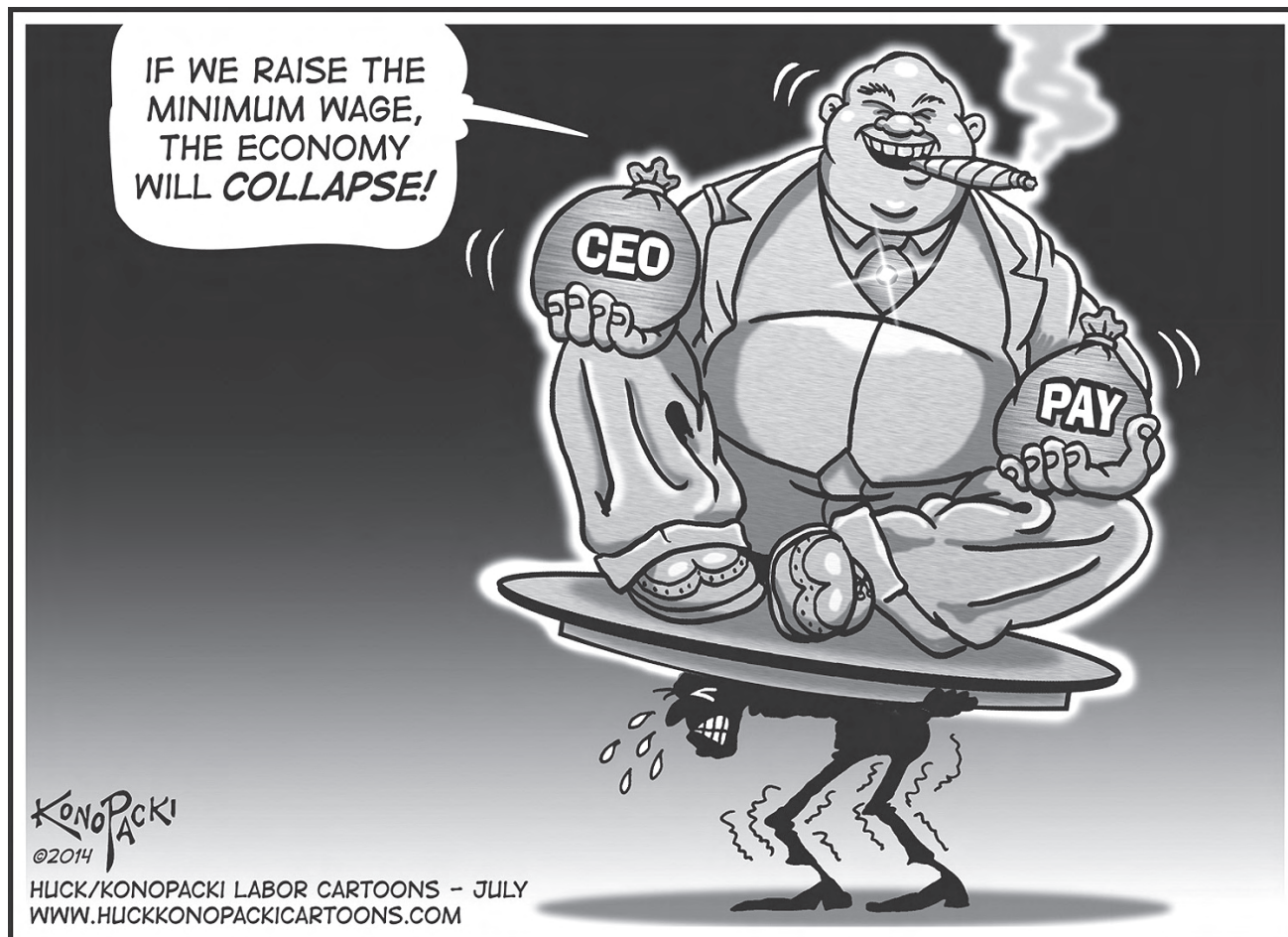
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* Make a contribution by credit card or PayPal account at: www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com. (You don't need your own PayPal account to use ours.)

