

FREE

D The Virginia **DEFENDER**

*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.*

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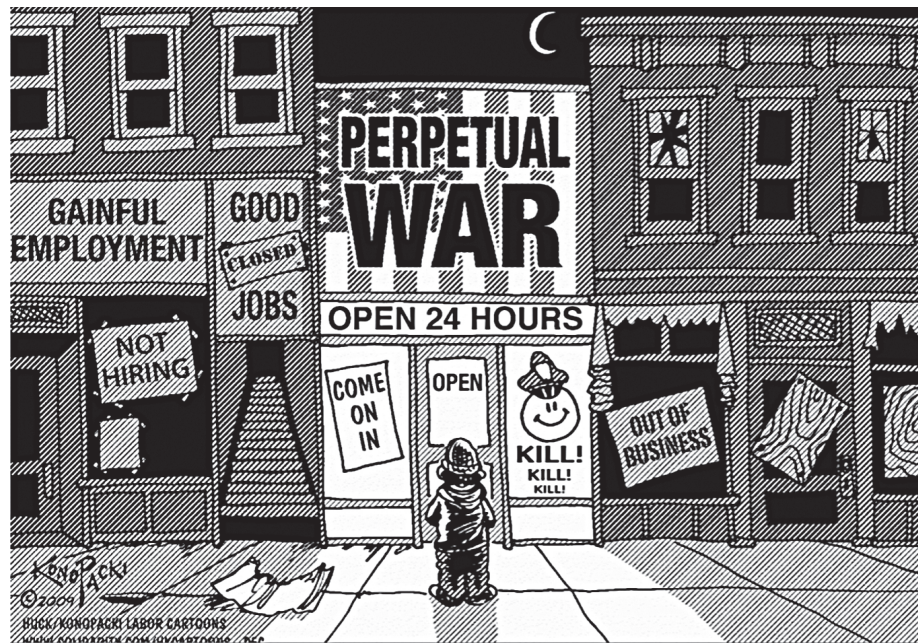
Libya - Somalia - Iraq - Afghanistan - Syria - Yemen - Pakistan - & more

We can't afford these wars ***and neither can the rest of the world!***

By Phil Wilayto

No country spends more on war than the United States. With 5 percent of the world's people, we are responsible for one-third of all military spending - more than the next seven or eight countries combined, and that includes both China and Russia.

We're told that some 23 percent of our federal tax dollars go to the Defense Department. But that doesn't include the cost of maintaining the nuclear arsenal, which comes under the Department of Energy. Or care for veterans, which comes under the Department of Veteran Affairs. Or the massive interest on the national debt, which is largely the result of borrowing money to pay for past wars. It doesn't even include the actual cost of fighting today's wars, which is a separate expenditure.



The truth is that fully half our federal tax dollars go to pay for wars, past, present and future.

What does this mean for us here at home? It means that, among all the major developed countries in the world and many of the less developed, we do not provide free health care for our people. It means our schools are funded by local property taxes, so poor communities get poor schools. Unemployed workers wind up in prison instead of in public jobs programs. We're told there's never enough money for decent social services, but always enough money for another war.

THE COST OF WAR

Each year we're taxed more than a trillion dollars for war. What could this money buy here at home?

See **COST OF WAR on Page 2**

NOV. 9-11 - WASHINGTON, DC

End the Wars at Home & Abroad!

Vets March - Culture - Conference

notrumpmilitaryparade.us

NOV. 16-18, DUBLIN, IRELAND

**International Conference Against
US / NATO Military Bases**

nousnatobases.org

MARCH 30, 31 & APRIL 4 - DC

**March, Conference, Protests
against NATO Summit**

unacpeace.org

MAY 2 - ALL OVER THE WORLD

**Actions in Solidarity with
the anti-fascist community
in Odessa, Ukraine**

odessasolidaritycampaign.org

"War is a racket. It always has been." - Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler, at the time of his death the most decorated Marine ever

COST OF WAR Continued from page 1

Let's just take the base budget of the Department of Defense, which this year is over half-a-trillion. That could pay the salaries of 6.5 million elementary school teachers (educating 150.1 million students) for a year. Or wages for 9.5 million infrastructure jobs. Or four-year university scholarships for 16 million students. Or Head Start slots for 59 million children.

Jobs and education, or wars and occupations? What do we really want?

IMMIGRATION

The antiwar movement in Europe is very aware of the relationship between wars and immigration. The U.S./NATO wars across the Middle East and North Africa have devastated whole countries, resulting in a mass migration to Europe. Germany alone, with a population one-quarter of that of the United States, has admitted a million refugees.

At the same time, right-wing organizations and parties in Europe have used this issue to build a nationalist/populist movement that has propelled them to power in Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Austria and Italy, with growing political power in France, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In response, the antiwar forces are working hard to explain to their national populations that refugees need solidarity, not hostility, and that it is the U.S./NATO wars that are responsible for the massive migration in the first place.

Here in the U.S., right-wing forces have also targeted immigration in order to build their political power, including the election of Donald Trump, but not enough of us are explaining how that immigration is tied to U.S. policies.

Within one year after President Bill Clinton signed the NAFTA agreement in 1994, the poverty level in Mexico doubled from an already high of 25 percent to 50 percent - half the population. Among other factors, U.S. corn growers, subsidized by the government, greatly increased their exports to Mexico, devastating the income of subsistence farmers, many of whom then travelled North to find jobs.

According to several immigrants this writer spoke with years ago in Prince William County, NAFTA also forbade the communal ownership of land, so Mexican peasants who had used these lands for centuries for grazing their animals were told they would now have to pay for the "privilege." Immigration from Mexico is now declining, but it is increasing from Central America, propelled by extreme poverty and gang-driven violence.

We need to explain that it was the U.S. role in the 1980s in Central America that laid the basis for these social problems. Reactionary forces and death squads promoted by Washington morphed into the drug gangs of today. More recently, U.S. interference in Honduran presidential elections led to social conflict and

repression. (See story on page 7.) In Nicaragua and Venezuela, U.S. pressure against the government has led to internal conflict, violence and migration.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate change and the increasing destruction of our environment are motivating millions of people to speak out and rise up against fossil fuels, carbon emissions and pipelines, often leading them to an understanding that it's capitalism itself that is the real problem. But there is no force on earth more destructive to the environment than war.

During its war against Vietnam, the U.S. military sprayed dioxin-laden Agent Orange over one-tenth of the land mass of South Vietnam. Forty years later, the effects on the people and the ecology are still being felt. Vietnamese peasants are still dying from unexploded ordinances. The use of depleted uranium in armor-piercing projectiles used in Iraq and Afghanistan has caused massive health problems for the targeted populations. The U.S. Navy is the world's largest user of petroleum products. Military bases pollute the surrounding communities. The examples go on and on.

Then there are the social effects of the wars on our society.

MILITARIZATION OF POLICE

After the 2014 police murder of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., we saw what looked like a military invasion of the Black community: armed personnel carriers, combat-grade uniforms and weaponry that

looked like it came right off the battlefield. That's when many people first learned about the Pentagon program that transfers so-called surplus equipment to local police departments, for free. This militarization of local police forces greatly exacerbates the existing problems of police racism and brutality.

MASS SHOOTINGS

People have the right to the responsible ownership of guns, but there's something deeply wrong with the gun culture in this country.

With just 5 percent of the world's population, we own half the world's privately owned guns. And it's not just the numbers - it's the glorification of guns and gun violence. It's in our movies, TV shows, all of our popular culture. And it's promoted by the Pentagon, which encourages Hollywood war movies as recruitment tools and even develops its own war video games. The military is in our schools. The teenager who shot up his former high school in Parkland, Florida, learned to shoot in a Junior ROTC program at that very school.

STREET VIOLENCE

Some years ago I was talking with a teenager in my neighborhood in Richmond's East End. There were a lot of street shootings at the time, as there are now, and I asked him what you do if you think someone is out to get you.

"You get him first," he said.

At that same time, President George Bush was telling us that Saddam Hussein was out to get us and so we had to get him first. These

See COST OF WAR on Page 9

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 Prison Justice Network, the United National Antiwar Coalition and the Virginia People's Assembly for Jobs, Peace & Justice.

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, 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.

community news

Is there a Master Plan to drive poor people out of Richmond?

Staff Report

A few months back we ran a story titled, “Does RVA have a Master Plan to push out the poor?”

It sure looks like it. Public housing is under attack. Mass transit has been reduced. The public schools are not improving and in

some ways are getting worse. The Richmond area has record-low unemployment, but so many of us are working two and three jobs just to survive. Everything is going up except the minimum wage.

And meanwhile it seems like the only people city government cares about are young, single professionals. The “creative class,” they call them - as if the rest of us have never created anything.

For this issue we asked two of our friends in the community what they think is happening. And specifically, their

thoughts on the new Coliseum downtown development project, headed up by Dominion Energy chairman, president and CEO Thomas F. Farrell II, and the new Pulse bus system.

Here’s what they had to say:

ART BURTON - Exec. Director, Kinfolk Community Empowerment Center

On the Coliseum Project

I have real concerns that we could take land that was formerly a Black community - that we destroyed under the pretext that we were moving these families to better living conditions and opportunities - and now 75 years later we could give this land to the white corporate community. And the very people we moved off the land, we have not kept one promise we made them. They live in substandard housing, go to substandard schools, the economic inequality gap is actually increasing, and I don’t see where this project really changes that.

