

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

D The Virginia **DEFENDER**

FREE



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The Democrats & Republicans are both failing the working class

WE NEED HELP NOW!

Poor and working people in Virginia are in a crisis.

No, we're in many crises.

As of Oct. 28, the state has had 176,754 cases of COVID-19, with 3,616 deaths. Black and Latino/a communities have been hit especially hard, as have prisoners and residents of nursing homes.

The pandemic has meant we've had to shut down businesses, bringing on the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

One result of that has been a tsunami of evictions, despite half-hearted moratoriums on the state and national level. And we already were in a housing crisis. Of the top 15 eviction cities in the United States, six are in Virginia: Richmond (No. 2), Hampton (3), Newport News (4), Norfolk, (6), Chesapeake (10) and Virginia Beach (15).

That one \$1,200 stimulus check is long gone, as is the extra \$600 in unemployment that held up those of us who lost our jobs. Small businesses, especially restaurants, are on the edge or already going under, taking our jobs with them.

We need help! We're in a desperate situation, and the government - federal, state and local - needs to start acting like it.

Desperate times call for radical solutions, so here are some suggestions:

- A guaranteed annual income for anyone not able to work.

- An absolute ban on evictions.

- A massive expansion of food pantries, funded by the government.

- Serious help for small landlords and small business owners.

- Free Personal Protection Equipment like high-quality masks, gloves and hand sanitizer.

- Free and safe child care for working parents.

- No-fare mass transit.

- Universal and free health care.

- Mandatory mask wearing for all cops.

- All COVID-19 and financial aid information must be available in both English and Spanish.

- Ban all ICE raids in Virginia.

- End bail for all nonviolent crimes.

- Release all prisoners held for non-violent crimes and anyone with less than a year on their sentence.

And how are we going to pay for all this?

Well, here are a few suggestions:

- Cancel all interest payments on the national debt. That's \$376 billion for 2020. The banks won't lose any money, they just won't make any more on the debt.

- Cancel all military exercises and deployments. Start with Defender 2020, the largest deployment of

U.S. troops to Europe in a quarter century, at a cost to U.S. taxpayers of about \$340 million.

- Tax the hell out of all corporate profits above what used to be considered a reasonable rate of return on investments.

- Treat the current crisis like you understand what it is: A full-scale attack on the working class.

Of course, the government has no intention of doing any of these things. In fact, Congress couldn't even get it together to provide even a small relief program before taking one of their many "breaks."

Look, we're not asking for charity. We're talking about our own tax money. But if we're going to get real relief, we're going to have to fight for it.

Fortunately, some folks are preparing to do just that. There's more and more serious talk about holding a General Strike: no work, no school, no shopping. Gather downtown in the financial districts and tell the bankers, stockbrokers and corporate suits, "NO BUSINESS AS USUAL!"

Become, as they said during the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, "ungovernable."

Think we're kidding? Then take a look at the little quote from JFK at the bottom of this page.

Our patience is running thin, and we won't wait forever.

Real Relief Now!

"Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." — President John F. Kennedy - May 29, 1917 - Nov. 22, 1963

community news

Born in struggle, RVA26 serves the community

By Phi Wilayto

It's an organization that was born in jail. Or, to be more specific, in a bus holding 26 people who were arrested May 31 while protesting the police murder of Minneapolis resident George Floyd.

Some 250 people were arrested that night and charged with violating Gov. Ralph Northam's just-imposed 8 p.m. curfew. They were held on buses, some handcuffed, for many hours. As the time passed, this particular group decided to stay in touch, to make sure everyone was eventually processed and released and then had legal representation.

And so the hashtag #rva26 was born.

"We wanted a way to stay connected," explained Marwa, an RVA26 lead organizer and one of the group's co-founders. "Some of us were already organizing on different issues, but we wanted to make sure everybody got out safe. So we made the hashtag #rva26, because there were 26 of us on the bus, and decided to stick with that name.

"Then about 10 people wanted to organize strategically, to work as one unit, one organization," she said. "We were about half-Black, half-non-Black. We spoke with different elders and organizers, as mentors,



Photo by @nickcapturesva

RVA26 co-founder Marwa speaking at an action.

and they were able to help us focus."

One of the first things the new organization decided to focus on was inmates at the Richmond city jail.

"We thought that was the most appropriate," Marwa explained. "We're in touch with a lot of inmates. Right now we're doing a mask drive for inmates,

because they're not provided the best kinds of masks. And we provide money for them to use at the commissary.

"And we do some on-the-ground actions," she said. "We had one where we provided legal information with the Richmond Legal Collaborative. We've supported events at the Marcus-David Peters Circle. And over the summer we held discussions on a weekly or biweekly basis. Then there were our creative protests, about once a month, with Black artists, visual and musicians, some dancers. We're a heavily creative group of people."

The group also raises money for mutual aid.

"So far we've raised close to \$15,000," Marwa said. "We redistribute it to Black folks in Richmond, to any Black individual, prioritizing those who are in dire need. So far we've been able to give money to anyone who has reached out to us, like if they're facing an eviction.

"And we collaborate with other groups, like Nolef Turns, which is a partner, to provide some of the funds that we might not have at the moment."

Marwa said RVA26 raises its money mainly through social media, word of mouth and selling items like T-shirts that they silkscreen themselves.

"And we have a few artists who help by auctioning off their art for us," she said.

"We'll be at the Black Farmers Market in November," Marwa said. (See the Community Calendar on page 6.) "And we're

planning to hold an exhibit in the spring of 2021, curating the experiences and stories of those who have been incarcerated."

For anyone who wonders what concrete good came out of the Richmond Rebellion, RVA26 seems to be providing a good example.

Anyone who would like to support the organization can make donations through its CashApp account (\$RVA26Funds) or Venmo (@RVA26Funds)

"We're also always looking for people with particular skills or expertise," Marwa said.

For more information, follow RVA26 on Facebook (rva26) and Instagram (@rva26_)



Photo courtesy RVA26

Some of the items RVA26 makes and sells to fund its projects.

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDERS for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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virginiadefender.org
sacredgroundproject.net

The Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality is an all-volunteer 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 sponsor the Virginia Defender newspaper, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project and the Odessa Solidarity Campaign and are affiliated with the Virginia Prison Justice Network, which we co-founded.

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.

Collective action challenges eviction on Richmond's North Side

By Phil Wilayto

Back in the desperate days of the Great Depression, housing rights activists would organize masses of people to block sheriff's deputies from carrying out evictions. Today's social and economic crises are producing a similar upsurge of militancy, most recently on Richmond's working-class North Side.

On the morning of Friday, Oct. 23, a multiracial crowd of some 75 people gathered outside the rental home of Katrina Pitt near the corner of North Avenue and West Crawford Street. The 56-year-old woman has a disability and survives on a monthly Social Security check. She had fallen behind on her rent and was facing an eviction, which would have put herself and five others who share the house on the street in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We all stood either out in the front yard or the street," an activist who asked to remain anonymous told the Defender. "The intention was there might be a need for defense, so we had a flier listing different levels of risk, from just standing there, to talking with the sheriff's deputies to, if necessary, actually occupying the home."

Previously, another local activist had told Ms. Pitt about a federal moratorium on evictions ordered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The order halting evictions is to be in effect through the end of the year, but it's up to the tenant to fill out the necessary paperwork and get it to their landlord. But even then, there's no guarantee the landlord won't still contact the sheriff's office, which actually carries out the evictions.

In this case, the activist had provided rides for Ms. Pitt, who does not own a car. They delivered the paperwork to the landlord, and then went to court and got a judge's order to stop the eviction. But even that didn't mean the deputies wouldn't show up, since in Richmond, unlike in some other cities, the courts don't necessarily tell the sheriff's office about the order.

"Our plan was based on the knowledge that the eviction would have been illegal," the first activist said. "The tenant had filled out the CDC documentation and delivered it to the landlord, but we didn't know if that had been

communicated to the sheriff's office."