And no, we are not a tax-deductible operation. We don't rely on grants, which too often restrict the kinds of things you can say and do. We rely on our members, allies and supporters to keep the Defender loud, strong and independent.

Please think about helping out today.



Letters to the Editor

A letter from Richmond's new jail

I am an inmate at the Richmond Justice Center (RJC). I am also a service-connected, disabled veteran, medically retired, U.S. Army.

RJC is so grievous, where does one start? With a grievance, you would think? I have put in several. They are supposed to respond in nine days; it has been months. Their attitude is, "We can treat you anyway we want, because we are the law!"

I am a very respectful person, but if you show me no respect I show you none in return. A lot of the deputies are petty, spiteful, vindictive and uncaring; some are even prejudiced. Lieutenant colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, all the way down the line. They act as if they hate their jobs and despise all inmates. I too am prejudiced – against assholes and arrogant people!

All of this even filters down to all employees of the RJC. Medical, law library, new, state-of-the-art money-making institution – same old brutal mentality and mismanagement! They do not even have enough deputies scheduled to properly run the tiers. They will come in and feed, lock us down and run to another tier to let them out to eat. Count time. Count us. Then off to another tier.

You would think that, even at charging a dollar a day per inmate, we would get healthy meals that are filling and nutritious. NOT!! I've gone weeks without seeing veggies and we never, ever get fruit of any kind. Everything we receive is of little or no nutritional value. Very small portion sizes. You are lucky to get two tablespoons of anything, which is usually only three or four items. Six thin french fries, five corn chips, 2-inch by 1-inch cake or corn bread or pan bread. Sometimes we don't even see meat! A two-year-old would be hungry after eating what we are fed.

There's a \$15 charge to go to medical! I told the nurse I was feeling weak and faint and seeing white shooting stars. She asked me was there any way that I could get family or someone to put money on my books so that I could get Keefe Commissary *. Also, that all inmates complained about the food from the kitchen. I told her that nothing in the commissary was of nutritional value, except some of the snacks or the bottle of daily multivi-

tamins. Everything is high-sodium and sugar and very much overpriced.

We live in a population full of poverty. Some inmates owe hundreds or more to RJC, because of the outrageous medical charges and the dollar-a-day charge. Not many families can afford to pay off these charges and the high, overpriced items at the commissary. If you need to see the doctor, it's a \$20 charge! Because you need medications, it's a throw-in-a-crashpoot as to when you will get them, if at all. They charge inmates \$5 to \$7 dollars for refills of medication. You may get your medications for three or four days, if you are lucky, and then they disappear. Keep in mind that they are charging inmates for these medications. Instead of ordering inmates' meds before they run out, they will steal meds from another inmate and pass them all out to other inmates. This is stealing! This is a bad practice, but there seems to be no supervision. I very much need my meds as much as the next inmate. Inmates are jealous over the few inmates who do get commissary, because they are starving!

No matter who you are, I hope and

pray you never get locked up and have to spend a long stay in the new-but-not-improved Richmond Justice Center. A tomb for the living. I could write another two pages of grievances. One small roll of toilet paper for the whole week, filthy blankets that are never washed!! Well, this is a start!

With a population full of discrimination, poverty, humiliation and injustice comes hatred, hunger, pain and violence. Unbiased justice and development must be spread. We must disallow murder, brutality and cruelty.

Thank you for your time and attention! God Bless!

Thomas O. Carter
U.S. Army Retired
#29816 6E #3

P.S. I have sent a letter to Mayor Dwight Jones, with no reply. No need to withhold my name.

* According to its website, Keefe Commissary Network "is the nation's leading provider of automated commissary management services and technologies to city, county and state correctional facilities nationwide."

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Black Lives Continued from page 1

Another Richmond demonstration was called, again by Black women students. The evening of Dec. 3 was frigid, but some 400 protesters moved swiftly from VCU's Monroe Park campus and, without hesitation, surged into the left lane of Harrison Street. At the intersection of Ryland and West Broad streets, about 40 demonstrators lay down as though dead. Other protesters formed lines in front of traffic, linking their arms to guard those on the ground. Their faces were set and resolute in the alternating red and green glow from the stoplights above and the flashing blue lights of the police cruisers gathering around them. Traffic backed up to Lombardy Street to the west and Belvidere Street to the east.