On the Pulse

I was talking to the gentleman who was working for VCU who did an analysis of the Pulse, and he said that there was a 48 percent decrease of accessibility for poor people who rely on public transportation. As a bus rider and someone who talks with bus riders, what I hear from Black riders is that it’s causing a real hardship for African-American women and African-American women with children in terms of being able to move around downtown.

And once again, even when we talk about the Coliseum project, it’s just curious to me that the transfer station that was identified as intolerable and inhumane has now been lumped into the Coliseum project, so it’s being held hostage to rich white men who don’t even ride the buses.

And when we look at where the bus stops are, you remove them from in front of Kroger and put them in front of Whole Foods. You have these big beautiful bus stops for the Pulse, but poor Black riders on the other lines don’t even have seats or

shelters. They’re sitting on cinder blocks or makeshift benches. So when we look at it, I think it’s very clear to most people that I talk to that the Pulse or the new transit system was designed to intentionally cause hardship for poor Black people.

OMARI AL-QADAFI - East End Community Organizer

In terms of a plan to drive out the poor, some of the language that the mayor uses seems like that’s the goal. A lot of the policies that I’ve seen in the areas of transportation and the lack of action being taken in a lot of areas, that goal is there too.

There’s the big idea of reducing poverty by such and such time, but it doesn’t seem like much is being done to increase the income or assets of the people who currently live in Richmond. Wealthier people are being incentivised to come into the city, and that’s giving the impression that there are less impoverished people in the city now.

On the Pulse

As far as transportation, bus transit is being reduced in the areas where poverty is mostly concentrated. I know HUD has done some studies that show that. They’re developing public housing and give vouchers, but there’s no one-to-one replacement for the units and no requirement for landlords to accept vouchers.

On the Coliseum project

All this development going on, like the housing that’s supposed to come with the Coliseum development, if no one is accepting vouchers, then there’s no benefit for the poor people. Maybe the ones who make more money, but not residents of public housing, or even the working poor in the city.

So it definitely seems that the goal may be to get more people of affluence into the city more so than to help out impoverished people in the city, and that the way the total poverty rate will go down, as poverty moves out of the city.

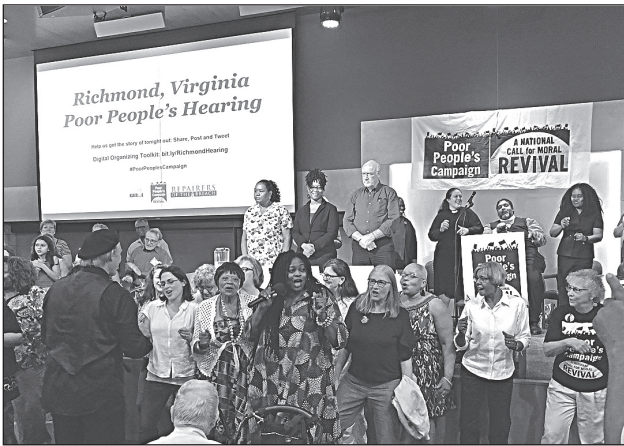


RICHMOND OBSERVES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE — Sept. 21 is observed around the world as an International Day of Peace. In Richmond, the Richmond Peace Education Center marked the day with a rally held at the Maggie L. Walker Memorial Plaza at the intersection of West Broad and Adams streets. A diverse group of speakers addressed a wide range of issues, including immigrant rights and juvenile detention. Princess Blanding spoke about the fatal police shooting of her brother Marcus-David Peters and her family’s continuing campaign for justice. Defender Ana Edwards, above, addresses the connections between the wars at home and abroad.



FIGHTING EDITOR RETURNS TO JACKSON WARD — A new mural depicting John Mitchell Jr., the “Fighting Editor” of the trailblazing Richmond Planet newspaper, graces the wall of a building facing the Maggie L. Walker statue at the southern entrance to Jackson Ward. Above at left signing the mural is the artist, George Fernandez, aka Visibly Hidden. Photos by Phil Wilayto

community news



Attendees at the Virginia Poor People's Campaign hearing join in songs of struggle. Photo by Phil Wilayto

Poor People's Campaign holds Virginia hearing

Several hundred people gathered Sept. 26 at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond for the first of eight scheduled Poor People's Campaign state hearings.

According to organizers, the purpose was "... to lift up the voices of the poor, directly

impacted, and faith leaders, to demand that our nation's elected officials take action to fight systemic racism, poverty, the war economy and militarism, ecological devastation, and our nation's distorted moral narrative of Christian nationalism."

Among the presenters were Princess Blanding, sister of Marcus-David Peters, the 24-year-old high school teacher fatally shot this spring by a Richmond police officer, speaking on systemic racism; Chad Oba of Friends of Buckingham County, speaking on

ecological devastation; Virginia Defender editor Phil Wilayto, addressing the effects of U.S. wars on U.S. society; and a representative from Richmond Fight for \$15, speaking about poverty.

Local organizers for the event included longtime social justice activist Andrea Miller.

The Poor People's Campaign is a national effort headed up by the Rev. William Barber, who previously led the massive, North Carolina-based Moral Monday movement.

Richmond unveils Sister City signpost

Pouring rain - really pouring rain - couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the dozens of people who gathered Aug. 6 at Richmond's Kanawha Plaza to celebrate the unveiling of the new Sister City signpost that points the direction and distance to each of Richmond's five Sister Cities.

Two of the cities are in Africa: Segou, Mali and Windhoek, Namibia. Two are in Asia: Saitama City, Japan and Zhengzhou, People's Republic of China. One is in Europe: Richmond upon Thames, England, from which Virginia's capital gets its name.

Among those attending the ceremony were a group of young baseball players from Shengzhou, who broke into an impromptu game as the deluge forced the adults to take shelter under tents.

Also attending was H.E. Mahamadou Nimaga, Mali's ambassador to the United States, pictured here in traditional attire and white hat, standing to the left of Richmond



International dignitaries brave a downpour to dedicate Richmond's new Sister City signpost. Photo by Phil Wilayto

Mayor Levar Stoney. The city of Segou is Richmond's newest sister city, a relationship begun in 2009 under the leadership of the Virginia Friends of Mali.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

A renovated Monroe Park features a new police substation - but no bathrooms.

Monroe Park reopens - with some changes

By Phil Wilayto

A renovated Monroe Park has been reopened to the public - minus restrooms and many benches, but with a brand new police substation and surveillance cameras.

Built in 1851, the 7.5-acre park has been given a \$6 million renovation. When that project was announced two years ago, volunteers who serve meals to homeless people voiced concerns that when the park reopened meals programs might be prohibited. That turned out not to be true, although there are several new restrictions.

The reduction in benches and the lack of restrooms, however, seem designed to discourage poor people from hanging out in what has

long been viewed a safe space for those without a place to go during the day.

One park feature will remain: the statue honoring Confederate Gen. Williams Carter Wickham, erected in 1891, a year after the Robert E. Lee statue was unveiled on Monument Avenue.

More than a year ago, two of Wickham's descendants asked Mayor Levar Stoney and all members of city council to remove the statue, saying "... as a plantation owner, Confederate general and industrialist, General Wickham unapologetically accrued power and wealth through the exploitation of enslaved people."

On Sept. 27, Stoney and VCU President Michael Rao cut the ribbon to officially reopen the park.

open by appointment

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no hay fronteras en la lucha de los obreros

'I'm going to fight for my freedom!' **An interview with Abbie Herrera**

By Aileen Rivera

Abbie Arevalo Herrera is a 31-year-old mom from Honduras who came to the United States in 2014 with her oldest daughter, trying to escape domestic violence by her ex-husband, who she says had been abusing her for years and had threatened to kill her if she left. Abbie is now married to a man who is a lawful permanent resident and has a second child, who is a U.S. citizen.

I first met Abbie at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond, which is providing sanctuary for her and her two children. The church had decided in January of this year to open its doors to people threatened with deportation because of their immigration status. Law enforcement generally does not enter places of worship to arrest immigrants.

Abbie had applied for asylum, but in June of this year U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that asylum seekers could no longer cite domestic abuse or gang violence as a basis for staying in this country. As a result, Abbie was told she had to report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to be deported back to Honduras, one of the world's most violent countries.

For this interview we met in the church's gray, windowless basement. My first impression was, "How much fear must you live in to be OK with living in such a cold, dreary hole with a 2- and 11-year old?" It reminded me that, throughout history, many people have survived in those circumstances and worse - but in 2018 in the United States?

Abbie is a kind, tough, sweet and smart woman. Even after all she's been through, she still lights up when she talks about the future and her kids.

This is our interview:

AR: Is there a question that has not been asked that you would like to talk about?

AAH: It's not easy to be an immigrant. When we come here, we're fleeing. I think that if we already come with trauma, we continue to be traumatized. I've had three or four people yelling, "You have to leave this country," "What are you doing in this



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Abbie Arevalo Herrera addresses the Poor People's Campaign hearing in Richmond. The event took place Sept. 26 at the First Unitarian Church, where Herrera has taken sanctuary.

country," "You don't belong in this country," "Nobody wants you in this country," and all I can do is cry. They feel so superior just because they are ICE agents and they were born in a country like this.