The eviction was set for 9:30 a.m. and the crowd was building outside Ms. Pitt's home. No one was sure what was going to happen. Members of the local chapter of Food Not Bombs showed up with coffee and pancakes. Other groups present included Richmond Eviction Defense, Richmond Tenants Union and the Richmond chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Finally 9:30 came and went, without incident. People stayed for another hour, just in case deputies were planning to come later.

"So, with just two days notice, 75 people came out at 9:30 in the morning on a weekday, so we felt that was a good sign for future actions," the first activist said.

This was at least the fourth time that local anti-eviction activists had gathered to try and stop an eviction. The calls for support mainly are promoted on Twitter and Instagram, along with word of mouth.

To get involved with these efforts, follow @noevictions_rva on Twitter and @richmondevictiondefense on Instagram.

If facing an eviction and looking for support, call the R.E.D. hotline at 804-313-9609.

The CDC order forbidding evictions through Dec. 31, 2020, can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/eviction-moratoria-order-faqs.pdf>

INFORMATION IS POWER!
Help bring POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

Volunteer to distribute
The Virginia Defender in your community, workplace or school.

Call or text
804-644-5834 or email
virginiadefendernews@gmail.com



Anti-eviction activists gather at the North Side home of tenant Katrina Pitt in anticipation of the arrival of sheriff's deputies. Note: Some faces have been blurred to protect the identity of participants.

Photo courtesy of a participant.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

There is a federal ban on evictions until Dec. 31, 2020. Tenants are covered who have lost income due to COVID-19 or who have extraordinary medical expenses and who make less than \$99,000 for an individual and for whom an eviction would cause them to be homeless or have to move in with a relative. Tenants are not covered if they are facing eviction for reasons other than non-payment of rent or whose ability to pay is not COVID-related.

To qualify, all adults listed on the lease must submit a sworn statement to their landlord. Tenants must continue to pay as much rent as they can. Tenants must make their best effort to obtain any rental assistance that might be available to them.

Tenants are still required to pay rent and can be evicted if it is not paid at the end of the eviction ban. Landlords can still charge late fees, fines, interest and any other penalties in the lease during the ban. Both landlords and tenants can be criminally charged for violating the rules.

Tenants are not automatically protected by this program. If your landlord sues you, GO TO YOUR COURT DATE and call Legal Aid.

This information comes from the
LEGAL AID JUSTICE CENTER

Richmond: 804-643-1086 Charlottesville: 434-977-0553
Falls Church: 703-778-3450 Petersburg: 804-862-2205

VIRGINIA EVICTION HELPLINE:
1-833-NO-EVICT

community news

Candidate responses to Defender questionnaire

	McLean	Rodgers	Addison	Chipman	Dickenson	Lynch	Maloney	Robertson	Rogers	Wentz	Hilliard	Lambert
SHOCKOE BOTTOM												
The community proposal for a nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Creating protective zoning now for the area of the memorial park?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Funding the creation of the memorial park and interpretive center as money becomes available?	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ensuring that the Black community is the primary recipient of financial benefits resulting from creating and maintaining the memorial park?	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
POLICE												
Creating a Richmond Marcus Alert System in which mental health professionals are the first responders in a suspected or confirmed mental health crisis, with police only as backup in the event that non-lethal force is needed?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Creating an independent Civilian Review Board, with subpoena power, to receive and investigate claims of police abuse?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Reallocating funds from the Richmond Police Department's \$100-million budget to fund the Marcus Alert System and Civilian Review Board, as well as human services addressing health care, employment, public schools, the environment and general community welfare?	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Banning the use of tear gas and other weapons of war by Richmond police?	-	-	-	Y	N	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y
Removing police from Richmond Public Schools and replacing them with civilian counselors and safety staff?	-	-	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Making public the names of all police officers charged with criminal misconduct?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ending the practice of police high-speed chases involving suspected misdemeanors?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
CRIMINAL JUSTICE												
Calling on Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney Colette McEachin to drop all charges against the roughly 300 protesters charged in the recent anti-racist rebellion?	Y	Y	-	Y	N	Y*	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Calling on Commonwealth's Attorney McEachin to reopen the Marcus-David Peters case?	Y	Y	-	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
CITY JAIL												
Calling on Richmond Sheriff Antionette Irving to immediately test all inmates, staff and contractors for COVID-19 at the Richmond city jail?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Calling on Sheriff Irving to post daily figures on COVID-19 cases in the city jail, as is done by the Virginia Department of Corrections?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Directing the Richmond Health Department to provide a COVID-19 vaccine to jail inmates at the same time it is made available to residents of nursing homes?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y*	Y	Y*	N	Y	N
SUPPORTING THE CITY'S IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES												
Forbidding the Richmond Police Department from cooperating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Forbidding the Richmond Police Department from asking immigration status during traffic stops, arrests or detention?	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Calling on Sheriff Irving not to turn over undocumented inmates to ICE?	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

This newspaper sent the list of questions below to all candidates for Richmond mayor and city council. asking for simple yes or no answers. We received 12 responses. The results appear below. One interesting point was that all 12 responders agreed that VCU property in Richmond should be taxed at the standard city rate. State property is now exempt from taxation and would require a change in the state constitution, which can be done by amendment. Making this change - and also taxing other state and federal real estate in the city, could go a long way toward providing the revenue necessary to really meet the needs of the people.

[illegible]

news u can use

Consult-A-Nurse

Looking for free but professional health advice? Speak directly with an experienced nurse to discuss symptoms, get answers to your health-related questions and get connected to the care you need. Free and available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. A service of HVA Healthcare. Call (833) 866-6727.

Free Books for the Visually Impaired

NLS (National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled - Library of Congress) is a free braille and talking book library service for people with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness or a physical disability that prevents them from reading or holding the printed page. NLS offers books in braille or audio, mailed to your door for free or instantly downloadable. For more information and to sign up, visit: <https://www.loc.gov/programs>.

Free Legal Advice

Legal Services offices across the state offer pro bono (free) help for low-income individuals facing civil (noncriminal) legal problems. Call **866-534-5243** to reach your local legal aid office and confirm your eligibility.

\$35 consultation with an attorney

If you think you have an issue that may require the services of a lawyer, you can call the Virginia Lawyer Referral Service to be referred to a private lawyer for an up-to-30-minute consultation for a prepaid fee of \$35.00. **Metro Richmond: (804) 775-0808; statewide: (800) 552-7977, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday.**

COMMUNITY CALENDAR**THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER**

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

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

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

STATEWIDE – ONGOING

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

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

WMMT'S CALLS FROM HOME – Every Monday, 7-9 pm, at WMMT Hot 88.7 FM. This radio station records messages for prisoners in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia state prisons from 7-9 pm and then broadcasts the messages from 9-10 pm. Call 888-396-1208 to leave a message. Information: wmmt.org/callsfromhome.

STATEWIDE – EVENTS

Tues., Nov. 3 - **GENERAL ELECTION**

Thurs., Nov. 12 - **ONLINE DISCUSSION ABOUT PRISON LABOR & THE MILITARIZATION OF THE POLICE** - With Ubaydah Baa'ith, a formerly incarcerated organizer working with the prison justice

and Black Lives Matter movements; Margaret Breslau, Chair, Blackburg Coalition for Justice & Co-founder, Virginia Prison Justice Network; & Phil Wilayto, Editor, The Virginia Defender & Co-founder, Virginia Prison Justice Network. Presented by students at the College of William & Mary. 6-7 pm. Online information TBA.

Fri., Nov. 13 - Sun., Nov. 15 - **85th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE VIRGINIA STATE CONFERENCE NAACP** - To be held virtually. Information: <https://vscnaacp.org>.

January - **4th ANNUAL VIRGINIA PRISON JUSTICE RALLY** - Details TBA. Information: Visit <https://vapjn.wordpress.com> or call or text: 804-644-5834.