The crowd held the intersection for 11 minutes. "Eric Garner told officers he couldn't breathe 11 times," explained a woman to the crowd, which was still growing. "He begged for his life 11 times, but they didn't stop."

When the 11 minutes ended, the protesters stood up, took all four lanes of Broad, and began marching again, chanting in unison: "Turn up, shut it down, for Eric Garner and Mike Brown!"

By this time, police had blocked off West Broad to vehicular traffic in both directions. Several squad cars followed behind the marchers, while one drove slowly a half-block ahead.

When the marchers reached Belvidere and West Broad, the largest intersection in the area, they stopped. VCU student Ashleigh Shackelford took the mic.

"Shut it down!" she proclaimed. The crowd needed no further instruction. Within minutes, 200 demonstrators had seated themselves in a square on the streets of the intersection, blocking traffic in all four directions. Two hundred more protesters, plus curious onlookers from nearby apartment buildings and gas stations, gathered outside those sitting down. The organizers stood in the empty asphalt expanse inside the blockade next to a banner reading, "Justice for Mike Brown" and taking turns leading chants.

The police presence, which began with only a few cruisers and officers on bicycles, quickly grew to include more than a dozen vehicles stationed on each side of the intersection. They gave no orders to the protesters and appeared to only stand and watch impassively. Meanwhile, people continued to arrive, alone or in groups, as news of the protest spread. Those blocking the intersection watched the police, resolute.

After 40 minutes in the street, a moment of silence was announced, lasting, again, 11

minutes. The intersection, usually loud with passing vehicles, went dead silent. Some of those on the peripheries spoke in hushed whispers, but none dared to break the tribute.

When it ended, the group rose and marched back to campus, having held the intersection for almost an hour.

The women involved in the VCU-based demonstrations have created a Facebook page to announce their future events. Black Action Now can be found at: <http://goo.gl/IWJtYZ>

The Defenders participated in all these actions and also scheduled a forum for Dec. 18 at the William Byrd Community Center, just south of VCU. The topic: "Why are there so many police murders and what will it take to stop them?" As of Dec. 19, nearly 100 people had joined the Facebook page indicating they would attend.

Other major protests took place across the state, including:

CHARLOTTESVILLE – A protest in the University of Virginia's Clark Hall Library followed the grand jury decision not to indict the officer who killed Eric Garner. Students massed and chanted "Black Lives Matter!" and "Shut it down!" Off-campus, at around 12:30 a.m., protesters blocked a part of East Market Street. They eventually gathered in front of police headquarters, chanting and holding signs. One woman was arrested and charged with being in the roadway and obstruction of justice. (WVIR). On Dec. 13, people held a march and vigil in solidarity with the people of Ferguson. (The Daily Progress)

WILLIAMSBURG – Nov. 25: More than 100 people marched, beginning at the Student Bookstore in Merchant Square and ending at the Wren Building on the College of William & Mary campus. A rally began with four-and-a-half minutes of silence, symbolizing the four-and-a-half hours that Michael Brown lay in the street, unattended, after being fatally shot in Ferguson, Mo. "This right here is a movement!" said W&M graduate student Travis Terrell Harris, who organized the protest. (Williamsburg-Yorktown Daily)

BLACKSBURG – Students at Virginia Tech held an on-campus die-in.

Editor's Note: We know that more protests happened around the state, including in Charlottesville, and apologize that we were not able to gather more information about them. To report on events in your area, please email: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com.

Huguenot High students hold in-school protest

By Phil Wilayto

A lot of people might think 7:40 in the morning is a little early for a protest, but not dozens of students at Huguenot High School on Richmond's South Side.

On Dec. 11, some 40 to 50 students gathered in a school hallway, held up their hands and chanted, "Hands Up! Don't Shoot!"

That's the same cry that has been raised in more than 200 cities and college campuses around the country following police shootings and choking deaths in Ferguson, Mo.; Cleveland, OH; Staten Island, N.Y.; and many other places.

According to school officials, the protest was allowed to continue until about 8 or 8:05 a.m., when the students went to class. Five students were singled out for disciplinary action.