I understand there's more respect here for women, but not for women from Central America or that come from another country. It's so inhumane to see that they humiliate you just because you have the need to survive. And that's what so many Americans can't see.

AR: What would you like people to know?

AAH: I'm going to fight for my freedom. I hope that I get support, because I think that's what I need right now - a lot of support from the people on the outside of this church.

My message to the Latin community? I would like for them to not be quiet. They need to get out and speak up and fight for our human rights, because we all have the

right to live. What I'm most worried about right now is to have my freedom - that they don't deport me and that I'm with my family.

AR: If you could give a suggestion to help the immigration issue, what would that be?

AAH: I would suggest that they return the law that sheltered us, that protected us. People here don't understand, because they'll never be exposed to the dangers that we are exposed to in our country (Honduras).

For example, in 2013, each day there were one to two women that were reported dead. Many have been killed with their children. Those are things people here will never understand because that will never happen here. And none of the killings have been resolved.

AR: What is one action that we here in the United States can do to help immigrants?

AAH: Make ICE disappear. Abolish ICE. That the Department of Justice wouldn't allow it to exist any longer.

If you look back at when God created the world, God didn't create borders. If we go into space, you can't see the borders. I believe He made a world for everyone so we can all treat each others equally, but sadly that's not how it is. As human beings, we have many flaws.

My hope is that my experience will help a lot of people. From a young age, I would advise friends that were in abusive relationships to get out of the relationship. I would somewhat judge the women that I would see being hit. And one day when I was the victim and wanted to get out of the relationship, I realized that it wasn't as easy as I thought, and that taught me a great lesson. I hope that this helps a lot of women.

It's not easy. To feel that day after day your life is consumed and that you never know if you'll be there the next day, especially when you have children, it's very hard.

To follow Abbie's story, please like and follow #HandsOffAbbie.

Why do they come?

As the Defender goes to press, President Donald Trump has ordered thousands of U.S. troops to the U.S./Mexico border to stop a caravan of Central American refugees from trying to enter this country and apply for asylum.

As with most recent caravans crossing Mexico, these refugees are from Honduras. It's a long, dangerous journey. Once they get here, they risk prison, deportation and separation from their children.

So why do they come?

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. More than half the population lives in poverty, with higher rates among rural and indigenous people. More than half the workforce is without jobs.

The country is actually very rich in resources, but most of its wealth is controlled by a tiny elite. Corruption is widespread. Earlier this year the Associated Press reported that the head of the national police had "helped a cartel leader pull off the delivery of nearly a ton of cocaine in 2013."

Honduras also has one of the world's highest murder rates.

Things got worse in 2009 when President Manuel Zelaya, who was popular among the poor and working people, was deposed in a military coup. Mass protests were violently suppressed. Rather than call for Zelaya to be returned to power, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported new presidential elections - that would exclude Zelaya.

Since 2014 the president of the country has been Juan Orlando Hernández, a conservative businessman.

Since the coup, political repression has increased, with environmental activists and LGBTQ people particularly targeted. Drug dealing and gang violence is rampant, with young men targeted for recruitment and young women for sexual exploitation.

Faced with a future of poverty, violence and political repression, many Hondurans choose to brave the dangers of the journey North in hopes of finding peace, security and a better life.

For more information about the role of Washington in Latin America, check out the Alliance for Global Justice at: afgj.org.

our working lives



Photo by Joseph S.H. Rogers

Richmond teachers and supporters line up to speak during the Public Comment section of the Sept. 4 school board meeting at City Hall. Their determination convinced the board to decide in their favor on two critical issues.

‘Red for Ed’ - Richmond teachers organize, score victories

By Joseph S.H. Rogers

“It’s not a good look when teachers and students have to rearrange their carefully created schedules two days before the start of school.”

That was just one of the comments expressed at the Sept. 4 Richmond School Board meeting as nearly 50 teachers and supporters, dressed in red as a sign of solidarity, packed the small school board meeting room at City Hall.

They came in response to an administration policy announcement which would have dramatically changed the school day and teachers’ ability to schedule their classes, as well as the ability of teachers, parents and students to plan their personal lives. The vocal opposition to this change caused it to be rescinded in a victory for the teachers and their students.

Speakers also expressed gratitude for an addition to the administration’s Strategic Plan. After successful agitation led by the Richmond Education Association and 2nd District School Board member Kenya Gibson, Teacher Retention was added to the plan’s top 10 goals for the next five years.

Though the victories were well-received, advocates say that there is still more to be done, including on professional development directives and contract clarifications.

As one of the more than a dozen teacher/advocates stated during her testimony, “The reason the teachers leave RPS is never because of the kids, it’s because of the chaos.”

Tonight’s victory came on the national teachers’ day of action called “Red for Ed.” Locally, the action was built using the Facebook event page “REA Bring out your Red.”

A court win for unions, for a change

A federal district judge in Washington has struck down “... most of the key provisions of three executive orders that President Trump signed in late May that would have made it easier to fire federal employees,” according to an Aug. 25 story in The New York Times.

“The executive orders, which also rolled back the power of the unions that represent federal workers, had instructed agencies to seek to reduce the amount of time in which underperforming employees are allowed to demonstrate improvement before facing termination, from a maximum of up to 120 days to a maximum of 30 days, and to seek to limit workers’ avenues for appealing performance evaluations.”

The orders also sought to significantly reduce the amount of so-called official time that federal employees in union positions can

spend on union business during work hours.”

“We are very pleased that the court agreed that the president far exceeded his authority, and that the apolitical career federal work force shall be protected from these illegal, politically motivated executive orders,” said Sarah Suszczyk, co-chair of a coalition of government-workers unions.

According to federal law, these types of work rules are to be negotiated between government agencies and the government-worker unions.

In June, the Supreme Court ruled that public-sector unions could no longer require mandatory fees for government workers. Federal workers were already exempt from such fees. At the same time, unions are still required to provide all the services to non-dues-paying workers that dues-paying union members receive.



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11 am Sunday Worship
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international & antiwar news

A CALL FOR A MASS MOBILIZATION TO OPPOSE NATO, WAR & RACISM!

1 PM SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2019

Protest the NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., at Lafayette Park (across from the White House)

Additional actions will take place on Thursday, April 4, at the opening of the NATO Summit

April 4, 2019, will mark the 51st anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the internationally revered leader in struggles against racism, poverty and war.

And yet, in a grotesque desecration of Rev. King's lifelong dedication to peace, this is the date that the military leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have chosen to celebrate NATO's 70th anniversary by holding its annual summit meeting in Washington, D.C.

This is a deliberate insult to Rev. King and a clear message that Black lives and the lives of non-European humanity really do not matter.

It was exactly one year before he was murdered that Rev. King gave his famous speech opposing the U.S. war in Vietnam, calling the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world" and declaring that he could not be silent.

We cannot be silent either.

Since its founding, the U.S.-led NATO has been the world's deadliest military alliance, causing untold suffering and devastation throughout Northern Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Hundreds of thousands have died in U.S./NATO wars in Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Yugoslavia. Millions of refugees are now risking their lives trying to escape the carnage that these wars have

massive protests: in Chicago, Wales, Warsaw, Brussels.

2019 will be no exception.

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) is calling for a mass mobilization in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, March 30. Additional actions will take place on April 4 at the opening of the NATO meeting.

We invite you to join with us in this effort. As Rev. King taught us, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

**No to NATO!
End All U.S. Wars
at Home & Abroad!**

**No to Racism!
Bring the Troops Home
Now!**

This Call was issued by the Administrative Committee of UNAC

To add your endorsement, please go to:

<http://www.no2nato2019.org/endorse-the-action.html>

NATO Expansion & Russia

When the North American Treaty Organization was founded on April 4, 1949, it had 12 members: the U.S. and Canada and 10 Western European countries. By then the wartime cooperation with the Soviet Union was long over and NATO was essentially an anti-Soviet military and political alliance.

Six years later, as a counterbalance, the Soviet Union formed the nine-member Warsaw Pact, formally the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. That alliance was dismantled in 1991, 10 months before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union. The U.S. had assured the Soviets that NATO would not be expanding eastward.

But far from limiting NATO's expansion, the U.S. vigorously promoted it.

Today NATO has expanded to 29 member countries, with 13 - nearly half - either former members of the Soviet bloc or part of the former socialist state of Yugoslavia. All new members admitted into NATO since the collapse of the Soviet Union are in Central or Eastern Europe. From a North American and Western European alliance, it has become a North American and European force that has moved steadily eastward right up to Russia's borders.

In NATO, the United States, United Kingdom and France together possess a total of 7,315 nuclear weapons. Russia is believed to have about 7,000.

But in terms of overall military power, Russia's military budget in 2016 was just over 8 percent of the combined total of all NATO countries, and just over 11 percent of the U.S. alone.

NATO exercises, training missions and military aid are always described as "defensive" in nature. But it's not Russia that's expanding its military influence right up to the borders of the United States. It's not Russia that has built a military alliance that now includes 29 countries, moving ever closer to its declared adversary.