Wed., Jan 13 - **OPENING DAY OF THE 2021 VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

RICHMOND – ONGOING

PARADOX OF LIBERTY: SLAVERY AT JEFFERSON'S MONTICELLO - This "exhibition conveys the experiences and perspectives of the 607 enslaved African Americans who lived on, built, and maintained the plantation. Come visit, read their stories, see the 300+ artifacts, and hear the oral histories as told by their descendants. ... Our hope is that visitors will use their exhibition experience as a starting point to engage in conversations and healthy dialogue about the impact slavery has on our lives today." The exhibition has been extended through Nov. 28, 2020. For charges, hours, reservations, parking and more, see: <https://www.blackhistorymuseum.org>.

RICHMOND – EVENTS

Thurs., Nov. 26 - **GIVING HEART COMMUNITY THANKS-GIVING FEAST** - A free event for those in the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area. This year's event will move to a "to-go" format due to COVID-19. For details about the feast, volunteering and making donations, see: <https://www.thegivingheart.org> or call: 804-749-4726 (9 am - 10 pm, every day).

Sat., Nov. 21 - **RVA BLACK FARMERS MARKET** - 9 am - 3 pm in the parking lot at The Way of the Lord Fellowship, 1700 Blair St. in the Randolph neighborhood, near Virginia Commonwealth University. For information, see Facebook at: [rvablackfarmersmarket](https://www.facebook.com/rvablackfarmersmarket).

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER HAS A NEW WEBSITE!
virginiadefender.org

Read and share articles. Browse and download digital copies of entire issues. Purchase subscriptions of print copies. Make donations. And more!

Current features include:

- Portable Document Files (PDFs) of every issue dating back to 2014. You can read, share, and download these files for free.
- Individually digitized copies of articles, for easy sharing and discussion.
- An archive of breaking news stories published online between print edi-

tions of the paper.

- An email subscription button, so you can have new articles sent direct to your inbox.
- A search function, to help you find information.

Coming soon:

- Older issues.
- A donate button, so that you can support our all-volunteer journalism via PayPal, Venmo, or credit card.
- Online newspaper subscription sign-ups.

- A list of locations that carry the print edition.

& MORE WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH!

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R. M. HUNTER
Pastor

1720 Mechanicsville Pike
Richmond, VA 23223
Church (804) 644-5830
Residence (804) 329-1375

11 am Sunday Worship
7 pm Wednesday Bible Study

Back in November 2008, a new \$61 million food-manufacturing plant was announced for Chesterfield County that would produce hummus, the ancient Middle Eastern food made from chickpeas now wildly popular in this country.

Since then, the plant has expanded four times. The company that owns it, Sabra Dipping Company, LLC, now produces most of the hummus in the United States.

Locally, Sabra products are available at Kroger, Food Lion, Wawa, 7-11, CVS and Walgreens. The company is known for its green-friendly buildings and its partnership with local nonprofits like Renew Richmond to address the issue of food deserts in low-income communities.

So why are the Defenders asking you to boycott it?

Because the company supports notorious units of the Israeli Defense Force.

Founded in 1986 as Sabra-Blue & White Foods, the company was sold in 2005 to Israeli food manufacturer The Strauss Group.

Strauss and PepsiCo each own 50 percent of Sabra.

The Strauss Group, a publicly-traded corporation, is the second largest Israeli food and beverage company - and is widely known for its vigorous support of the IDF.

Until 2010, when it became more concerned about its public image and removed this from its website, Strauss' statement on "Corporate Responsibility" included a section titled "In the Field with Soldiers" that boasted, "We have adopted the Golani reconnaissance platoon for over 30 years and provide them with an ongoing variety of food products for their training or missions, and provide personal care packages for each soldier that completes the path. We have also adopted the Southern Shualei Shimshon troops from the Givati platoon with the goal of improving their service conditions and being there at the front to spoil them with our best products."

Even by the abysmal standards of the Israeli army, Israel's "elite" Golani Brigade has a history of severe human rights abuses against Palestinian and Lebanese people. According to the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, the Golani Brigade "is known as a brigade that struggles with no small number of disciplinary problems and scandals, caused by bad behavior ranging from revolts against commanders to abuse of Palestinians."

Breaking the Silence, a group of ex-Israeli soldiers, has documented numerous cases of Golani Brigade involvement in human rights abuses.

As a shopper, you vote with your dollar. We ask you not to vote for Sabra-Strauss and the Golani Brigade.

For more information on Sabra and the boycott against it, see: <http://bdslist.org/consumer/sabra-dipping-co-llc>.

HOUSE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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RE-ELECT



Councilwoman Ellen Robertson

"COMMITTED DEMOCRAT"

6TH DISTRICT CITY COUNCIL

What's next:

- Restore the "Alternative to Incarceration Citizen advisory board to prevent disparities in law enforcement policies.
- Reduce pipeline from birth to prison discrimination of black and brown people mass incarceration.
- Provide alternative education for students not reading at 3rd grade, 7th grade math, aging out students, and dropouts.
- Incorporate Restorative Justice in the criminal justice system.
- Create a Community-lead policing reform model to address excessive force and increase culture enrichment training.
- Build Hillside Court Recreational Center to provide children a safe place to live and play.
- Open the Annie Giles Talents Center to provide promising pathways for children and young adult of RRHA communities.

What's next:

- Bonds up to \$100Mil. to build 10,000 affordable housing
- Create Homesteads to protect families' ownership against gentrification
- Complete 250 additional homes in Highland Grove, Chestnut Hill, and Bellemeade.
- Rezone and rebrand Commerce /Hull Street and Meaowbridge Six -Point communities.

Authorized and Paid for by Ellen Robertson for City Council

www.robertsonrva6.com—(804) 508-4157—robertson4the6th@gmail.com



United Food & Commercial Workers Local 400
 PRESIDENT Mark P. Federici • SECRETARY-TREASURER Christopher Hoffmann • www.ufcw400.org

MEET JOSEPH ROGERS

For years, Joseph has stood with the Richmond community and the 7th District in his professional work and volunteer advocacy. Joseph feels called to bring that dedication to justice and democracy to City Hall, this time as a **CANDIDATE FOR 7TH DISTRICT CITY COUNCIL**.

Vote Joseph Sharif Hakeem Rogers

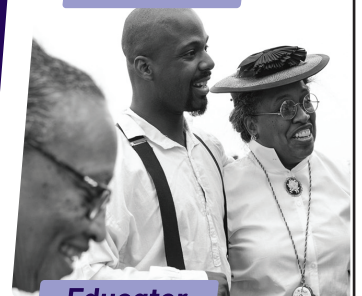
NOVEMBER 3

Joseph4Seven.com

AUTHORIZED AND PAID FOR BY THE COMMITTEE TO ELECT JOSEPH ROGERS



Historian



Educator



Advocate

In Commemoration of Freedom Fighter Gabriel of Gabriel's Rebellion of 1800 and wife Nan whose sacrifices were commemorated on Gabriel Day, October 10, 2020, and Dr. Haskell S. Bingham, Gabriel Descendant and Family Historian, Bingham Family Association, on what would have been his 90th Birthday, October 15, 2020.



400 Years of African American History Commission

Gabriel was a proud young Black man, born into slavery, but determined to be free. At the age of 24, he organized what many historians consider to be the most extensive, well-planned attempt at a mass slave rebellion in U.S. History.

Every school child should know his story. There should be a statue of him on Virginia's Capitol Square. Cities, libraries, schools, bridges, and streets should be named after him. His name was Gabriel...(from "The Story of Gabriel", Dr. Haskell S. Bingham, Mary Washington University, Fredericksburg, VA, March 17, 2005)

2020 has been an impactful year! Virginians have the opportunity to acknowledge and commemorate the heroes of African descent, like Gabriel, who after 400+ years, still do not appear in most history textbooks.