"There were five students who became a

bit disruptive and were given in-school community service," Cletisha Lovelace from the school system's Public Information Office told the Defender. "Based on my conversation with the principal, they were not being responsive or compliant with the security officers."

Lovelace said the five would be required to perform some kind of community service within the school, but would not miss any class time. There would be no permanent mark on their records, she said.

"This is something we anticipated," Lovelace said. "We wanted to give the students an opportunity to express themselves within the confines of the instructional policy that has been set forth and they did so, aside from those five students, and that was minor."

"They have every right to do it. And we support that."



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Richmond fast-food workers and their union and community supporters show solidarity with the movement against police murders. The workers were holding a rally outside a McDonald's restaurant to press their demand for a \$15-an-hour wage. (See story on page 4.) Historically, first the students become active, then the workers — and then we win!

Join activists from around the state at the 2015 Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice!

Saturday - Jan. 10 - Richmond
Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church

1720 Mechanicsville Turnpike in Richmond's East End, just south of I-64

For the 7th year in a row, activists from around Virginia will come together for a one-day conference of workshops, panel discussions, speakers, networking and strategizing. Join us as we reach across the boundaries of race, sex, gender, issues and geography, building a movement based on respect, solidarity and a passion for justice.

More information is being posted at: www.vapeoplesassembly.org

Endorsers as of Dec. 18, 2014:

Active-RVA (Richmond)	Jamil Jasey – Sol Society (Richmond)
All As One, Richmond Chapter	John Lewis – Renew Richmond
Breanne Armbrust – Kaiser Permanente	Stephen Loughman – Rag & Bones Bicycle Cooperative (Richmond)
Regional Coordinator, UFCW Local 400 (Statewide)	Weluna Earth Mother – Nation of Gods & Earths, Richmond Chapter
Kwame Binta – November Coalition (National)	Jericho Movement, Richmond Chapter
Charles Brown – Labor & Community Activist (Newport News)	Bryan G. Pfeifer – Labor Activist (Abingdon)
Evandra Catherine – The Identity Project (Richmond)	Plowshare Peace Center (Roanoke)
Coalition for Justice (Blacksburg)	POWER, Inc. (Portsmouth)
Collective X (Richmond)	Raise Up – The movement to win a \$15 wage for fast-food workers (Statewide)
Willie Mae & Ray Doss – Parents of Wrongfully Incarcerated Virginia Prisoner Jermaine Doss (Norfolk)	Resource Information Help for the Disadvantaged (RIHD) (Highland Springs)
Lillie A. Estes – ALO Community Strategy (Richmond)	Richmond Peace Education Center
Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality (Richmond)	BeKura Wallah Shabazz - International Women's Liberation Council
Ana Edwards – Chair, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project (Statewide)	Ha Tran – Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project
Flying Brick Library (Richmond)	The Virginia Defender (Statewide)
House of Consciousness (Norfolk)	Wayside Center for Popular Education (Faber)
	Woodbridge Workers Committee (Prince William County)

Defender editor speaks in Vancouver

Virginia Defender Editor Phil Wilayto was a guest speaker at a Day of Action Antiwar Conference held Oct. 25 in the city of Vancouver, on the west coast of Canada. The conference, sponsored by the Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO), was titled "Which Road to Peace in the Middle East & North Africa?"

The event followed a lively downtown street rally demanding an end to U.S. and Canadian interference in other countries.

Wilayto spoke on the roots of U.S. policy in the Middle East. Iraqi-Canadian community activist Mandoh Ashir discussed historical

examples of resistance to oppression. Aaron Mercree of MAWO addressed the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and the origins of the group ISIS.

Members of MAWO are planning to attend the "Stop the Wars at Home & Abroad!" conference to be hosted by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) May 8-10 in Se-caucus, N.J.. The Defenders are members of the conference organizing committee.

For information on the UNAC conference, see www.unacpeace.org.

For information on MAWO, see: www.mawovancouver.org.

Don't miss Generation Dream 2015

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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Feb. 28 at 3pm - Henrico Theatre

www.rpec.org

Richmond Peace Education Center



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