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brought to their homelands, while workers in the 29 NATO member-countries are told they must abandon hard-won social programs in order to meet U.S. demands for even more military spending.

Every year when NATO holds its summits, there have been

Join us for Generation Dream — honoring the life & legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Sun., Feb. 10, 3 pm - Henrico Theater, Highland Springs
Sun., Feb. 24, 3 pm - VCU Institute for Contemporary Art

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international & antiwar news

An appeal to help oppose fascism in Ukraine

In May of 2016 three activists representing the United National Antiwar Coalition, including the editor of The Virginia Defender, traveled to the Black Sea city of Odessa, Ukraine in Eastern Europe.

They were part of a group of international observers invited by the local Council of Mothers of May 2 to attend a memorial program on the site where their sons, daughters, other relatives and friends were murdered by a right-wing mob on May 2, 2014. Fascist organizations were threatening to attack the memorial, and it was thought that the presence of people from other countries might influence the Ukrainian government to prevent violence.

The 2014 massacre took place just months after the president of the country was overthrown in a right-wing coup in which openly fascist organizations played a major role. With support from the U.S. government, the corrupt, pro-Russian president was replaced by a corrupt, pro-U.S. president.

Emboldened by their success, the fascists started attacking anyone in the country who had opposed the coup - primarily the Russian-speaking minority, which in Ukraine tends to be antifascist, due to the oppression they suffered under Nazi occupation in World War II. One bad sign was when the new government immediately



May 2, 2014: A violent mob led right-wing extremists set fire to the House of Trade Unions in Odessa, Ukraine. At least 42 people were killed and many more injured. To date, not one person has been punished for this crime.

banned the use of the Russian language.

The massacre of May 2, 2014, is described in the Call below. In this age of cellphone cameras, social media and instant communication, many videos of the massacre were quickly posted online. Just google "May 2, 2014 Odessa" and you'll find scores of them.

After returning home, the UNAC activists

formed the Odessa Solidarity Campaign to support the Council of Mothers. The OSC has organized international campaigns that have drawn attention to the situation in Odessa and at times have gotten the attention of the U.S. and Ukrainian governments.

This coming May 2 will be the fifth anniversary of the massacre. The OSC has joined

forces with a Swedish organization called Prague Spring II which also has been organizing support for the call for an international investigation.

On May 2, 2017, there were 19 local actions across Europe and North America. In 2018 there were 40. In 2019, the hope is for many more, including a major action in Washington, D.C.

The Odessa Solidarity Campaign and PS II are jointly issuing the following appeal for local actions on May 2, 2019.

We strongly urge all justice-minded people to endorse this call and also to plan to hold some kind of event on that day: a march, a rally, a public showing of videos about the massacre, a silent vigil, a prayer service - whatever you can do.

Only when masses of people learn about this massacre and the continuing repression of antifascists in Ukraine will justice come.

To endorse the Call for International Actions, please send your name, organization, your position in the organization, city, country and email address to the Odessa Solidarity Campaign at:

DefendersFJE@hotmail.com

In cooperation with PS II, we will work to get the widest possible attention on the ongoing situation in Odessa.

A CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS ON THE 5th MEMORIAL DAY OF THE ATTACK ON THE HOUSE OF TRADE UNIONS IN ODESSA, UKRAINE

May 2, 2019, will mark five years since a right-wing mob attack on the House of Trade Unions in Odessa, Ukraine, a tragedy that resulted in the deaths of at least 42 people and more than 100 injured. Today there still is no justice in sight for the mourners of the victims.

Those deaths on May 2, 2014, came just months after the democratically elected president was forced out of office by politicians, mass protests and violent right-wing organizations. This resulted in growing tensions in Odessa over several weeks, which culminated with street clashes and the mob attack on the House of Trade Unions.

Many cellphone videos of the attack have been posted on the Internet, clearly showing

people setting the union building on fire with Molotov cocktails. People can be seen jumping from the burning windows and dying when falling to the ground. People laying on the asphalt and those trying to escape were severely beaten with bats and other weapons.

To date, not one of the perpetrators of these murderous actions has been brought to justice. At the same time, survivors from the arson as well as several of their sympathizers were arrested and many of them are still in prison, many never having been charged with a crime.

Family members, friends and supporters of the victims and survivors have repeatedly held memorials at the site of the killings, demanding an international investigation leading to

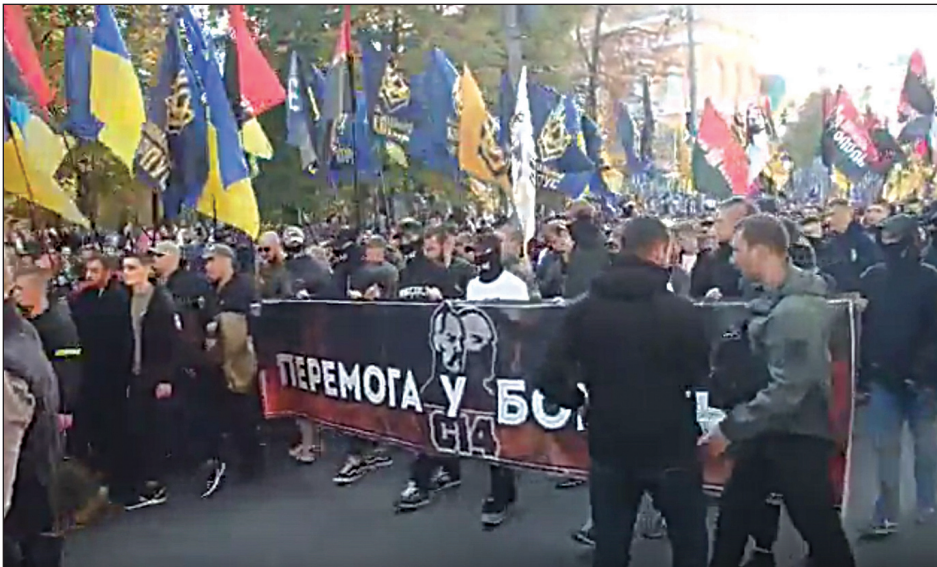
prosecution of those responsible. Each year on May 2, thousands of Odessans gather there, despite repeated threats by extreme right-wing organizations to attack the mourners.

The organizations listed below call on all those who value justice to hold local events on May 2 in solidarity with the people of Odessa and in support of their demand for an international investigation.

We further call for an end to the harassment and legal repression of survivors of the May 2 tragedy, of their relatives and supporters, and of journalists attempting to investigate the situation.

This Call has been initiated by the Odessa Solidarity Campaign (USA) and Prague Spring II (Europe).

international & antiwar news



A C14 contingent in the Oct. 14 march of fascist organizations in Kiev, Ukraine. The radical nationalist group was founded in 2010 and gained notoriety this year for violent attacks on camps of Romany people. It also was involved in the 2014 coup.

Four years after U.S.-backed coup, fascism grows in Ukraine

By Phil Wilayto

Over the past few years, the United States has gotten glimpses of fascism - notably in Charlottesville on Aug. 12, 2017. But to understand what a far more advanced fascist movement looks like, try Ukraine, a country in which the U.S. military is deeply involved.

On Oct. 14, some 8-10,000 members of right-wing, paramilitary organizations marched through the streets of Ukraine's capital city of Kiev. Members of the European Union-based Global Rights of Peaceful People sent journalists to video the day's activities. (<http://fact.international/2018/10/a-stream-from-banderovits-day>)

Many of the participants, overwhelmingly young men, came from Kiev, but other regions were represented as well, so it was a national action. Some even came from other countries, such as Germany. Some wore civilian clothes, others camouflage uniforms.

Marching behind huge banners, they carried hundreds of flags representing their different organizations: Right Sector, C14, Sich, Svoboda, National Corps and the Azov Battalion - a cross-section of the strongest fascist forces in Ukraine.

Prominent among the flags was the black and red banner of the followers of Stepan Bandera, a WWII-era Ukrainian fascist

responsible for the murders of thousands of Jews and Poles.

Some of these organizations took part in the U.S.-backed right-wing coup of February 2014 and the subsequent May 2 massacre at Odessa's House of Trade Unions. (See Appeal on page 8.)

Especially chilling was the fact that the march was part of a national holiday. Oct. 14 is a date long associated with Ukrainian nationalists. Formerly known as the Day of the Cossacks, the date was chosen in 1943 for the founding of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a fascist military organization responsible for genocide during World War II. Since then, Oct. 14 has been a rallying date for various right-wing forces.

In 2014, President Petro Poroshenko proclaimed Oct. 14 to be Defender of Ukraine Day. His decree was approved the next year parliament. The new state holiday replaced the former Feb. 23 Soviet-era Defender of the Fatherland Day.

This was part of the "decommunization" process now taking place throughout Ukraine: renaming holidays, streets and memorials dating to Soviet times to honor nationalist dates and figures. For example, in 2016 Kiev renamed Moscow Avenue after a Russian figure accused by the Kremlin of siding with the Nazis during World War II. And Kiev's

local council renamed one of the city's main northern arteries to honor Bandera.