"Writing a New History"

Student Contests – Petersburg/Richmond

Funded by the 400 Years of African American History Commission, Washington D.C.

Pamela R. Bingham, Bingham Consulting Services Program Manager
Henri Dozier, President, Galactic Griot, Petersburg, VA

Students, Teachers, Parents, Mentors – Participate in Two Student Contests to Highlight African American History in Virginia. Cash awards, books, and plaques will be awarded to 16 student winners in grades 5-12.

#1 - My Hero, My Shero, My Image – A "Super Hero Creator" Contest to Celebrate African American History. Contest open to student artists enrolled in grades 5-12. Character entries must be originally created by the applicant. Only one (1) entry to the contest is allowed per artist. Additional guidelines available by contacting organizers.

#2 - African Americans in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Architecture, and Mathematics) Essay Contest. Contest open to students enrolled in grade 5-12. Guidelines available by contacting organizers.

Questions?

GabrielLegacyVirginia@gmail.com | GalacticGriot@yahoo.com
 Facebook - Pamela R. Bingham, Galactic Griot | or Call 804-861-6036

no hay fronteras en la lucha

Multiple crises challenge immigrant communities

Immigrant communities in Virginia are facing unprecedented challenges, now greatly complicated by the COVID-19 crisis. Below is a list of some of the organizations that offer services to immigrants in the state. NOTE: Listing an organization here should not necessarily be considered an endorsement.

IMMIGRANT SUPPORT GROUPS

STATEWIDE

Commonwealth Catholic Charities
(804) 285-5900

ICE Out of Virginia
On Facebook

League of United Latin American Citizens
<https://lulac.org>

Santos en Virginia
<https://www.thesantos.org>

ALEXANDRIA

Hogar Immigrant Services - Legal
(Catholic Charities)
(703) 534-9805

ANNADALE

Just Neighbors
(703) 979-1240

ARLINGTON

Catholic Charities Migration
& Refugee Services
(703) 841-3876

U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants
(703) 310-1130

CHARLOTTESVILLE

International Rescue Committee
(434) 979-7772

FALLS CHURCH

Northern Virginia Family Services
(571) 748-2800

Tahirih Justice Center

(571) 282-6161

FARMVILLE

Farmville Immigrant Rights Coalition
On Facebook

HARRISONBURG

CWS Harrisonburg - Immigration & Refugee
(540) 433-7942

NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center
(540) 438-8295

MANASSAS

Catholic Charities, Hogar Immigrant Services
(571) 208-1572

Catholic Charities Migration & Refugee Services
(571) 364-8010

RICHMOND

Commonwealth Catholic Charities
cccofva.org/immigrationhelp

International Rescue Committee
(804) 308-9144

Refugee Resettlement
(804) 329-3420

Sacred Heart Center
shrichmond.org

Virginia Immigrant Multi-Cultural
& Empowerment Center
(804) 495-6073

WOODBIDGE

CASA Virginia
(571) 421-2211

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our working lives

Va. Beach sanitation workers strike over hazard pay

Staff Report

What do you do when, in the middle of a pandemic, they call you an “essential worker,” but then don’t pay you like one?

For Virginia Beach sanitation workers, the answer was to strike.

On Aug. 19, a Wednesday, more than 100 workers at Virginia Beach Waste Management announced they were on “stand down” until they received the hazard pay they said they were promised by the city.

Alfred McClenny, who has 17 years with Waste Management, told a local CBS affiliate that “city council recently voted to give first responders hazardous pay, and we were designated as first responders over a month ago during the time where they were trying to get employees to come back to work. And now that it is time for them to pay us – we’re not listed among the first responders.”

The workers said that in Norfolk and Hampton, sanitation workers all receive hazard pay.

With sanitation trucks idle, City Manager Patrick Duhaney came out that same afternoon to speak with the striking workers. Among the concerns they raised was systemic racism in the workplace.

“They give us the title of Waste Management,” McClenny said. “That sounds so professional, but at the end of the day people look at you as a ‘common trash man’ and that’s how they pay us. So, I want them to know that trash is what we do, it’s not who we are.”

Within a week of the one-day strike, the city council approved \$1,500 in hazard pay for each worker.

Last April 27 in Richmond, half of GRTC’s 100 drivers refused to work, demanding a \$6-an-hour hazard pay raise. The workers are represented by Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1220.

On Sept. 23, GRTC bus driver John Thrower, 49, died from complications caused by the COVID-19 virus.

Kroger workers protest proposed health care cuts

Staff Report

Despite record sales growth amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, along with a rising number of confirmed cases among store workers, the grocery chain Kroger is proposing to cut health care benefits for thousands of employees in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio.

In response, outraged Kroger union members and their community supporters have been holding weekly protests at multiple locations in these three states.

“Essential workers at Kroger have risked their lives and the lives of their families to operate these stores during this pandemic, and they continue to do so,” said Mark Federici, President of UFCW Local 400, the union representing the workers. “While other businesses have shuttered as a result of this pandemic, Kroger is making more money than ever. But instead of sharing this success with the workers who have risked their lives to make it possible, Kroger is greedily threatening to slash their health care benefits.”

In addition to slashing health care benefits, and after eliminating so-called “hero pay” earlier this year, Kroger is also proposing to

eliminate raises and seniority rights for the most experienced store workers.

“Some of these associates have been with the company for more than 40 years,” Federici said. “They didn’t sign up to be first responders during a pandemic, but that’s exactly what they’ve become. They deserve to be rewarded, not punished, for their service.”

Most Kroger stores in Virginia are also unionized by Local 400. Virginia workers come under a different contract and - so far - are not affected by the threatened cuts. However, a weaker contract in other states can make it harder to keep stronger contracts elsewhere. The union also represents workers at Giant, Shoppers and Safeway grocery stores in Northern Virginia.

Kroger is the largest supermarket chain in the United States and the second largest overall retailer, just behind Walmart.

UFCW Local 400 represents 35,000 members working in the retail food, health care, retail department store, food processing, service and other industries in Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

OPINION Continued from page 12

attacking the protesters. This follows her years of accomdating the upper-income whites in her Monument Avenue district who long opposed taking down the white-supremacist Confederate statues. Time to go.

Justin Griffin - A one-issue (Navy Hill) candidate who recently drew a distinction between "homeless" and "regular" people.

Tracey Mclean – Has a generally progressive platform, but seems to lack the experience necessary for the position.

CITY COUNCIL

1st District - Anyone but **Mike Dickinson**, a completely reactionary, pro-cop, Trump wannabe.

2nd - No preference

3rd - No preference

4th - No one

Kirsten Larson is running unopposed. We recommend either not voting or else writing in someone else.

Like Gray, Larson had a good track record while on the school board and seems to be popular in her district, a largely middle-class area where, according to Larson, the biggest problem is a lack of sidewalks. But she and Gray were the last two council members to agree to take down the Confederate statues, and for that reason alone Larson should get a less-than-enthusiastic voter turnout. Maybe it would grab her attention.

5th: STEPHANIE LYNCH

Stephanie Lynch, a social worker, has distinguished herself, along with 9th District Councilmember Michael Jones, by willing to promote serious police reforms. She's also shown up at Rebellion protests, although she has been criticized by some activists for leaving before things got frisky, and also for voting for the city to accept a half-million-dollar federal grant for the police department. Lynch maintains the grant was to address COVID-19 issues in the RPD, sheriff's department and the Richmond commonwealth's attorney office. But overall, she's been a breath of fresh air on council and we want to see her continue in that position.

One of Lynch's opponents, **Taylor Maloney**, is a young Black activist,

a political science major at Virginia Commonwealth University and president of the VCU Student Government Association. They have been out in the streets in the Rebellion both as a leader and participant. Maloney is a latecomer to the election campaign and so is running a write-in campaign, but, to our knowledge, hasn't developed a campaign Facebook page, website or platform. We wish her the best in her future endeavors, in or out of politics.