You would think that mass fascist marches and state holidays honoring fascists would at least raise some eyebrows in the West. Instead, the U.S. and NATO are increasing their military involvement in this eastern European country that has a 1,200-mile land border with Russia.

With NATO troops, planes and warships exercising on its borders and a national government honoring WWII-era fascist militaries, it's small

wonder that Russia is becoming increasingly concerned for its own security.

And with Washington and the Pentagon supporting a government that honors out-and-out fascists, we should be concerned as well.

Phil Wilayto is editor of *The Virginia Defender* and coordinator of the *Odessa Solidarity Campaign* (odessasolidaritycampaign.org) of the *United National Antiwar Coalition*. (unacpeace.org) This article was written in cooperation with Ukrainian progressives.

COST OF WAR Continued from page 2

values are being taught at the highest levels.

Street violence is something that oppressed communities are deeply concerned about and something about which the left movement typically has little to say. The common wisdom is that the shootings devastating so many poor communities of color are driven by the combination of poverty, the drug trade and the prevalence of guns. But we need to push that analysis further.

Back in the mid-1970s, the end of the Vietnam War coincided with the deindustrialization of the economy and the resulting loss of good-paying factory jobs, just as massive numbers of veterans were trying to enter the workforce.

Many GIs were coming home with physical and emotional wounds. The percentage of homeless, drug-addicted and imprisoned vets skyrocketed. At the same time, there was a massive influx of drugs into oppressed communities: first heroin, from Southeast Asia in the Vietnam era, then cocaine, transported from South America through Central America during the contra wars, with both drug operations abetted by the CIA.

Returning vets, fewer jobs, an explosion of drugs and the proliferation of guns all played their roles. The despair of today's poor youth that leads to seemingly senseless street violence is a direct result of this perfect storm, and the wars were a major factor. The same scenario is now being played out again, with fully one-quarter of returning combat vets experiencing PTSD.

GLORIFICATION OF VIOLENCE

You cannot have a society that is continuously at war and not have it deeply affect the home society itself.

Our society is addicted to violence. We glorify it as part of our history, as part of who

we are as a people. Our country was founded in genocide against indigenous people. It was developed through the violent exploitation of enslaved Black labor, the theft of half of Mexico and its participation in two world wars and scores of smaller ones, from Korea to Vietnam to Syria.

This cult of violence seeps into every aspect of our lives and gets worse with every passing year. When the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world," he was talking about our times as much as his own.

The U.S. is now openly at war in Libya, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and Pakistan. It has military bases in 70 countries and a military presence of some kind in 150. The wars are not being fought for our defense and they do not make us safe. They are being fought to protect the ability of U.S. corporations to make unprecedented profits and they are making us much less safe by creating millions of enemies we never had before.

And worst of all, these wars inflict unimaginable suffering on mainly poor people of color who are totally innocent of any crime against us or anyone else. As we demonize these same people of color, we build on and expand the legacy of white supremacist power that enables the building of an Empire on the bodies of the oppressed.

As we address the many problems here at home, we must be just as concerned about the many problems the government and its military are creating in other countries. Our sense of outrage over injustice cannot end at our borders. Our own future is intimately bound up with all of humanity.

We must unite and work, with all our passion and courage and energy, to stop the wars at both home and abroad.

cops. courts & prisons

MASS RALLY SET FOR JAN. 12!

Prison Justice Network prepares for 2019 General Assembly

Mark this date on your calendars: Saturday, Jan. 12.

That's when you're going to want to be in Richmond's Capitol Square from 1-2 p.m. for another big Rally for Prison Justice.

The rally was just one of the plans that came out of a statewide conference held in Richmond Oct. 6 by the Virginia Prison Justice Network.

Last year at this time, Virginia prisoners called for a rally for prison justice to try and get public attention on the many issues they face in the state's Department of Corrections: no parole; brutal solitary confinement; slave wages for prison work; the Fish-back decision; meals lacking in minimum nutrition; failures in the DOC's grievance system; and many more.

More than 300 people turned out for that racially mixed rally. Most were

former prisoners or families and friends of prisoners.

After the rally it was decided to start a statewide network, the Virginia Prison Justice Network, which now has 15 affiliates, a website and a hard-copy newsletter sent to more than 100 prisoners in 18 correctional facilities in the state.

The October conference was the network's first statewide meeting, drawing ex-prisoners and prison justice advocates from Blacksburg, Hampton, Norfolk, Richmond and Stafford, with Clintwood participating by Skype.

In addition to the Jan. 12 rally, there are plans to intervene in the 2019 Virginia General Assembly by lobbying and promoting or opposing bills dealing with prison and criminal justice issues.

For more information, visit:

VAPJN.wordpress.com

Update: Jermaine Doss

Staff Report

Jermaine Doss, the Norfolk native serving a sentence of life-plus-34 years for a crime many believe he did not commit, has a new lawyer who is planning legal action in the case.

Attorney Bryan J. Jones of Charlottesville says he will "probably" file a petition for habeas corpus in federal court by the end of the year.

"I think it's a strong case," Jones told the Defender. "Of particular concern is the issue of his being indicted for one thing and convicted of a different charge."

Jermaine Doss was 25 years old when he was sent to prison for murder in a case in which he was originally charged with murder-for-hire. In January he'll be 46.

The only evidence against him was the testimony of the actual killer, Nathaniel McGee, who has repeatedly insisted that Doss is innocent and that he only testified against him because prosecutors had said if he did not that he himself would face the death penalty.

Doss has always maintained he was set up

by a crooked cop after refusing to pay a large bribe. The officer in question, former Norfolk Det. Robert Glenn Ford, was sentenced in 2011 to 12 ½ years in prison for taking money from criminals in exchange for getting them favorable treatment in court and then lying about it to the FBI. Ford was the officer who arrested McGee after the murder.

At Doss' request, the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project got involved in the case, but then dropped it without explanation or notifying either Doss or his parents, Willie Mae and Ray Doss, who have been their son's strongest supporters.

In May of 2013 the Defenders helped submit a formal request for a pardon from then-Gov. Bob McDonnell. The request was resubmitted after Terry McAuliffe was sworn in as Virginia's governor in January 2014.

Under McAuliffe, the Secretary of the Commonwealth, in charge of reviewing pardon requests, was Levar Stoney, now mayor of Richmond.

To date, there has never been a response to the pardon request.

Virginia's prisons: Hazardous to womens' health?

By Ashley Collier

The fastest growing demographic of incarcerated people in the United States is women. Between 1980 and 2014 the number of women in prison increased more than 700 percent, according to data compiled by the Washington, D.C.-based research and advocacy center The Sentencing Project.

The ACLU of Virginia states that the quickly increasing incarceration of women is a symptom of systemic inequity - more specifically, the intersection of gender and numerous social barriers, including economic inequality, educational inequity, reproductive injustice and racial and sexual discrimination.

As these inequities are sown into the fabric of society, they are also risk factors for substance use disorders and mental health challenges. According to the organization Mental Health America, there is a direct correlation between mental illness and the likelihood that one will engage in crime and become incarcerated.

Virginia has two women's prisons: Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, a Level 3 security facility with a capacity of 1,200 located in Troy, and the Virginia Correctional Center for Women, a Level 2 security facility with 609 beds located in Goochland County.

Fluvanna has come under fire in recent years for allegedly neglecting to provide adequate health care to prisoners.

"Offenders," as prison staff refer to prisoners, are supposed to be protected by the Constitution's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. In 2012, outraged over prisoner deaths due to what they charged was a lack of proper medical care, five Fluvanna women initiated a class action lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia that charged cruel and unusual punishment by prison officials and Armor Correctional Health Services Inc., the Florida-based,

for-profit company contracted to provide medical care at the prison.

Among the officials targeted by the lawsuit were Harold W. Clarke, director of the state Department of Corrections; A. David Robinson, DOC chief of corrections operations; Frederick Schilling, DOC director of health services; and Phyllis A. Baskerville, Fluvanna's warden.

The lawsuit, filed by the Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville, alleged a "systemic, pervasive and ongoing" failure to meet the minimum standards for medical care for prisoners. According to the Daily Progress, the women detailed "... being regularly given the wrong doses of medication; having to stand in a 'pill line' for more than an hour in rain, snow and excessive heat and cold at 3 to 4 a.m. to get medication; and not having requests for medical attention taken seriously, among other complaints."

In 2014 the Justice Center announced it had reached a settlement, with the court ruling that the Virginia DOC may not defer to a subcontractor its constitutional obligation to provide adequate health care.

In 2017, following the deaths of three women who died from what they argued were preventable medical conditions, the five FCCW plaintiffs filed a motion for contempt. The motion asked the court to enforce the class action settlement due to FCCW continuing to fail to provide constitutionally adequate medical care, a violation of the court agreement.

The case was heard this past June. In an opening statement, LAJC attorney Angela Ciolfi said the prison had made no changes to its staffing plan, had kept the same private contractor for health care and had made no changes to the way the system is funded.

The defense disputed this claim by stating that FCCW has undergone "constant change and improvement."