6th: ALLAN-CHARLES CHIPMAN with reservations

As a self-styled progressive, Allan-Charles Chipman's day job has been, according to progressivevoterguide.com, a "financial advisor while working for Fortune 500 companies to make sure they stay within budget." We're not really familiar with his community work, since our paths apparently don't cross, but he earned a perfect score on our Candidate Questionnaire. We don't have any particular concerns, other than his apparent lack of a track record on local issues.

On the other hand, the incumbent, **Ellen Robertson**, supported the pro-corporate Navy Hill project and also advocated for the removal of Camp Cathy. While we believe Ms. Robertson has made her contributions, such as promoting affordable housing, it's time for a change in the poorest district in the city.

7th: JOSEPH ROGERS

Joseph Rogers gets our unqualified endorsement. A former call center supervisor and now museum educator, he has distinguished himself by his daily volunteer community activism on many critical issues. He was consistently out on the streets during the Rebellion. As a member of the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality, he has worked hard to promote the reclamation and proper memorialization of Shockoe Bottom. He has worked closely with Justice and Reformation, the advocacy group led by the family of Marcus-David Peters, helping to promote the Marcus Alert and civilian review boards on the city and state level. He also chairs the People of Color Caucus of the Richmond chapter of Democratic Socialists of America. Whether or not he is elected to city council, we know he will continue to make important contributions to the community.

Rogers's opponent in the race is the

incumbent, **Cynthia Newbille**, who also is city council president. Newbille used to have a good reputation when she headed the East End's Family Resource Center, but once elected to council she quickly lined up with the Marsh-Jones-McQuinn machine. She supported the Navy Hill project, voted against moving funds from the police department to human services and only very recently came out in support of the community proposal for the nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. It's past time for a real change.

8th - AMY WENTZ with reservations

Amy Wentz is a U.S. Army veteran who now works for the Department of Defense. She helps oversee Visit BLK RVA, a campaign of Richmond Region Tourism and also is a co-founder of the Richmond Black Restaurant Experience. She initially supported the Navy Hill project. Her platform is long on progressive promises, but seems short on specifics.

Her opponent, incumbent **Reva Trammell**, has long been known as a staunch ally of the police. She resisted years of calls to take down the city's Confederate monuments and, despite many promises, has failed to bring real economic benefits to her working-class district. On the other hand, she has been exemplary in responding to requests for help by her constituents and hosts what are likely the largest and most multiracial district meetings in the city. She also opposed the Navy Hill project. In short, a mixed record, but again, it's time for a change.

As for **Regie Ford**, we are familiar with his former performance as president of the Richmond Crusade for Voters, and we are not impressed.

9th - No endorsement

The incumbent, **Michael Jones**, is a pastor at Villages of Faith Ministries in Richmond and holds a doctorate in ministry. He is running unopposed. During his first term on council, he has distinguished himself by vocally opposing Confederate monuments and promoting police

reform.

On the downside, he supported the Navy Hill project, publicly stood with Mayor Stoney when the mayor falsely claimed to have \$3.5 million available for the Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park and has taken credit for leading the fight on issues that actual grassroots activists have been leading for years. Further, he has donated \$1,000 to the election campaign of 7th District Councilwoman Cynthia Newbille, further exositing himself as a member or wannabe member of the anti-democratic Marsh-Jones-McQuinn machine.

Until someone better comes along, we would prefer to see Jones remain on council, but no endorsement.

SCHOOL BOARD**3rd - KENYA GIBSON**

Kenya Gibson, a working mother, has proven herself as a progressive, anti-racist leader since first being elected to the School Board in 2016. A stand-out elected official.

Her opponent, **Sabrina Gross**, also promotes progressive values, but does not have Gibson's track record. So, if it ain't broke ...

4th - DEANNA FIERRO

Deanna Fierro is a parent of a public school student, taught for seven years in Richmond Public School and holds a Masters in Educational Leadership from Virginia Commonwealth University. In 2019 she helped organize the RedforEd march to the state Capitol to promote increased public school funding.

Incumbent **Jonathan Young** was the only member of the school board to vote against changing the names of public schools honoring Confederate figures. Time to go.

cops, courts & prisons

Open Letter to Sheriff Irving on COVID-19 in the city jail

EDITOR'S NOTE: Many individuals and organizations have been concerned about how the Richmond city jail has been handling the threat of COVID-19. Recently there have been some major improvements in the number of active cases in the jail, but little has been done to address the issue of trust. The following Open Letter to Sheriff Antionette Irving was initiated by The Virginia Defender, which has been following this issue since early spring.

Dear Sheriff Irving,

As you know, concern is mounting in the Richmond area over the COVID-19 crisis in the Richmond city jail. On Oct. 22 your office reported that there were no active cases in the Richmond jail, down from the 81 active cases you reported on Sept. 2. We congratulate you on this progress, but we note that the previous high number of cases may have been avoided if the jail had conducted testing much earlier, as outside advocates had urged.

In addition to the active cases, many rumors are circulating that, whether true or not, are creating an atmosphere of near-panic among relatives and friends of those confined in the jail. These include reports of incarcerated individuals being made to clean COVID-19 pods without proper PPE and then being "compensated" with bags of noodles; some being tear gassed after raising their concerns about health safety; and the rumor, which you have denied, of at least one COVID-19-related death in the jail.

After listening to the grievances being raised by numerous confined individuals and their relatives and examining the practices of other jails and prisons in the state, we the undersigned would like to raise the following suggestions. We are aware that the jail administration has stated that it is already implementing some of these suggestions. However, some individuals have reported that the implementation, when it happens, is less than consistent.

1 - It is our understanding that you have the authority to release people into home electronic incarceration without needing the approval of Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney Colette McEachin. In light of the ongoing threat of COVID-19, we urge you to increase the number of early releases, as other Virginia jails have done.

2 - In the interests of transparency, the jail administration should establish a daily online

report of the number of confined persons and employees in the jail; the number of active COVID-19 cases; the number presently hospitalized; the total number of cases since the beginning of the pandemic; and the number of deaths, if any. This is the practice followed by the Virginia Department of Corrections.

3 - Every confined individual, jail employee and contractor should be tested immediately. As you have reported, the vast majority of active cases in the jail are asymptomatic, so this is really the only way to determine the actual present spread of COVID-19 in the jail.

4 - We are not suggesting that anyone be forced to be tested, but if they decline, they should be isolated from the rest of the jail population.

5 - All jail employees should be tested as often as possible, since they are the most likely carriers of the disease into the jail. Simple daily questionnaires and temperature checks are not enough.

6 - Any employee or contractor who refuses to be tested should not be allowed into the jail.

7 - All employees and contractors must be required to wear masks whenever they are close proximity to the jail population.

8 - Hand soap should be made available at no cost to the jail population.

9 - Hand sanitizer stations should be established in all areas of the jail.

10 - Protective masks should be made available at no cost to all individuals willing to wear them.

11 - Incarcerated people should have regular access to water and meals and at least one shower per day.

12 - Every person scheduled for release must be tested or else quarantined for two weeks before their scheduled release date.

13 - Incarcerated persons should not be asked to clean areas of the jail infected with COVID-19. The jail should be contracting with professional outside services.

14 - Daily lines of communication should be open between incarcerated people and their loved ones, legal representation and outside advocates.

15 - Administrative staff should be available to meet with relatives concerned about the safety of their family members.

16 - Chemical agents such as tear gas should not be used inside the jail as means of control.

17 - In order to move forward with these suggestions, we are requesting that you agree to meet with a delegation of the signers of this



Michaela Hatton speaking at the Defenders' July 22 press conference in front of the John Marshall Courts Building. To her left is Omari Al-Qadafi. Photos by Phil Wilayto

Free the Richmond 300!

Staff Report

During the months of national anti-racist protests triggered by the brutal police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, around 300 protesters were arrested in Richmond. Some are facing serious felony charges.

Four more young people were arrested here the evening of Oct. 27 while protesting the fatal police shooting in Philadelphia of Walter Wallace Jr., a Black man experiencing a mental health crisis. Wallace's family had called for an ambulance and instead got two cops, who arrived without nonlethal weapons.

On July 22, the Defenders held a press conference attended by more than 80 people outside the John Marshall Courts Building, calling for all charges to be dropped against all protesters.

We raise that demand again.

It is right to rebel against racist oppression.



Sidewalk graffiti near the Marcus-David Peters Circle calls for reopening his case and dropping all charges against protesters. Both were among the seven demands of the Richmond Rebellion.

letter. We would ask that this meeting take place as soon as possible.

18 - We also request permission to meet with any incarcerated individual willing to speak with this delegation, with that discussion taking place in private.

We look forward to your speedy response.

Sincerely,

Phil Wilayto

Editor, The Virginia Defender

Yohance Whittaker

Organizer, Legal Aid Justice Center

Co-Signers:

Princess Blanding - Justice and Reformation for Marcus-David Peters

Allan-Charles Chipman - Candidate for 6th District Richmond City Council

Coalition for Justice (Blacksburg)

Ana Edwards - Chair, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project

Charles Feinberg - Executive Director, Interfaith Action for Human Rights

Rev. Rodney Hunter - Pastor, Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church
Richmond Community Bail Fund
Richmond For All

Joseph S.H. Rogers - Candidate for 7th District Richmond City Council
RVA26

Santos en Virginia
Rebecca Keel - Va. Statewide Organizer, Southerners On New Ground

Lynetta Thompson - Immediate Past President, Richmond Branch NAACP
Virginia Poor People's Campaign

In our opinion

Our endorsements - & nonendorsements

PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

NONE OF THE ABOVE

Please see our Op-Ed on the next page for why we aren't supporting the Biden-Harris ticket.

As for the Greens, four years ago we endorsed Jill Stein and Ajamu Baraka, but this time we are severely disappointed that the Greens failed to distinguish themselves from the Democrats, by also running an older white man for president and a younger Black woman for vice. After months of the national anti-racist Rebellion, this is a telling failure. As a party, the Greens still don't get the importance of the struggle against racism.

RICHMOND MAYOR

ALEXIS RODGERS

Endorsed, with reservations

Alexis Rodgers is running as a progressive, despite her record as a policy director for then-Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam. Her other career has been in the nonprofit world, which always raises questions for us. But the main concern is that she's so new to Richmond. We already have one recent-come-here in charge. We hope she wins, if only to weaken the Marsh-Jones-McQuinn machine's hold on the city, which, in return for perks and limited personal power, works hand-in-glove with the city's overwhelmingly white corporate class to keep the profits flowing and community empowerment to a minimum. We would feel more comfortable if Rodgers first had put in the time and effort to get to know the city and its challenges, but if she wins, we will wish her the best.

Levar Stoney - A pro-corporate, professional Democratic Party operative shepherded into office by Terry "The-Outside-Fund-Raiser" McAuliffe. Stoney shamelessly promoted Dominion's Thomas F. Farrell II's Navy Hill Project. Goes along with the Master Plan to drive the poor out of Richmond, particularly by destroying public housing. Presided over tearing down the Camp Cathy homeless encampment. And, as the city's chief executive, bears the main responsibility for the brutal police repression of the anti-racist Rebellion.

Kimberly Gray - Despite years of good work in the community on the issues of schools and homelessness, Gray chose to spend the recent Rebellion supporting the police and

See **OPINION** on page 10

Letters to the Editor

Richmond's other African Burial Ground

I visited a beautiful spot recently here in Richmond. Not everyone would call this spot a place of beauty, it's just a small plot of abandoned land at the intersection of 5th and Hospital streets. A derelict service station sits cockeyed off the side of the road, the Hebrew Cemetery across the street, a train trestle to the east and, not too far away, Interstate 64. Why would this seemingly forgotten spot of our city be considered beautiful, a spot worth a second look? It's not what you see there now, but what lies beneath. Or what's left, anyway.

This tiny parcel of land holds tightly in its secret embrace the remnants of what is now referred to as the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. As many as 22,000 human beings were buried here in the 19th century, according to Lenora McQueen, the vigilant defend-



Photo by Ana Edwards

View of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground (1816-1879) at 1305 N. 5th St., Richmond, looking east from the Hebrew Cemetery.

er of this site who also suggests it may have been the largest burying ground for enslaved people and free people of color in the United States.

Destruction of this area occurred early on. During the evacuation of Richmond, the Confederates exploded a nearby powder magazine, disturbing human remains. Continued exploitation of the area by way of industrial devel-

opment, a viaduct, the expansion of 5th Street and a bridge have violated the site's original footprint. Descendants and allies have reminded us that our history is incomplete. It's time to acknowledge and preserve our collective history by protecting this site. There's beauty in truth.

Elaine Phillips
RICHMOND

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Why we're not endorsing Biden-Harris

By Phil Wilayto

Editor, The Virginia Defender

"This presidential election may well be the most important of our lifetimes."

It really doesn't do much good to remind folks that we've been told that exact same thing every four years at least since "liberal" Hubert Humphrey got trounced by neo-fascist Richard Nixon back in 1968. Or when Jimmy Carter was shown the door by Ronald Reagan in 1980. Or when we had a chance of getting the first Black president in Barack Obama in 2008. But this time really is different.

Donald Trump is more than just a walking, stinking pile of horse manure. He's an authoritarian oligarch who - seriously or not - is encouraging an actual fascist movement, complete with paramilitary militias. He is openly inciting white supremacists, calling on police to be even more brutal and repressive and is endangering the entire country by his insane rejection of science in addressing the worst public health crisis in a century. And he locks small children in cages after having them torn away from their parents in a deliberate attempt to terrorize other would-be immigrants.

So why aren't we endorsing Joe Biden and Kamala Harris?

Simply put, because we can't divide up our solidarity between people who live within this country and those who live outside it.

If the good people of the United States really knew what the Democrats have done and are doing to the poor and working people of other countries, we're convinced they would have broken with the Democrats long ago and put their efforts into building a genuinely progressive third party.

But they don't know. Eight years of defending President Obama from the viciously racist right-wing also meant giving him a pass on wars, occupations, coups, sanctions, blockades and CIA subversions abroad, while looking the other way at his many destructive policies here at home.

For just a few examples, the Obama-Biden administration:

- deported far more undocumented workers than any other administration in U.S. history, including that of Trump;
- largely kept silent about police racism, brutality and murders until Trayvon Martin was shot to death by George Zimmerman in Florida in 2012, four years into their first term;
- expanded the war in Afghanistan, kept tens of thousands of troops in Iraq, intervened in Syria, backed Saudi Arabia in Yemen, ex-

panded the U.S. Africa Command throughout almost all of Africa and led the U.S.-NATO bombing of Libya, which reduced the most prosperous country in Africa to a failed state and haven for right-wing extremists who have now destabilized a large part of the Sahel region of West Africa, including Mali;

- demanded that all NATO countries increase their domestic military spending - which has meant transferring money from their domestic programs to buy arms from the U.S. "defense" industry;

- oversaw the 2014 fascist coup in Ukraine, which, among other horrors, resulted later that year in the massacre of scores of progressives in the House of Trade Unions fire in Odessa;

- and, of course, continued sending more than \$3 billion a year in "aid" to Israel so it could maintain its apartheid settler state and brutal oppression of the Palestinian people.

And, while mass incarceration decreased during the Obama years, it was Joe Biden who, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, largely wrote and pushed through Congress the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which did greatly increase mass incarceration.

We understand why liberals, progressives and even many self-described leftists will vote for Biden and Harris. Many are rightly terrified about what a second Trump administration could mean. Many feel a vote for the Democrats is an act of solidarity with the most vulnerable among us. We get it, and we don't criticize them.