**Prisoners! Ex-prisoners! Family Members!
Friends & Supporters!**

**Join the VIRGINIA PRISON JUSTICE NETWORK
& help fight for Justice in the Virginia Prison System!**

VAPJN.wordpress.com

cops, courts & prisons

Politically conscious prisoners face repression in Va. DOC

Trying to exercise your rights in prison is like being stopped by a cop late at night on a lonely country road. Sure, you have rights, but exercising them can get you in a world of trouble.

Just ask Askari Danso, Kevin “Rashid” Johnson and Uhuru Rowe.

Askari Danso is a co-founder of Virginia Prisoner of Conscience and the Virginia Prison Justice Network. He’s been in prison for 20 years, with a release date in another 20.

Since he began speaking out for prisoner rights, Askari has been transferred from Buckingham Correctional Center (security level 3-4) to Augusta (level 3), to Sussex II (level 4), to Sussex I (level 4-5) and now to the Level S “Super Max” Red Onion state prison in southwestern Wise County. He is currently in long-term segregation.

VAPJN members are in touch with Department of Corrections officials about Askari’s situation and hope to convince prison authorities to transfer him to a lower-security facility.

You can follow his case on Facebook at “Free Askari Danso Movement.”

Kevin “Rashid” Johnson is an artist, founding member of the New Afrikan Black

Panther Party and member of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee. He is serving a life sentence. Officially a Virginia prisoner, in 2012 he was transferred first to Oregon, then to Texas and Florida before being sent back to Virginia. As of the Defender’s presstime, he is being held in an “interstate” facility and will likely be transferred out of state.

Rashid maintains a website at: rashidmod.com

Uhuru B. Rowe, now in Greensville, is a native of Richmond who has been incarcerated since 1995. His release date is Aug. 27, 2076. Along with Askari Danso, he was sent to solitary confinement while at Sussex II for allegedly being involved in a petition campaign designed to expose unjust conditions in that prison. Uhuru blogs at:

consciousprisoner.wordpress.com

Yes, there are plenty of problems to keep everyone busy on the outside. But paying attention to what is happening behind the walls of the prison-industrial complex is one of the best ways of providing some measure of protection to our sisters and brothers who struggle for justice under much more challenging circumstances.



CA RULING DENOUNCED IN FATAL POLICE SHOOTING — Backed by two dozen supporters, Princess Blanding speaks at a press conference Aug. 31 outside Richmond’s John Marshall Courts Building. Hours before, Richmond Commonwealth’s Attorney Michael Herring had announced that his office would not be bringing charges against Richmond police officer Michael Nyantakyi for the May 14 fatal shooting of Blanding’s brother, Marcus-David Peters. Blanding denounced Herring’s decision and declared the family’s determination to continue to pursue justice in the case. The press conference was attended by representatives of most of Richmond’s media.

Photo by Phil Wilayto



‘RELEASE THE DATA!’ — Dozens of people marched Aug. 6 from the south end of the Mayo Bridge across the James River to the site of the Devil’s Half-Acre (Lumpkin’s Jail) in Shockoe Bottom to demand that the Richmond Police Department release data on traffic stops and “stop-and-frisk” actions by its officers. The march was sponsored by a coalition of organizations including the nonprofit advocacy groups New Virginia Majority and the Legal Aid Justice Center. The groups charge that the “working poor, and minority communities, particularly African-Americans, are being unfairly targeted by police stops.” Among the speakers at a rally held at the Devil’s Half-Acre was Princess Blanding, sister of Marcus-David Peters, the 24-year-old high school science teacher fatally shot by a Richmond police officer May 14 while experiencing a mental breakdown. The family is demanding structural changes in how the city’s police interact with people with mental illness, as well as justice for Marcus-Davis Peters.

Photo by Phil Wilayto



INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WITH U.S. PRISONERS

Thousands gathered July 7 in Brussels, Belgium, to protest the NATO Summit being held in that city. Among the many organizations was this one, holding a banner in solidarity with U.S. political prisoners. The first name listed is that of Kevin Rashid Johnson, incarcerated by the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Photo by Phil Wilayto

In our opinion

2019

2019 will be a watershed year for Virginia.

For one thing, it will mark 400 years since the organization of the House of Burgesses, the first European representative body in what would become the United States.

OK, representative of property-owning white men, but it evolved into the state's General Assembly, right? OK, that body mostly serves property-owning white men too.

But hey, 400 years!

Also 400 years since the arrival of the first large group of European women, and the first Thanksgiving. (Sorry, Massachusetts.)

More importantly, 1619 was the year the first Africans - that we know of - were forcibly brought to English-occupied North America. And for that reason there's going to be a lot of interest about our present state of race relations.

There's already been a lot of interest. Before and after Charlottesville, national and international media have been flocking to Richmond, ground zero for the Lost Cause mythology, to see what we're doing with our statues. The Washington Post. The Boston Globe. The New Yorker. Reuters. Al-Jazeera. The Defenders, early critics of the statues, have been giving a lot of interviews.

In many other cities - New Orleans, Baltimore, Orlando, Memphis - city governments have taken down their Confederate statues. Here in Richmond, city council just voted 6-3, largely along racial lines, not to even ask the General Assembly for the authority to take down just the five Confederate statues on Monument Avenue - if and when it ever decided to do so.

Profiles in courage, this is not.

The other big race-related issue, of course, has been the future of Richmond's Shockoe Bottom, once the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade and now the lust object of the city's developers. You know, the ones who give a lot of money to politicians.

Seven years after Virginia Commonwealth University was forced by community pressure to give up its parking lot that desecrated the African Burial Ground, city government has yet to enact any kind of protective zoning for that early municipal cemetery for enslaved and free Black people. Why, it's almost as if they're trying to wait us out.

So here we are going into 2019 with the country's biggest public collection of Confederate memorabilia, while little progress is being made on properly memorializing Shockoe Bottom with a nine-acre memorial park, which is what the community has made abundantly clear it wants.

This glaring contradiction - maintaining grand symbols to white supremacy while neglecting sacred ground uniquely important to the country's Black community - will make it a tough time to be mayor or one of these council members too frightened by tough issues to even want the power to deal with them.

And rest assured, the Defenders will do our best to make sure the world stays focused on this shameful situation.

Letters to the Editor

About that Coliseum deal ...

As a concerned resident of Richmond who has been monitoring the details of the Coliseum deal, I am strongly opposed to the initiative. Mayor Levar Stoney has been in negotiations for a deal involving the City to accept a bond from the Navy Hill District Corporation that would divert millions of dollars from the city general budget into the control of a private entity using a tax increment financing system (TIF) to pay for the development.

There are three categories of concern that I have about this: risks, biased PR campaign and the lack of transparency.

David Merriman is an economics professor mentioned in a Style article covering the issue who has studied the long-term consequences of economic development through TIF. Merriman has found that municipalities that adopt a TIF system actually experience slower economic development, which may place the city in the situation of not generating enough revenue to pay off the principle of the bond issued by private developers. This would jeopardize the city's credit rating and could result in austerity measures and cuts to social programs.

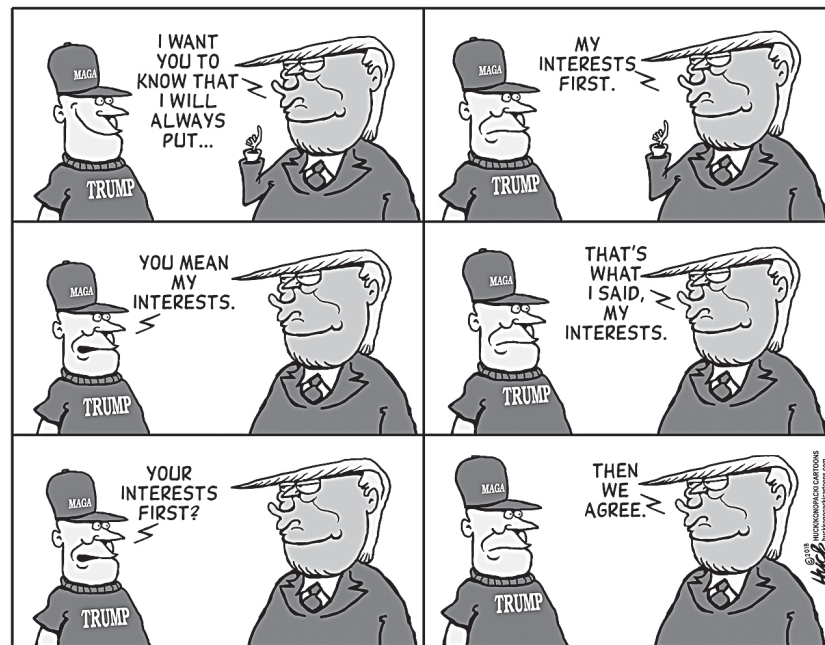
Last week I also received a call from a California number conducting a survey regarding Richmond issues. The pollster asked misleading questions and told me at the end that the survey was funded by Navy Hill.

In addition, the Coliseum is currently unavailable for VCU's spring graduation. We don't know what's going on, but if the building is unavailable due to a procurement agreement without input from the City Council, that would indicate a massive scandal.

Aaron Tabb
RICHMOND

Voting Rights Act still under assault

We must not take for granted that redistricting ahead of the 2020 Census involves the redrawing of boundary lines for



state legislative and U.S. Congressional districts that will most certainly have an adverse impact on African Americans political and economic clout.