Our own refusal to endorse the Biden-Harris ticket rests on two hard facts:

First, Biden has demonstrated that he is fully in support of U.S. predatory wars, occupations, coups and subversions against other countries, none of which are in defense of the people of the United States and all of which

are carried out to defend and expand the profits of the corporate class that controls both major parties. This actually means something to us, not to mention the rest of the world's peoples. So voting for the Democrats on the national level is validating an imperialist party.

And second, the Democrats are no protection against the development of a mass fascist movement in this country. That's a gross misunderstanding of history.

Fascism isn't just a right-wing president or some white-supremacist, paramilitary organizations. It's a violent mass movement promoted by a section of the ruling 1% that fears an anti-capitalist uprising of the working class. That was what was behind the rise in the 1930s of Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain.

We haven't had a powerful workers' movement in this country since the Great Depression, but the ruling class understands far better than we do that capitalism has been unraveling for a long time, a process now greatly accelerated by the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The widespread economic anxiety, combined with the deep and broad rebellion over continuing police murders of Black people - a movement that was beginning to draw in some unions and other worker

organizations - has the potential to provoke at the very least a new upsurge in economic and social demands that would threaten the superprofits of the very wealthiest who actually who run this country.

We were in Charlottesville in August 2017. We went head-to-head with Nazis, Klansmen, League of the South members and other white-supremacist fascists. We are proud of the contribution we made to pushing back that "alt-right" gathering and at least delaying the consolidation of a broader fascist movement.

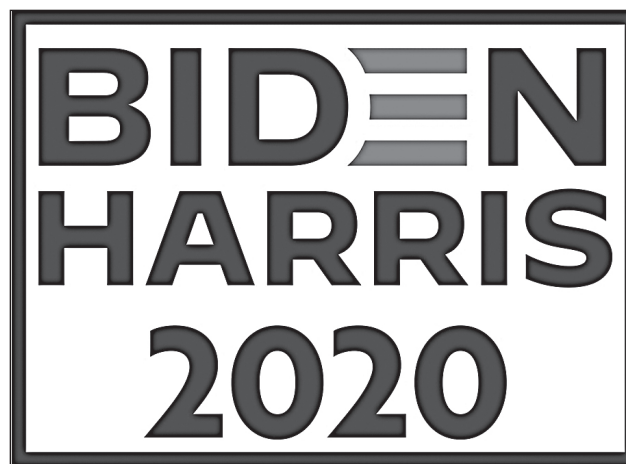
We also were in Odessa, Ukraine, on May 2, 2016, when much better-funded and organized fascist organizations were threatening to murder the people who came out for the second annual memorial honoring those who died in the House of Trade Unions fire. We have no illusions about the dangers of fascism.

But we also know the solution. It's the development of a broad, multiracial, multi-issue, working-class, antiwar and anti-imperialist movement that can unite millions under a program of economic, social and anti-racist demands, a movement that also is capable of physically defending itself from fascist attacks. And building that kind of movement is where we choose to put our time and effort.

There's nothing wrong with voting for Biden and Harris, if it's intended to be a vote against racism, repression and fascism. The problem is that the near-hysteria against anyone on the Left who chooses not to vote Democrat just reinforces the false idea that the Democratic Party is our only hope against the social and economic disasters for which they also are responsible.

So vote for whomever you want - except Trump. But if you're really concerned about stopping the right-wing movement that Trump represents, either continue to be involved in real grassroots organizing, or start doing it today.

Either way, we encourage you to get in touch and see how we can work together.



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reclaiming our sacred ground

Defying rain, 18th annual gathering honors Gabriel & promotes Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park

Staff Report

RICHMOND, VA — The steady drizzle may have dampened the 3.1-acre grassy field, but not the spirits of the nearly 90 people who showed up Oct. 10 at Richmond's African Burial Ground for the 18th Annual Gabriel Gathering.

By their presence, they declared their solidarity with the region's great slave rebellion leader Gabriel, executed on this site in 1800, as well as their determination to continue the struggle to win the nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park that would honor the memory of Gabriel, his many hundreds of sister and brother freedom fighters, and the sufferings and resistance of the hundreds of thousands of women, men and children who were sold out of Shockoe Bottom, once the epicenter of the U.S. domestic slave trade.

The annual gathering, hosted by the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project of the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality, featured a lineup of speakers who each had made some special contribution to promoting the memorialization of this sacred ground, which includes the municipal cemetery created for enslaved and free Africans; the site of a notorious slave jail known as the Devil's Half-Acre; and two adjacent blocks where other slave jails and slave trader offices once stood and which now are dilapidated municipal and private parking lots.

Sacred Ground Project Chair Ana Edwards, a public historian who herself is descended from people sold from Shockoe Bottom, opened with welcoming remarks, followed by comments by community elder and activist Queen Nzinga. Michaela Hatton, a young community activist and veteran of the months of the anti-racist protests that followed the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, read the seven demands adopted by the local protest movement.

The other presenters were Nana Monica Esparza and Queen Zakia Shabazz of the Afrikan Ancestral Chamber; Free Bangura of Untold RVA; Joseph Rogers, a historian, Defender and candidate for the city council district that includes the footprint of the memorial park; Pamela R. Bingham, a direct descendent of Gabriel; and Phil Wilayto, editor of The Virginia Defender newspaper.

The program began at 5:30 p.m. and ended

just as the sun was setting. Lanterns were turned on at the small blue tent that protected the portable sound system and literature table. Torches were lit along the opposite edge of the cemetery. The mood was reflective, spiritual and quietly serious.

To promote safe practices in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone had been strongly encouraged to wear face masks. To help with social distancing, 100 white and yellow carnations were spaced 10 feet apart in the area in front of the speakers. After the program, attendees were encouraged to either take the flowers home as reminders of the event or else lay them at one of three areas in the burial ground: the city-sponsored plaques that describe the history of the cemetery; the African-inspired tekken, or obelisk, erected by the Afrikan Ancestral Chamber; and a row of small altars constructed by Untold RVA.

This year's gathering took place at a critical time for the now-decades-long campaign to reclaim and properly memorialize Shockoe Bottom, a struggle that included blocking city plans to erect a baseball stadium on land where human beings once were held for auction.

Richmond will hold municipal elections on Nov. 3, and all five mayoral candidates have committed to supporting the proposal for the nine-acre memorial park, which developed in 2015 from a months-long community process led by the Sacred Ground Project. Further, Richmond City Council has approved a request from the present mayor, Levar Stoney, to devote \$1.7 million for development of part of the memorial park and also a second, recently rediscovered Black cemetery in the nearby Barton Heights neighborhood.

Even so, a full decade after the first burial ground was reclaimed from its use as a Virginia Commonwealth University parking lot, Richmond's city government has yet to create any kind of protective zoning for the cemetery, let alone the additional two blocks that would be part of the memorial park. That failure was a focal point of this year's Gabriel Gathering, where attendees were encouraged to contact the mayor and their council representatives and urge them to establish the needed zoning. The contact information for these elected officials were printed on the back of the bright yellow programs handed out to everyone at the gathering.

It's now a year until the 19th Annual



Photo by Brian Palmer

Activist Michaela Hatton reads the seven demands of the Richmond Rebellion at the 18th Annual Gabriel Gathering at Richmond's African Burial Ground.

Gabriel Gathering at Richmond's African Burial Ground. With the commitment and determination on display at this year's event, there is hope that the next 12 months will see concrete progress to creating the Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

HOW YOU CAN HELP AT THIS CRITICAL TIME:

All 2020 Richmond mayoral candidates and most members of Richmond City Council have expressed support for the Community Proposal for the 9-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park. But now they are using the excuse of not being able to commit money during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting recession. This is a false argument. City government can take one simple step to move the park forward without spending a dime: Create "protective zoning" for the park footprint, including the African Burial Ground, the Devil's Half-Acre and the two blocks east of the CSX railroad tracks where other slave jails and trader offices once stood.

You can help by contacting the mayor and members of city council and ask them to promote protective zoning for the nine-acre Shockoe Bottom Memorial Park.

For their phone numbers and email addresses, see richmondgov.com and click on "Government."



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Shock & dismay as hearing reveals desecration at East End Cemetery

By Ellen Chapman

There was palpable shock and sorrow at a public hearing as descendants of families buried at the Evergreen and East End cemeteries heard that human bones recovered near the Richmond cemeteries had likely been the victims of medical dissection.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources held the online hearing Oct. 23 to discuss how to reinter the remains - more than 200 bones from nine adult individuals, both male and female - found in July in a wooden box eroding out of a bank between the two Black cemeteries.

The meeting was led by DHR Director Julie Langan, Deputy Director Stephanie Williams and Archaeologist Joanne Wilson Green, along with John Sydnor, executive director of Enrichmond, the nonprofit organization that owns the cemeteries.

Green stated that dissection cuts on the bones and the burial of the nine individuals together indicated that "at least some of these individuals were taken from their original graves and were subjected to medical dissection."

Virginia Commonwealth University professor Ryan Smith, a member of the East End Collaboratory of cemetery researchers, attended the meeting and later wrote, "I was prepared for a difficult evening. I had no idea how difficult it would be."

In addition to expressing their pain from learning about the desecration of remains in a public online meeting, many descendants and cemetery volunteers expressed concerns regarding how decisions are made by Enrichmond. The organization had contacted the media and distributed images of the bones when they were discovered.

"I am truly outraged ... with this summer's exploitation of my ancestors' bones," said Jerene Fleming, a former member of Enrichmond's ExPRT advisory group. "I want you to feel how shook I am right now, hearing this news in a public venue, about those bones. It just blows my mind."

Maurice Hopkins, a current ExPRT member, urged independent oversight.

"The descendants and families of those interred in Evergreen and East End should have the authority to make decisions about their family members," he said. "I strongly suggest

international & antiwar news

International solidarity with U.S. rebellions

More than 130 organizations and individuals from 17 countries have endorsed an International Statement of Solidarity with the Anti-Racist U.S. Rebellions.

The statement, written in English by Virginia Defender editor Phil Wilayto, was translated into French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish by antiwar activists in Germany.

The countries so far represented by the endorsers are Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Netherlands, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Venezuela, as well as the United States.

The statement and endorsers can be found at: <https://internationalsolidarityblm.wordpress.com/signatures-unterzeichner>

World's poorest hit hardest by pandemic

"From factory to syringe, the world's most promising coronavirus vaccine candidates need non-stop sterile refrigeration to stay potent and safe. But despite enormous strides in equipping developing countries to maintain the vaccine 'cold chain,' nearly 3 billion of the world's 7.8 billion people live where temperature-controlled storage is insufficient for an immunization campaign to bring COVID-19 under control.

that an advisory board - and I've suggested it time and time again - be formed for each of those two cemeteries, and the Colored Paupers cemetery as well. ...

"Evergreen Cemetery was bought by the Iseminger family to keep it out of the hands of whites who were opportunists. It is now belonging to Enrichmond. It is still the white operation."

Currently, there is no independent elected body of descendants with decision-making power over how Enrichmond operates at Evergreen and East End.

Members of the nonprofit organization Friends of East End Cemetery reiterated their concerns about Enrichmond's stewardship of the cemeteries, particularly allegations of lack of transparency, poor treatment of volunteers, inadequate maintenance, and resistance to independent oversight.

A recording of the hearing is on the Department of Historic Resources website: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov>.

Ellen Chapman is an archaeologist living in Richmond, Virginia.

"The result: Poor people around the world who were among the hardest hit by the virus pandemic are also likely to be the last to recover from it."

-- Associated Press, Oct. 25, as carried in the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Was U.S. military training a factor in Mali's coups?

For the second time in eight years, military officers trained by the United States have overthrown the elected government of the Republic of Mali in West Africa.

The latest coup d'état, on Aug. 18, involved a number of officers who had received foreign training, including from the United States.

The previous coup, in 2012, began with a mutiny by soldiers and led to wide insurgencies by extremist forces, including ISIS, Al-Qaeda and allied groups. Many of these operate with arms taken from Libya after that once-prosperous country was destroyed by a massive bombing campaign led by the United States under the Obama-Biden administration.

The United States has some 34 different foreign military training programs in almost every country in the world.

Formerly colonized by France, Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world, but is rich in natural resources, including gold, bauxite and uranium, which makes it of great interest to Western corporations.

Mass struggle erupts in Nigeria

Massive demonstrations have erupted across Nigeria after video emerged showing members of the infamous SARS federal police unit dragging two men from a hotel and summarily executing one of them.

Over the last three years, Amnesty International has accused the nearly 30-year-old Special Anti-Robbery Squad of 82 cases of abuse, including beatings, hangings, mock executions, sexual assault and waterboarding.

In response to the protests, the Nigeria Police Force announced Oct. 11 that it had dissolved SARS and fired at least two officers. However, when the people learned that SARS officers would just be incorporated into other police units, the protests continued.

Meanwhile, people around the world began taking notice after celebrities in different countries began using the hashtag #EndSARS, which has been around since 2017.

By Oct. 16, there were nearly 3.3 million tweets containing the hashtag.

Then, on Oct. 20, police attacked protesters camped outside a busy toll booth plaza in the upscale suburb of Lekki, just outside Lagos, a major financial center and the most populous city in all of Africa. Protesters reported that street lights suddenly went out in the plaza, then Nigerian security forces approached and opened fire. Ten people died and hundreds were wounded, according to Amnesty International.

The Nigerian army denied that soldiers had been present.

Meanwhile, people around the world have mobilized to support the anti-SARS movement in Nigeria, holding demonstrations in many cities, including Oct. 24 in Richmond at the Marcus-David Peters Circle.

Bolivia defies U.S. in 2020 election

The following is excerpted from a statement Oct. 21 by the Alliance for Global Justice on the Oct. 18 electoral victory of presidential candidate Luis Arce of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS in Spanish). (<https://afgj.org/the-alliance-for-global-justice-congratulates-the-bolivian-people>)

... In 2006, after the expansion of popular democracies in Latin America, Bolivia elected its first indigenous president, Evo Morales, from MAS. Under this historical change, the members of the government in Bolivia, for the first time, looked like the people that elected them. Evo Morales was surrounded by indigenous men and women. He reached out to the Afro-Bolivians to recognize their ancestral government structures and brought them to govern with him.

Since Evo and MAS came to power, the economy that had been stagnant for more than 25 years grew consistently. ... In particular, the poverty gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Bolivians narrowed significantly since 2006. ... Overall, Bolivia testified a steady increase in human development as measured by indicators such as child mortality, life expectancy, access to health care, years of schooling, and literacy rate.

In 2019, after the successful re-election of Evo Morales to the Presidency for the third time, the extreme right with the support of the U.S. Government and the Organization of American States' Secretary General orchestrated a coup. Unlike 2018 in Nicaragua, the extremists were able to force a democratically elected president to leave his presidency. Evo was taken to Mexico in political exile. ...

The defeat of the coup government, led by Jeanine Áñez Chávez and supported by the US, and the victory of the grassroots movements in the Bolivian electoral arena bring hopes to the entire continent. ...

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Alexsis will fight to fully fund our schools and will pursue innovative partnerships within city government and community partners to address inequities in public education.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Alexsis will prioritize access to clean, safe, and affordable housing for every Richmond resident and support programs that promote economically-diverse communities and reduce displacement.

POLICE REFORM

Alexsis will work to keep Richmond safe by reducing the scale and scope of policing and reinvesting in community resources for public education, after-school programs, and mental health services.

TRANSPORTATION

Alexsis will work to establish a Department of Transportation in the City to modernize our local government and provide direct accountability for the state of our streets.

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