We must never forget, that on June 25, 2013, the Robert's Court ruled by a 5-to-4 vote that Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act is unconstitutional because the coverage formula was based on data over 40 years old, making it no longer responsive to current needs and therefore an impermissible burden on the constitutional principles of federalism and equal sovereignty of the states.

Five years after the ruling, nearly a thousand polling places have been closed in the

country, with many of the closed polling places in predominantly African-American counties.

Therefore, the elected officials who will have a say in redistricting and restoring the formula in Section 4(b), of the the Voting Rights Act, must make it a top priority to update the coverage formula that will determine which jurisdictions that will be subjected to preclearance after the November 6, 2018 elections and wipe out the existing, heavily pro-Republican House and state legislative maps.

Mr. Roy L. Perry-Bey
Exec. Dir., United Front for Justice
NORFOLK

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Solutions from a Jailhouse Lawyer

By Hassan Shabazz

When you look at the Department of Corrections, we have to understand that it is a business - "big" business. Billions of dollars of taxpayer money are funneled into corrections every year, but the public is not seeing a positive return on its investment. There should be no prisons that are understaffed, no lack of clean water, no inedible food and no failure to provide adequate medical, dental, and mental health care, among other things.

So where are all these billions of dollars going every year? Inquiring minds would like to know.

The truth is that, as long as Truth-In-Sentencing exists, then mass incarceration will continue to cost taxpayers for results they just won't see. While our communities suffer and education and health care are suffocated to death, multibillion-dollar corporations will continue to benefit from modern-day slavery totally funded by the citizen who sees not one iota of the profits.

We have to do something about this social cancer known as mass incarceration. I am a mentor in a Pre-re-entry Self-Governing Community here at Augusta Correctional Center, where residents volunteer to participate in incentive-based workshops created and facilitated by model prisoners/mentors.

Residents sign on to govern themselves in an effort to prepare for release and ready themselves for an actual re-entry site at a lower-level facility. They attend 12-week workshops such as "L.A.B." (Life and Business), where residents learn how to equate life to a business and how that can bring structure to their lives. They learn how to start a business, write a business plan and more.

That is coupled with the "I.F.L.E. (Investments for Life Economics) Tower" workshop, where residents learn about the stock market, how to day trade and how to Invest

their money. They are also offered "Clase de Espanol," where they can learn conversational Spanish. And there is a workshop called "Communication," where they learn how to interact with others in a respectable, considerate manner and how to express themselves intelligently.

There are many more mentor-created and -facilitated workshops, but they all work to bring about a change in the mind of the residents in comparison to how they were before their stay in the community.

We do this with no funding and our own talents and, after completion of the program, residents represent what it means to be reformed. What we are showing is that if we are successful at reform through a conscious choice to govern ourselves, we are ready for society.

There is no other community like this in any other prison in America, but that doesn't have to be. In fact, this type of program could be used in a conviction-intervention facility where we combat the criminal mentality with ex-offenders who have succeeded in destroying it.

We are talking about solutions here, and a cost-efficient one at that. Instead of pumping billions of dollars into warehousing prisoners, let the taxpayers' money go toward something that will actually solve the problem of mass incarceration, rather than pay more officers to work more hours in overcrowded facilities, with no resources to take care of those that they are there to secure.

Give men like me a chance and you will see that it is the best investment that you could ever have made. We want to make a difference and we know that we can.

Hassan Shabazz is a member of Virginia Prisoner of Conscience and the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality.

The poisoning of Virginia's Schoolchildren

By Queen Zakia Shabazz

In June 2017 the Virginia General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 1359 requiring school divisions to conduct lead testing of potable water to ensure that schools have a safe, clean water supply for consumption by students and staff.

This legislation also requires local school boards to give priority to testing in schools that were built, in whole or in part, before 1986. This testing requirement is effective July 1, 2017, and local school boards must develop a schedule for water testing and a plan for remediation as needed.

(http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2017/171-17.shtml)

After the bill was passed, United Parents Against Lead sought and received permission from then-Acting Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools Thomas Kranz to test four Richmond elementary schools with UPAL funds awarded by the Falls of the James Group/Sierra Club.

Using the standards of the American Academy of Pediatrics, two of the schools, Ginter Park and George Mason, tested high for lead content in water.

I was a first-grade teacher at George Mason at the time and witnessed the alarming rate at which very young children are expelled, suspended, punished and retained. Lead poisoning is rarely attributed to being the cause for some of the behavioral issues or developmental delays the children exhibit.

When it was revealed that the schools had elevated levels of lead in their water, RPS went into immediate denial and sought to smear me until ultimately the termination of my employment from service became, to them, more important and urgent than the protection of our children.

Ironically bottled water is still being delivered to George Mason, even though RPS says that the lead levels in the water are "acceptable" by EPA's standards.

Recently UPAL made inquiries of several Virginia school districts. Of those contacted, none have a visible water testing schedule or plan for remediation posted.

RPS has test results hidden on its website under the following tabs: Departments, Facility Services and Water Testing. School districts are supposed to make the information easily accessible to the public.

If the water testing is mandatory, then why are so few school districts complying? Who is protecting the children, the poisoned children



whose bodies and voices are laden with lead?

Lead poisoning affects children's learning, IQ and cognitive abilities. The building of prisons is determined by the reading levels of third-grade students. If reading scores are down, there is a presumed need for more prisons because the third graders will not be able to catch up, excel or perhaps even graduate high school.

Void of a high school diploma, many take the route towards a modern form of enslavement, the prison industrial complex. Thus the term "School-to-prison pipeline."

The school-to-prison pipeline is a troubling national trend where children, especially Black male children, are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. According to Rise for Youth, Virginia spends one third of the Department of Juvenile Justice annual operating budget on youth incarceration.

Recent research suggests that childhood lead poisoning may be correlated with 88 percent of the variation in violent crime rates in the U.S. over several decades. This research points to lead poisoning as contributing to disciplinary problems in school, delinquency, and adult criminality.

For the most part, the vast research on lead and the link to criminal delinquency is ignored and children continue to be medicated and incarcerated. Private jailers make big profits off incarcerated youth and it is in their interest to make sure that the poisoning continues.

Queen Zakia Shabazz is the mother of a lead poisoned son and has been an advocate for children for more than 20 years. She currently serves as the Coordinator for the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative www.vaejc.com and can be reached at qshabazz@vaejc.org.

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reclaiming our sacred ground

Shockoe Bottom advocates to Stoney: Take a stand!

By Ana Edwards

Longtime advocates for Shockoe Bottom have sent an Open Letter (see below) to Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney asking him to finally take a stand on whether he supports the community-generated proposal for a nine-acre memorial park.

The letter states that advocates "... are tired of seeing this process dragged on indefinitely. We suspect the purpose is to try and wear down the supporters of a proper memorialization of Shockoe Bottom."

The release of the letter was covered by Channel 8 ABC news.

AN OPEN LETTER TO RICHMOND MAYOR LEVAR STONEY CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF SHOCKOE BOTTOM

Oct. 8, 2018

Dear Mayor Stoney,

Oct. 10 will mark the 218th anniversary of the execution of the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel. It has now been more than a quarter-century since Richmond historian Elizabeth Kambourian uncovered the existence of Richmond's African Burial Ground, one of this country's very first municipal cemeteries to accept Black people, many of whom were enslaved.

It has been 10 years since the city's "Slave" Trail Commission discovered the actual foundation of the buildings comprising the Devil's Half-Acre, the jail complex for enslaved Africans owned by the notorious Robert Lumpkin.

It has been seven years since a protracted community struggle forced Virginia Commonwealth University to remove its parking lot that desecrated the African Burial Ground.

It has been four years since an intense community struggle succeeded in blocking plans by the Venture Richmond business organization and former Mayor Dwight Jones to build a baseball stadium in the heart of Shockoe Bottom, which for decades before the end of the Civil War was the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

It has been three years since the Community Proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park was adopted after a five-month series of open community meetings in a process led by the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project. That park would include the Devil's Half-Acre, the African Burial Ground

and the two blocks east of the CSX railroad tracks bounded by East Broad, East Grace and North 17th streets, an area that once included several jails for enslaved people, including those owned by Silas Omohundro and William Goodwin.

Since that process, there have been several City attempts to upend the Community Proposal by sponsoring other series of community meetings: one by Richmond Speaks and two more by SmithGroup JJR. In every meeting, the overwhelming preference expressed by community members was for the nine-acre park.

Because of its unique importance to African-Americans everywhere, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1949, has declared Shockoe Bottom a national treasure, as well as one of the most endangered historic sites in the country. That evaluation has been seconded by the Rose Center for Public Leadership in a process that you yourself initiated. Both the National Trust and the Rose Center have emphatically stated that any memorialization of Shockoe Bottom must be larger than any one single site. The National Trust has endorsed the proposal for a nine-acre memorial park. The Rose Center has stated that an even larger area should be memorialized.

Advocates have spoken with you about this issue many times. There have been formal meetings in your office and informal talks in the community. Always you say the same thing: you would like to see a memorial larger than the Devil's Half-Acre, but never clearly stating your support for the memorial park.

Meanwhile, serious City money is being spent in what seems to be an endless series of discussions, meetings, reports and presentations. Little if any of this taxpayer money has gone to the Black community. Instead, it has been paid to private, for-profit, predominantly white companies that have simply duplicated the community process that produced the proposal for the memorial park - a process that did not cost the City a single dime.

And while all these endless discussions continue, real estate and development deals are being made in the Bottom that would threaten the viability of the memorial park. You yourself have promoted designating the Main Street Station, which the Rose Center suggested could be the site of a slave-trade interpretive center, as the city's center for high-speed rail, which would entail building more parking areas next to or on the footprint of the proposed park.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Janet "Queen Nzinga" Taylor conducts a traditional West African libation to open the 16th annual Gabriel Forum at Richmond's African Burial Ground. To her left is Ana Edwards, chair of the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project. The event is held every Oct. 10 to spiritually stand with the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel on the anniversary of his execution near this site in 1800. Some two dozen people attended the event, during which participants rededicate themselves to reclaiming and properly memorializing Shockoe Bottom, once the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

Mr. Mayor, we are tired of seeing this process dragged on indefinitely. We suspect the purpose is to try and wear down the supporters of a proper memorialization of Shockoe Bottom. We want an definitive answer to the following question, and we would like it now:

Do you support the Community Proposal for a Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park, to include the site of the Devil's Half-Acre, the African Burial Ground and the two blocks east of the CSX railroad tracks bounded by East Broad, East Grace and North 17th streets?

Mayor Stoney, it is past time to take a stand. Are you for or against the nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park?

Sincerely,

Florence Breedlove - Member, RVA

Archaeology

Ellen Chapman, PhD - Co-Founder, RVA

Archaeology

Ashley Collier MSW

Leonard Edloe - Pastor, New Hope Fellowship

Ana Edwards - Chair, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project

Danita Rountree Green - Co-founder, Coming To The Table - Richmond (CTTT-RVA)

Rev. Rodney Hunter - Pastor, Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church

ICE Out of RVA

John Moeser - Emeritus Professor, Urban Studies & Planning, VCU

Queen Nzinga

Joseph Rogers - Member, Steering Committee, Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality.

Martha Rollins - Co-founder, Coming To The Table - Richmond (CTTT-RVA)

Queen Zakia Shabazz - United Parents Against Lead.

Lynetta Thompson - State Advisor, Virginia State Conference Youth & College Division

Richard Walker - Founder, CEO, Bridging the Gap - Virginia

Phil Wilayto - Editor, The Virginia Defender

To add your name to this letter, please email your name and how you want to be identified to:

sacredgroundproject@gmail.com

‘no shrines to white supremacy - take ‘em down **NOW!**’

Neo-Confederates humiliated again

Staff Report

For the fourth time in less than a year, an armed group of neo-Confederates came to Virginia's capital city Aug. 19 to “protect” the shrines to white supremacy on Monument Avenue. And for the fourth time, they were outnumbered, outmaneuvered and decided to leave early.

The New Confederate States of America and the Virginia Task Force 3% / Dixie Defenders had announced their intention to “protect the Jefferson Davis monument,” one of five large Confederate statues on Richmond's Monument Avenue.

Their stated reason was that Mayor Levar Stoney's Monument Avenue Commission had recommended that the statue honoring the first and only president of the slavery-defending Confederacy be removed from the avenue.

The commission, made up of local historians, museum officials and others, also suggested that the other four Confederate statues - of Admiral Matthew Maury and Generals Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and J.E.B. Stuart, remain in place, but with some kind of added “context,” a proposal that has pleased no one.

The pro-Confederate rally had been scheduled to run from noon until 4 p.m., but a few members from that side as well as several anti-racist protesters showed up early. Two young anti-racist women took up a position directly in front of the towering Davis monument, which stands in a city roundabout, and refused to leave even after being threatened by two white men.

Quickly reinforced by other protesters, the anti-racists were able to hold the Davis statue position for the rest of the day, leaving the pro-Confederates to “rally” across the street on a median strip.

By 1 p.m. the neo-Confederates had 14 people, several guns, two Confederate flags, two dogs and a small child dressed in a Confederate flag. Meanwhile, about 50 anti-racists held the Davis statue, with another 20 across the street on a sidewalk facing the statue. The protesters dedicated their action to a call to end mass incarceration, promoted with signs and banners.

With the temperature hitting 86 degrees and humidity at 84 percent, the afternoon was a war of endurance between the two sides. With their songs, chants and continual taunts, the anti-racist side was clearly winning. One sign that read “Honk if you hate Confederates” was met with a steady stream of horn blasts from motorists.

By 3 p.m. - an hour before their scheduled



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Southern women, some in period dress, denounce the racist mythology promoted by the United Daughters of the Confederacy at its national headquarters in Richmond.

Promoters of the ‘Lost Cause’ mythology protested in Richmond

By Phil Wilayto

While the United Daughters of the Confederacy were holding their annual convention in Richmond, more than 50 antiracist activists took the occasion to gather outside the organization's national headquarters at 328 N. Boulevard to demand the UDC stop glorifying the slavery-defending Confederate States of America.

The activists, many of them white women wearing formal hats and white gloves - a reference to UDC dress practices, came from Charlottesville and Durham, as well as Richmond.

UDC members were scheduled to gather on Nov. 4 outside their headquarters to dedicate a flagpole and plaque, but apparently postponed the event when word got out about the protest. A counterprotest called by the pro-Confederate

ending time, the pro-Confederates packed it in and headed home, as the anti-racists played the theme song from the Benny Hill Show on their amp.

The same bunch of neo-Confeds came back again, on Nov. 3, to the Robert E. Lee statue on Monument Avenue

This time the protesters took the tactic of holding a Comedy Central-style Confederate Roast, compete with a comedian, a loud speaker blaring The Battle Hymn of the Republic and some impromptu dancing.

The neo-Cons were not amused - but the much larger group of antiracists was.

Virginia Flaggers did not materialize.

More than any other organization, the UDC has been responsible for promoting the myth that the Confederacy represented a noble cause, that slavery was not the reason for the Civil War, and that slavery itself was a benign institution in which enslaved Black people happily toiled for benevolent white masters.

The white women's organization was founded in Nashville, Tenn., in 1894, a time when the Southern white oligarchy was reasserting its political power after the end of Reconstruction.

While best known for its work in promoting the building of Confederate monuments throughout the South - and in most states in the country, it was the UDC's work in policing history textbooks that had the greatest effect in spreading the organization's distorted views. Generations of white Southerners grew up believing in the nobility of the Confederate cause, a belief system that predisposed many to defend racial oppression, including Jim Crow segregation and racist violence.

Among those attending the protest were members of Charlottesville Black Lives Matter, the Richmond chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America and the National Lawyers Guild, which provided legal observers. The Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality helped with logistics and security.

(A longer article by Lisa Provence, with video, is posted at <http://www.c-ville.com>.)

After 122 years, Confederate museum closes

Staff Report

The Museum of the Confederacy, located in downtown Richmond, closed its doors on Sept. 30.

Its thousands of artifacts are being moved to the new American Civil War Museum at the site of the Tredegar Iron Works near Belle Island, part of an effort to tell a more complete story of the Civil War.

The Confederate museum dates back to 1896, when it was housed in what today is known as the White House of the Confederacy. In 1976 it moved into the larger building next door at 1201 E. Clay St.

In 2013 it merged with the American Civil War Center at Tredegar, creating the American Civil War Museum. The Clay Street building was purchased last year by the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System, whose buildings dominate the neighborhood.

The White House of the Confederacy, where Confederate president Jefferson Davis and his family lived during most of the Civil War, will remain open for tours.

The new museum, to be housed in a \$25 million, 29,000-square-foot building now under construction, is expected to open in the spring. The entire institution includes Tredegar, the White House of the Confederacy and the Lee surrender site in Appomattox.

The museum's mission is to tell the story of the Civil War from multiple perspectives: the Union, the Confederacy and the Black community, soldier and civilian.

Its CEO is Christy Coleman, a graduate of Hampton University, former director for public history at Colonial Williamsburg and former director of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit.

The Confederate museum's former president and CEO, S. Waite Rawls III, a former banker, is now president of the American Civil War Museum Foundation, which raises funds for the new museum.

In recent years Rawls came under right-wing fire for refusing to display the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia outside the museum on Clay Street. He also was very helpful in the community struggle to block Venture Richmond's plan to build a baseball stadium in historic Shockoe Bottom.

For more information: <https://acwm.org>.

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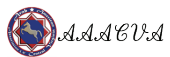
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United Parents Against Lead
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Now through April 2019, UPAL will be recording Voices and Stories of Lead Poisoned Children as we invite the EPA into communities overburdened with environmental hazards.

You are invited to speak with a lead poisoned child and share highlights of your conversation with UPAL upal@juno.com.

Mention #LeadLadenVoices and you can be featured on UPAL's website www.upal.org during Lead Awareness Month in April 2019.

Do you know a child who lives in one of these Virginia zip codes that are at high risk for lead poisoning? 23665, 23224, 22903, 23701, 24016, 23607.

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804.308.1518

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A CHILD IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE!