

INSIDE THE RICHMOND CITY JAIL

Inmate grievances & Sheriff Woody's responses - story on page 6

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

THE VIRGINIA DEFENDER

FREE

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Spring 2013

Will Richmond's legacy be the desecration of Shockoe Bottom?

By Phil Wilayto

Richmond is at a crossroads.

Corporate types with dollar signs in their eyes are on the verge of selling out our greatest collective treasure for a lousy bowl of porridge.

The two most powerful local clubs of the local powerful – the Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce) and Venture Richmond – along with their allies in government, academia and the world of nonprof-its, are furiously putting into place a plan to build a commercial sports stadium, a ball-park, in the heart of Shockoe Bottom, the most historic district of a most historic city.

As we go to press, 150 of the region's movers and shakers are on a Chamber-or-ganized visit to Denver, Colorado, where they hope to learn about innovative ideas they can bring back to Richmond.

On the top of their list is checking out Denver's downtown sports stadium, also constructed in a historic area.

If they're talking about Coors Field, that's a magnificent ballpark. It's 76 acres with a spectacular view of the Rocky Mountains for fans in the first-base and right-field areas.

In Richmond, the view would be of a few railroad tracks and the I-95 expressway.

But that's not the point. Even if building a ballpark in a crowded little flood plane could somehow avoid totally tying up down-town traffic, including on the streets lead-



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Members of the African Ancestral Chamber; Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality; Prisoners & Families for Equal Rights & Justice; Collective X and other organizations protest plans to build a commercial baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom, once the site of the second-largest slave market in the United States. The vigil was held on April 3, the 148th anniversary of the liberation of Richmond by Union troops and the end of more than 200 years of slavery in Virginia's Capital City.

ing to the VCU Health Center's emergency room, defiling Shockoe with a baseball stadium would still be the height of petty, money-grubbing small-mindedness.

It would be like paving over the James

River and then crowing that we finally had enough downtown parking space.

Here's the choice: either we can build a modest little ballpark for a lovable little double-A farm team and draw fans from

the Greater Richmond area – or we can develop Shockoe Bottom as a uniquely valuable historic district that draws tourists from all over the world.

See **SHOCKOE** on **PAGE 2**



Photo courtesy of Virginia Organizing

Alle Witt, left, and Lillie Estes participate in a Tax Day Protest outside Richmond's Main Post Office on Brook Road. The April 15 action, sponsored by the Richmond Peace Education Center, sought to educate the public about how much of our federal taxes go to military spending.

The problem isn't Social Security or Medicare - Half our taxes go to war

By Adria Scharf

On Tax Day this spring, April 15, the Richmond Peace Education Center and Virginia Organizing held a leafleting action at Richmond's Main Post Office on Brook Road. We held signs and handed out information to educate tax filers about how their federal tax dollars are being spent. We wanted taxpayers to make a "pocketbook connection" between their tax bill and military spending.

A lot of us think our federal income taxes mostly pay for things like schools, potholes and Pell grants. But the truth is, we spend far, far more on military and war-related expenses than we spend on things like education, housing or transportation. Most of our federal income taxes go to military and war-related programs.

Let me explain. In the decade after 9/11, U.S. military spending almost doubled, reaching heights unseen since

World War II. When you hear overblown talk of "catastrophic" cuts to defense, please remember: what we are seeing in the budget debates is discussion about miniscule reductions to a hugely bloated war apparatus that has grown exponentially over the past decade.

President Obama just requested \$527 billion for the Defense Department for 2014, a tiny fraction less than his request in 2013. The truth is that if the president's budget is approved for next year, we will still spend more than 65 percent more on the Defense Department than we did in 2001.

More importantly, that \$527 billion number, so often cited by the press, only refers to the "base Pentagon budget." It's actually a gross underestimation of the true cost of war making, but let's start there. In 2013, the Pentagon's base budget is almost 60 percent of the

See **TAXES** on **PAGE 9**

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

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

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

WHAT WE BELIEVE:

We believe in Freedom.

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

We believe in Justice.

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

We believe in Equality.

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

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

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

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

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

regional & national news



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Members of the Fire Spitters jazz ensemble present a musical tribute to Jayne Cortez (in photo at right). Other notables at the Jan. --- program held in New York City included actor Danny Glover, poet Amiri Baraka and Jayne's husband of 35 years, sculptor Melvin Edwards.

Spirit of revolutionary poet Jayne Cortez celebrated in NYC

By Ana Edwards

Jayne Cortez was the real deal. A poet warrior woman artist. And in a large, darkened and crowded theatre at Cooper Union University in New York City's Lower East Side this past Feb. 6, I sat there thinking maybe Jayne was just waiting off-stage for her cue to come on out.

But she wasn't. We were a room full of family, friends, colleagues and fans — people who'd arrived from across the country, across the Atlantic, and across spectrums of creative work to come together and become the physical community of Jayne for just one day.

Because Jayne, whose poetry was a controlled weapon of cultural honesty, flaying the bodies of social, economic and aesthetic corruption, whose person was gifted with ferocity, melody and joy, Jayne Cortez had died on Dec. 28, 2012, after a short battle with heart failure.

An acclaimed poet, activist, performing artist, author, filmmaker and educator, Jayne

was born in Fort Huachuca, Ariz., on May 10, 1934, grew up in California and lived in New York City and Dakar, Senegal. She was the author of 10 books of poems and performed her poetry with music on nine recordings.

Since the 1960s, her voice has been celebrated for its political, surrealistic and dynamic innovations in lyricism and visceral sound.

Jayne's first husband was jazz innovator Ornette Coleman, and though divorced after 10 years, they shared a friendship and musical sensibility that also comes through in the dynamic drumming of their son Denardo Coleman. In 1980, she and Denardo created the Firespitter Band, whose lineup has included Don Cherry, Bill Cole, Charlie Moffat, David Murray, Roy Campbell and Bern Nix.

Jayne's first book, "Pissed Stained Stairs and the Monkey Man's Wares" (1969) was self-published and illustrated with drawings by artist Melvin Edwards, who in 1975 would become her second husband. His drawings are in all but one of her books of poetry. Their

Occupy the Hood Hampton Roads

[Editor's Note: A year and a half after the Occupy Wall Street movement rocked the country, many of its young participants have dug in on local struggles for justice. One such group is Occupy the Hood Hampton Roads. The following is an excerpt from the group's website, occupythehoodhrv.org. The organization also can be found on Facebook.]

The epidemic of economic inequality, oppression from the prison industrial complex, corruption of politics through corporate funding and the marginalization of communities of color are not just national problems that affect other communities. These are problems here in Hampton Roads as well.

Our goal is to unite people of color from Hampton, Portsmouth, Newport News, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Norfolk and Virginia Beach in order to address the grievances that have been plaguing our communities. We are a group of non-partisan community organizers and activists who are dedicated to focusing on the issues and fostering a change that people can measure.

The problems in our justice system, education system and political system will not just go away. You can make a difference with as little as a few hours a month.

Occupy the Hood Hampton Roads works in Solidarity with Occupy movements in Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News and throughout Virginia. We plan to be a vital and constructive part of the entire Occupy Wall Street movement as we challenge people of color to reclaim their lives and liberate their neighborHOOD!

Shockoe

Continued from page 1

Of course, that seems overstated, but only because Richmond has such limited knowledge of its own history and such a deeply conflicted attitude toward the little history it does know.

Rather than face our tortured racial past head on, so we can truly move on to an honest accounting, reparations and finally reconciliation, the city's corporate and civic leaders would rather bury and forget it.

Bury the African Burial Ground under a parking lot.

Bury Richmond's old slave market district under a baseball stadium.

Bury the historic essence of this city under festivals, concerts and bicycle races that have no more uniqueness to Richmond than another Applebee's, Denny's or TGI Friday's.

We urge our readers to please study this issue of the Defender. On page 8 there's an editorial on why Shockoe Bottom is uniquely important. On page 3 you'll find two maps: one shows the rich history that lies in Shockoe Bottom — Black history, Jewish history, Quaker, Mason, Indian and civic history.

The other map shows the same Shockoe Bottom, with a baseball stadium dropped in the middle.

When this editor and Virginia State Conference NAACP Executive Director King Salim Khalfani met last Sept. 5 with Jack Berry, Executive Director of Venture Richmond, and Kim Scheeler, President and CEO of the Greater Richmond Chamber, we did our level best to explain what a tragic waste and crime it would be not to develop Shockoe Bottom as a historic district.

It was like talking to a wall.

"So people come to Richmond," Scheeler said, "They go and look at Lumpkin's Jail. They visit the African Burial Ground and then what? They go home!"

life together as well as their artistic collaborations continued until her death.

Jayne's commitment to her work, to artists' integrity and purpose in society was evident throughout her career. She established Bola Press to ensure creative control over her writings and recordings into the future.

In 1991, she helped found the Organization of Women Writers of Africa (OWWA) with Ghanaian poet Ama Ata Aidoo to connect the creative voices of Black women writers of the African diaspora.

The next session of OWWA's conference "Yari Yari Ntoaso: Continuing the Dialogue," will be held May 16-19 in Ghana's capital city of Accra. The first two of these conferences were held in New York in 1997 and 2007.

Jayen also, with UNESCO, organized two international symposiums: "Slave Routes: The Long Memory" (1999) and "Slave Routes: Resistance, Abolition and Creative Progress" (2008).

Jayne presented her work and ideas at universities, museums and festivals in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, the Caribbean and the United States. She is featured in the films "Women In Jazz" and "Poetry In Motion."

The roster of those who helped pay homage to Jayne on Feb. 6 was in itself an homage to the arts: actor Danny Glover; poets Amina and Amiri Baraka, Quincy Troupe and Rashidah Ismaili; historian Daniel Inneh; author and educator Robin D.G. Kelly; writer Genna Rae McNeil; composer Randy Weston; the Firespitters, with her son, Denardo Coleman; and many more.

They made songs, read poems and shared stories of knowing Jayne the woman or encountering her poetry.

It was no simple summation; to each she was someone specific. Even so, it seemed just right that the one piece of advice that Jayne was most consistent in giving was used in video form to close the program:

"Find your own voice and use it. Use your own voice and find it."

Visit www.jaynecortez08.com.

Defender Ana Edwards is one of three daughters of Jayne Cortez' husband and partner, Mel Edwards.

No, Mr. Scheeler, that's what they do when they come to town to see a ballgame. They watch it, buy a hot dog and beer and go home.

But what if people came to Richmond to visit what is arguably the most important Black historical site in all of North America? If they walked the Trail of Enslaved Africans, visited Lumpkin's and the Burial Ground, toured a Bottom redesigned as a living, outdoor museum, visited the bookstore, the interactive exhibits, listened to lectures in an educational center — and picked up brochures about all the other things that Richmond has to offer.

Why, they'd check into a motel. They'd dine at local restaurants. They'd visit the river. They'd spend money. (Did we get your attention there?)

And Richmond would have fulfilled its historic role as faithful steward of this Sacred Ground.

By the way, we asked Mayor Jones if he'd made a decision on where he would like to see a new baseball stadium built in Richmond.

"No determination of a site for a new baseball stadium has been made at this time," he replied May 1.

Could he comment on recent media speculation that he's leaning toward Shockoe Bottom?

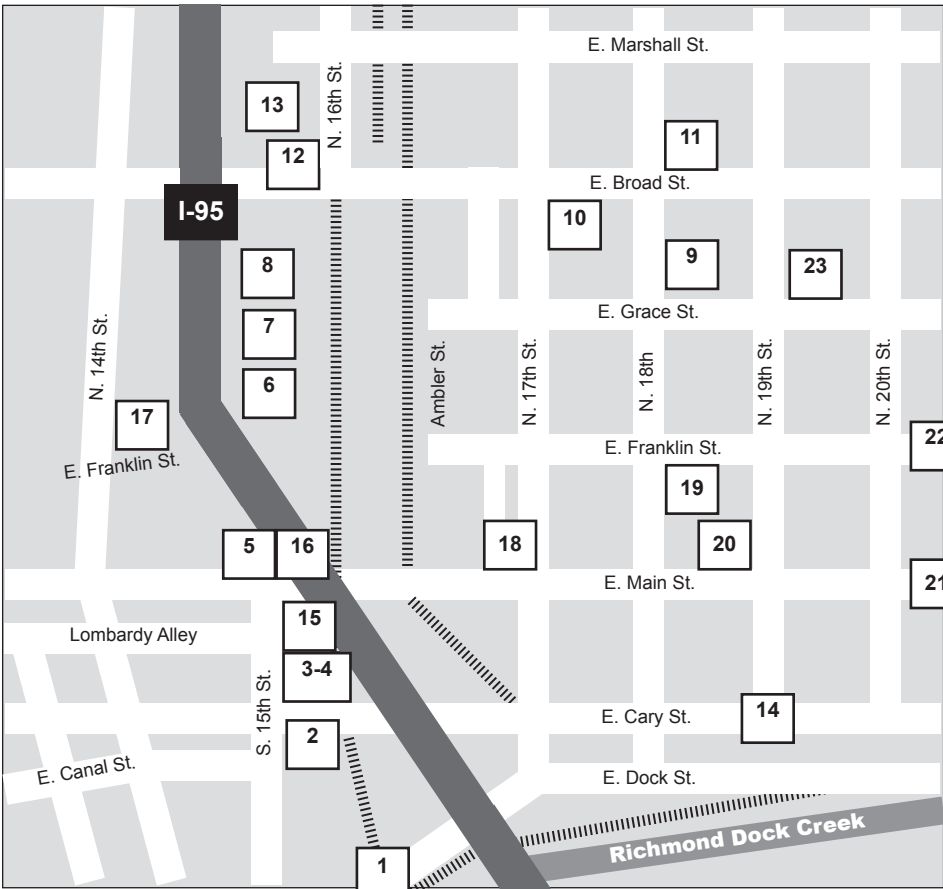
"When a decision is made, it will be based on sound financial analysis, timing and the anticipated economic impact on our tax base and local economy."

And meanwhile, would the mayor be willing to meet with a committee of community advocates to discuss this issue?

"Having all members of the community, residents, advocates and the business community's input in decisions that move our city forward is of the utmost importance," he answered. "When a stadium plan is ready to move forward, all will be encouraged to become engaged in the process."

And by that time, it will be too late.

A few of the richly historic sites in Shockoe Bottom



This map and legend were part of a brochure the Defenders published a few years before the African Burial Ground was reclaimed. Its purpose was to help educate public officials and the public at large about what an irreplaceable historical treasure we have in Shockoe Bottom.

1 - TRAIL OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS
This federally recognized Historic Landmark is a 1.3-mile walking trail between Shockoe Bottom and what was once the major port of Manchester Docks on the south bank of the James River. Before 1778, when Virginia banned participation in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, captured Africans brought to Richmond to be sold into slavery were forced to walk north along this trail to the slave jails in Shockoe Bottom – at night, so as not to offend the sensibilities of Richmond’s white residents. After U.S. participation in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was banned in 1807 (the ban went into effect the following year), Virginia became the country’s major source of forced labor for newly opened plantations in the Deep South. Now enslaved Black people were forced to walk from the jails and auction house of Shockoe Bottom south along this trail to the ships waiting at Manchester Docks. Many believe this is the origin of the phrase “sold down the river.” The Night Walk Along the Trail of Enslaved Africans is now part of the city’s annual Juneteenth Celebration, coordinated by the Elegba Folklore Society. Tours are also conducted by other Richmond organizations, as well as by the Richmond Department of Parks and Recreation.

2 - HENRY “BOX” BROWN MEMORIAL
Box Brown Plaza, 15th & Dock streets
Born into slavery in 1815 in Louisa County, Henry “Box” Brown escaped to freedom in 1849 by arranging to have himself sealed in a wooden box and shipped to an organization of abolitionists in Philadelphia. He took this desperate measure after his wife and children were sold to a North Carolina plantation.

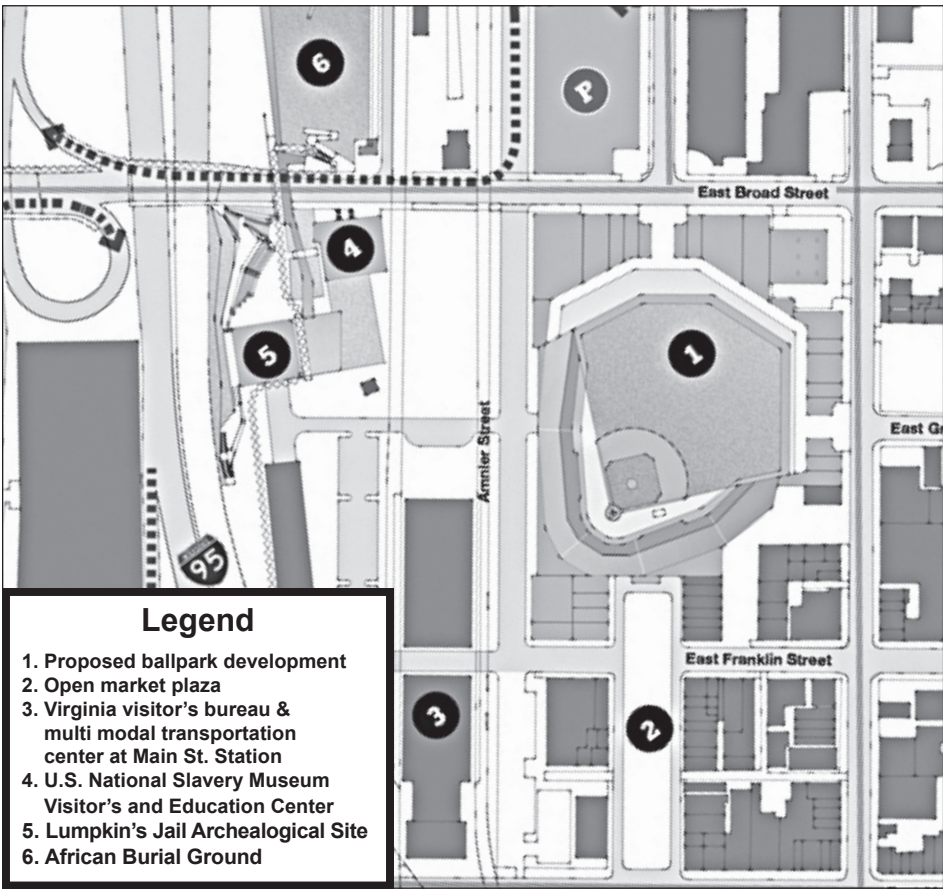
3 - DAVENPORT & CO.
15th & E. Cary streets
A slave auction house. Portions of the building survived the Civil War and are now part of the present building. *City of Richmond Web site*

4 - ATKINSON JAIL
15th & Cary streets
A large jail complex, likely owned by George Washington Atkinson. *Jeffrey Ruggles, Virginia Historical Society, quoted in Style Weekly, 2/3/09*

5 - RECONCILIATION STATUE
15 & E. Main streets
This statue, one of three identical structures symbolizing reconciliation between those oppressed by slavery and those responsible for it, was unveiled in March 2007 before a crowd of more than 5,000. Dignitaries from around the world addressed the crowd, illustrating the international importance of Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom. The other two statues are in Liverpool, England, and Benin, West Africa. Together they memorialize the British, African and U.S. triangular trade. “Profits from the sale of enslaved Africans financed major British and North American economic development.” *Plaque at the Richmond site, erected by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Richmond*

6 - SLAVE AUCTION HOUSES
Along 15th Street
“Some 40 or 50 slave dealers plied their trade in this ‘specialized’ neighborhood. The dealers and auction houses were concentrated between 14th and 18th streets, with the heart of the district along 15th Street from Shockoe Slip to Marshall Street, on the north side of Broad.” *“Locus of Sorrow” by Richmond historian Elizabeth Cann Kambourian, The Richmond Defender, 2/05*

7 - LUMPKIN’S JAIL
15th & Franklin streets
Owned by the notorious slave dealer Robert Lumpkin, this complex was the largest antebellum slave trade site outside New Orleans. It consisted of “holding pens,” plus a restaurant and hotel for visiting dealers. Known as the “Devil’s Half-Acre,” the complex was also used as a place for breaking rebellious slaves. Robert Lumpkin died shortly after the Civil War and the property was inherited by Mary Anne Lumpkin, his wife and one of his former slaves, who leased it to a Baptist minister looking for a space in which to start a Black seminary. That was the origin of what is now Virginia Union University. A 2008 excavation of the original site revealed the complex’s intact foundation, attracting international attention and a major article in



This map and legend, dated Sept. 10, 2012, were produced by Venture Richmond, which along with the Greater Richmond Chamber (of Commerce) is pushing hard for a Shockoe Bottom stadium. The stadium would dominate the entire area, reducing Richmond’s Black history to a footnote.

the magazine of the Smithsonian Institute. The survey that led to the excavation was sponsored by the City of Richmond, the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the preservationist organization A.C.O.R.N. After the excavation, the site was covered with a tarp and landfill and now awaits funding for its proper restoration.

8 - WINFREE COTTAGE
Next to Lumpkin’s Jail site
This two-room cottage once belonged to Emily Winfree, a free Black woman formerly owned by a wealthy Manchester landowner by whom she had five children. In 2002, A.C.O.R.N. saved the cottage after learning it was to be demolished. Current plans are for it to be used as a visitor’s information site along the Trail of Enslaved Africans. *A.C.O.R.N. Web site*

9 - ASH HOUSE
211 N. 18th St.
Home of Ash Levy, slave trader and seller of clothing to the slave auction trade. *Kim Chen, quoted in Style Weekly, 2/3/09*

10 - OMOHUNDRO SLAVE JAIL
17th & E. Broad streets
Operated by Silas Omohundro, a slave trader. Now the site of an Exxon gas station. *Style Weekly, 2/3/09; Library of Virginia*

11 - SLAVE TRADER OFFICE
1800 E. Broad St. (Parking lot next to McDon-ald’s)
One of many trader offices in the area. *Style Weekly, 2/3/09*

12 - GABRIEL MARKER
North side of E. Broad Street, between I-95 and CSX tracks
This state highway marker commemorates the execution of the great slave rebellion leader Gabriel on Oct. 10, 1800. The marker was erected by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources after a community campaign led by the Defenders. Unveiled on the 204th anniversary of Gabriel’s execution, it was also the first official recognition of the nearby “Burial Ground for Negroes.”

13 - “AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND”
Just north of East Broad Street, between the entrance to I-95 and the CSX railroad tracks
First used as a cemetery around 1750, the so-called “Burial ground for Negroes” was once the final resting place for enslaved Africans, executed criminals and the indigent. It also included the city gallows, where Gabriel was executed on Oct. 10, 1800. The Burial Ground evidently was used until the first of a group of Black cemeteries in Barton Heights opened around 1814. The Broad Street property then changed hands many times. It was once the site of the City Jail. In the 1930s it was used as the city’s dog pound. A commercial parking lot, constructed in the 1970s, was purchased in 2008 by Virginia Commonwealth University, a public institution, which continued to park cars on this sacred ground.

14 - QUAKER MEETING HOUSE
19th & Cary streets
The Richmond Friends Meeting was organized in 1795 and soon built its first Meeting House.

This was the second oldest church in Richmond. *Richmond Friends Web site*

15 - SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER OFFICE SITE
15th & Main streets
A publication edited for a time by Edgar Allan Poe.

16 - MAIN STREET STATION
1500 E. Main St.
This French Renaissance-style station opened in 1901. Closed in 1975, it reopened to passenger train service in 2003 after a \$51.6 million station renovation. However, because of rail congestion north of the city, most travelers prefer the station at Staples Mill Road.

17 - KAHAL KADOSH SHALOME MARKER
14th & E. Franklin streets
The “Holy Congregation House of Peace” was the first Jewish congregation in Virginia and the sixth established in the United States. Its first permanent synagogue, at 115 Mayo St., was dedicated on Sept. 15, 1822. *www.dhr.virginia.gov/contents/hwmarker_month_content.htm*

18 - 17TH STREET FARMERS’ MARKET
17th & East Main streets
Wares have been sold here continuously since about 1770.

19 - MASON’S HALL
1805-1807 E. Franklin streets
Dating from 1785-87, this is the oldest Masonic lodge in the United States and one of the oldest continuously used Masonic lodges in the world. *http://www.nps.gov/history*

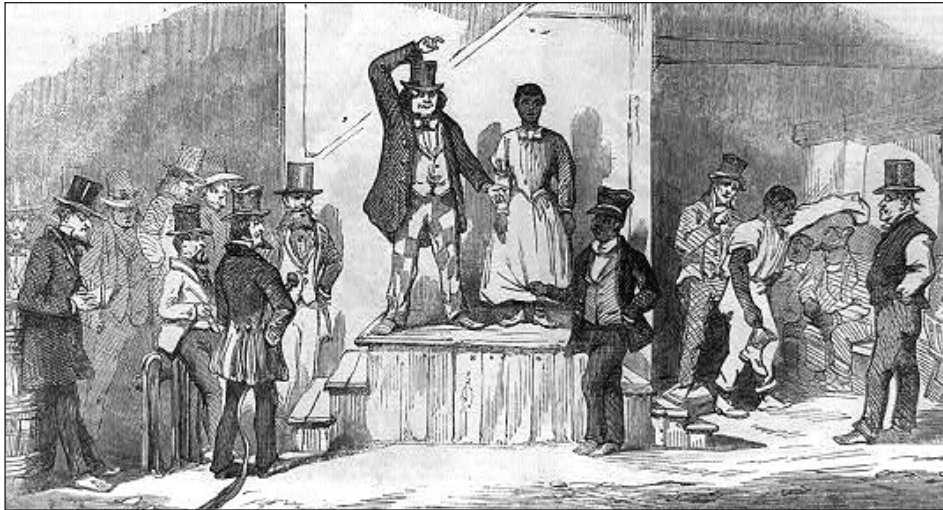
20 - POE MUSEUM
1914 E. Main St.
The oldest house in Richmond, this stone building now houses a museum dedicated to the 19th century writer Edgar Allan Poe, who lived in Richmond for a time.

21 - FORMATION OF RICHMOND’S 1ST CITY GOVT
2127 E. Main St.
“On July 2, 1782, the people of Richmond gathered near this site to elect twelve citizens and constitute their first city government, known as the Common Hall.” *State Historical Marker at the site*

22 - FRANKLIN STREET BURIAL GROUNDS
N. 21st & E. Franklin streets
Founded in 1791, this was the first Jewish cemetery in Virginia. It is maintained by the Congregation Beth Ahabah.

23 - KNESSET HOUSE
209 19th St.
One of Richmond’s first synagogues, built by a congregation of Orthodox Russians and Poles. *Valetine Museum*

Copies of the Defenders’ Shockoe Bottom brochure can be downloaded from: DefendersFJE.blogspot.com



Richmond Slave Auction, Illustrated London News, 1856

cops, courts & prisons

Ashley Williams trial set for May 20

By Phil Wilayto

Ashley Williams, the young Richmond mother whose four-year legal case has drawn wide community interest and support, will go on trial May 20 in Richmond Circuit Court.

The mother of four is charged with second-degree murder and felony child neglect in the May 30, 2009, death of her youngest child, D'Sean. The 2-year old weighed just 14 pounds at the time of his death, about half of what a child that age usually weighs.

Williams' other three children, who were placed in foster care after D'Sean's death, were all healthy and thriving. However, two of Williams' sisters and a niece have young sons who also are severely underweight.

The family maintains that D'Sean suffered from a genetic disease that his Medicaid doctor failed to properly diagnose. As a low-paid

home-care worker, Williams did not have health insurance, unlike her sisters and niece.

The three-day trial is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. in Courtroom 301 of the John Marshall Courts Building, 400 N. 9th St. in downtown Richmond.

Supporters are urging the public to attend the trial to see that justice is done.

For more information on this case, see the Summer 2012 edition of The Virginia Defender at: www.DefenderFJE.org.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Ashley Williams



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Activists deliver 'Socks for Inmates' — At left, Collective X members Vanessa Coleman, Sarah Okolita and Claire Tuite read a statement outside Richmond City Jail explaining the "Socks for Inmates" campaign. Listening, in leather cap, is Sheriff C.T. Woody. The campaign to collect free socks for each jail inmate was launched after Collective X members heard that some inmates could not afford to buy socks from the jail store. In photo at right, activists carry more than 2,000 pairs of new white socks into the jail. The donated socks were delivered Dec. 18. For Sheriff Woody's responses to recent jail inmate grievances sent to the Defender, see page 6.

Jermaine Doss petition campaign reaches half-way point

Staff Report

A Norfolk-based campaign to free a Virginia man who his supporters believe is wrongly imprisoned has gathered more than 500 signatures, halfway to its goal of 1,000.

The petition campaign, launched Nov. 1 at Norfolk's Black-owned House of Consciousness bookstore, asks Gov. Robert McDonnell to look into the case in the hopes the governor will see fit to grant a pardon.

Jermaine Doss, 40, now in the 14th year of a life-plus-38-year sentence for a crime he swears he did not commit.

In 1998, Doss was running a beauty salon and auto detailing shop in his home town of Norfolk, when an acquaintance named Nathaniel McGee was charged with the murder of local businessman James Webb. At the time of his arrest, McGee gave police a statement claiming Jermaine had hired him to kill Webb in a dispute over drugs.

McGee later retracted that statement in court. He also signed an affidavit stating he only testified against Doss because prosecutors had told him that if he didn't, he would face the death penalty. He also has written a letter to Doss apologizing for his original statement. McGee is now serving a sentence of 17 years for the murder, plus more time for related charges.

Doss was arrested and charged with capital murder-for-hire. In 2000, he was found guilty of a lesser, non-included charge, first-degree murder. He is now serving a life sentence on that charge, plus 38 years for related charges.

Doss maintains that he was set up to be framed by Norfolk Detective Glenn Ford, who he says was demanding money from him in return for not finding a reason to arrest him. Detective Ford is now serving a 12.5-year prison sentence after being convicted of extortion in another case. According to an article in The

Virginian-Pilot newspaper, Ford was "accused of accepting money from criminal suspects in exchange for getting them favorable treatment within the court system." He was also convicted of lying to the FBI during an investigation of the extortion.

Ford was also the lead investigator in the controversial case of the Norfolk Four, sailors convicted of a murder/rape but whom many believe were framed.

Jermaine's parents, Ray and Willie Mae Doss, have spent more than \$100,000 in lawyers' fees trying to free their son. Jermaine's current lawyer says there is nothing more he can do: even though the courts used McGee's original statement to convict Jermaine, they now say he is not a reliable witness.

"He's been in jail for 13 years and he's not guilty," Jermaine's mother told the Defender. "And the man that confessed, he lied on him. And he came back to court in 2006 and said he had lied, but they said he wasn't credible. So if he wasn't credible in 2006, how was he credible in 2000? So they made him credible when they wanted him to be credible."

"And Ford was a crooked cop," said Ray Doss. "He knew that stuff wasn't right. And the judge knew it too, the prosecutor knew it and the head investigator knew it."

Having exhausted their resources, the Dosses do not have the money necessary to mount a federal appeal. Jermaine Doss now faces the prospect of spending the rest of his life in prison.

Ray and Willa Mae Doss are hoping that, with enough signatures on their petition, enough publicity and enough public support, Gov. McDonnell can be convinced to look into their son's case, see the injustice that has been committed and issue a pardon to free their son.

Copies of the petition can be downloaded online at: www.DefendersFJE.org.

Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference holds 'Justice Hearing' at VUU

By Kwame Binta

The Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference of Chicago held a "Virginia State Justice Hearing" April 12 at Richmond's Virginia Union University. Representing the Conference were its General Secretary, Dr. Iva E. Carruthers; Director of Advocacy and Outreach Rev. Carl Lower; and Dean of Theology Dr. John W. Kenney.

The local Justice Hearings are designed to document the critical issues and perspectives from the field and the faith community that must be integral to public discourse and public policy recommendations on the criminal justice system, due to the mass incarceration of African (Black) people.

The 13 commissioners who co-chaired the hearing included Dr. Yvonne V. Delk, Rev. Dr. Audrey Brown Burton, Dr. Patricia Gould Champ, Mrs. Willie Dell, Ms. Faith Drayton, Mr. Jesse Fiereson, Dr. Neal Holmes, Mr. E. Marty Jewell, Dr. Sandra Mitchell and Mr. Curtis M. Rustin Jr.

The commissioners listened to wide ranging testimony from people who have been unjustly charged and convicted by the court system. Some who testified included former city council members, people convicted on drug and assault charges and who because of a system failure ended up doing time in prison. For everyone who did time it has been a very hard struggle to stay out and make a living in society after being convicted of a crime.

The commission listened to people who once had so-called successful careers and from people who never were able to escape doing time before becoming adults.

I hope there will be more input from the

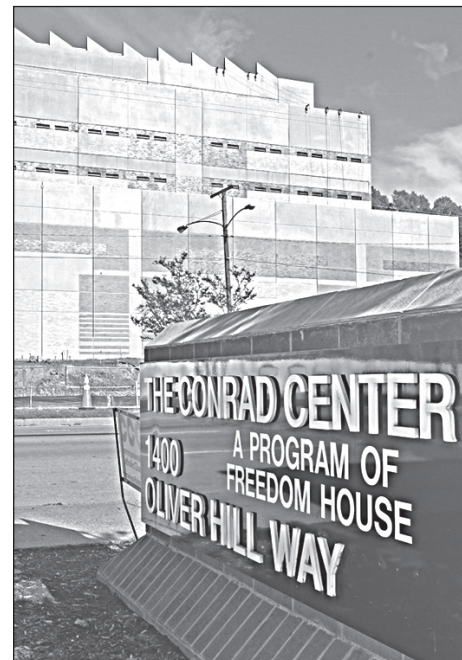


Photo courtesy Kromatic Photography

Money for jails, but not meals?

The nonprofit Freedom House has announced it is closing the Conrad Center, the only Richmond-area facility that offers breakfast and supper seven days a week to homeless people and the working poor. The stated reason is cutbacks in city, state and private funding. Meanwhile, construction continues on the new \$134-million Richmond City Jail, just across the street (above). Ironically, the new jail is to be called "The Justice Center." Like the Conrad Center, the new jail also will serve daily meals to the impoverished.

masses who have suffered under the system of capitalism where prisoners are a commodity and Wall Street investors make money off the suffering of others.

Community activists tour City Jail

[Editor's Note: This past January, 11 activists from several local organizations toured the Richmond City Jail. They had been told they would not be allowed to speak to any inmates, but they wanted to see the physical conditions for themselves. Following are reflections on the visit by a member of Collective X, the group that organized the Socks for Inmates campaign. Other organizations represented on the tour were Books for Prisoners, Defenders, Jericho Movement, SONG and SPARC.]

By Whitney Whiting

My first thought upon walking through the gates of the Richmond City Jail was that it reminded me of public school. It smelled like one. Our "tour guide" was a pleasant man in a sweater vest named Jerry. He was clearly the PR personnel for the Sheriff's department. I won't deny he did his job well. He always answered our questions with a gentle, courteous smile. Had we been anywhere else, I might have felt comforted by this.

The women's tier looked freshly painted and smelled strongly of chlorine. We saw metal bunks with thin mattresses for sleeping. Some women lay curled up. Others played cards at a table. Some smiled at us as we passed the large windows. I tried my best to offer one in return.

We were not shown any male tiers, but at one point we could see some male inmates through a window in one of the doors. One of the men waved and so I waved back.

Then we were shown the cafeteria, or "chow," as it is called. We were there for less than 30 seconds, but for me it was the most intense experience of the whole tour. I'm sure the feeling will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Upon walking into this room, we were met with a sea of faces, mostly Black, staring straight ahead, crammed incredibly close to each other, in total silence. There were no physical bars or iron doors, no glass to separate the 11 of us from the hundreds of them. But despite the empty space between us, I could feel the separation.

The tension in the room hit me like

a wall. I couldn't bring myself to look at them for long. It was not about any fear for my safety. I really didn't feel any fear at all. What I felt was my whiteness.

My stares at them felt invasive, and yet, didn't we come here to see what it was like? What really unnerved me was the silence, in a room that felt enormous, and all those stunned, unknown faces staring back at us.

Later, I expressed my surprise at what being in that room made me recall. I do not want to trivialize the experience of being incarcerated by this comparison. It's a poor analogy, I know. But as a white woman of privilege, it may be the only experience I have that comes remotely close.

Being in that room reminded me of the lunches in my public elementary school. Our vice principal would stand in front of the cafeteria every day, a microphone in hand, calling out any student he heard talking.

It didn't matter if we were just whispering or accidentally let out a giggle. Any noise, for any reason, and he would demand another five minutes of silence. If any other child giggled or said a word before the five minutes was up, he would add another five minutes onto that. This forced silence soon became the norm.

I was a quiet child, so for me, it wasn't a difficult task. Even so, I remember being so angry — not at my schoolmates who might let out a whimper of laughter. I was angry at him - this guard standing before us, demanding such strict behavior of 8-year-olds.

I remember thinking, "But we're just kids." Sure, kids get loud sometimes. But their system of doling out punishment was unfair and inefficient.

The system, even then, seemed broken.

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reclaiming our sacred ground

Ancestors group criticizes City's 'Slave Walk' graphic

By the African Ancestral Chamber

As the Richmond Slave Trail Commission planned bronze plaques in sidewalks of the City of Richmond, the African Ancestral Chamber requested their consideration of additional images. It was of the group's opinion that planned (and now actual) use of the Richmond Slave Trail logo was an unfair depiction of slavery, focusing only on the African American experience.

Even as the face of slavery is historically represented as African American, it is unacceptable to have a stand-alone image of a chained people to portray African Americans. The image represents the African American holocaust during a horrendous chapter in American history, but does nothing to express the slaves' strength, resistance and ultimate victory to end slavery.

Additionally, an image only reflecting Af-

rican Americans misses the opportunity to express the European American role in the slave travesty. Public canvassing and conversations about the Richmond Slave Trail logo within the public-right-of-way found no favor.

What psychological or other harm may be unleashed with the image of a chained people every 40 feet or so in the sidewalk? Has the sentiment that slaves were once considered real estate and a perception of the world "trampling on heritage" been considered?

What message is being communicated to children, those without intimate knowledge of slavery, and those who have experienced incarceration without the benefit of sidewalk interpretation?

Where is the spirit of Black Love?

The African Ancestral Chamber was organized to preserve and affirm the sacredness and legacy of African ancestors.



Richmond's "Slave Trail" Commission chose this graphic of a slave coffle to represent the "Slave Trail."



This is the graphic suggested by the African Ancestors Chamber. The STC has not responded to their suggestion.

'Slave Trail' Commission blows it ... again

By Phil Wilayto

The official web page of the Richmond "Slave Trail" Commission has just one item about Richmond's African Burial Ground: the now-discredited Virginia Department of Historic Resources report claiming that very little of the Burial Ground lay under the parking lot that until the summer of 2010 desecrated this sacred ground.

That's just as well. Not only did the commission not assist in the more-than-10-year

struggle to reclaim that sacred site, it actually obstructed the struggle every step of the way — including by *still* promoting this false report.

But to try and wipe out the very fact that the African Burial Ground was the final resting place for enslaved Africans takes some real chutzpah.

When the STC was preparing its official brochure describing sites along the Trail of Enslaved Africans — which the STC continues to call the "Slave Trail" — this reporter pointed out at an STC meeting that the draft brochure described the Burial Ground as where "many of Richmond's earliest African American citizens" were buried.

The people buried in this cemetery were neither Americans nor citizens. How could they be either if they weren't even considered human beings? They were Africans.

So the STC changed the wording.

And took out the words "African American."

Now the brochure — which was widely distributed during Richmond's April 4 Civil War & Emancipation Day commemoration, states that the Burial Ground holds the remains of "many of Richmond's earliest citizens."

So now the ancestors buried there are not even remembered as being Black.

And this is the body that, by City ordinance, has control over the African Burial Ground.

According to the STC's web page, the commission was established by City Council "... to help preserve the history of slavery in Richmond."

At this task, the STC has blown it ... again.

UPCOMING STC MEETINGS

"Slave Trail" Commission meetings are scheduled for 4-5:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month. However, these meetings are often rescheduled at the last minute, with no public notice. The meetings are (usually) held in the Richmond East District Initiative Government Services Building, 701 N. 25th St. in the city's East End.

This is the spring and summer STC meeting schedule as it appears on the City's website:

Thurs., May 2
Thurs., June 6
Thurs., June 11
 (held on the 2nd Thursday because July 4 is a holiday)
Thurs., Aug. 1
Thurs., Sept. 5

a warrior becomes an ancestor

Dacajeweah (Splitting the Sky)

John Boncore 1952-2013

By John Steinbach

International human rights activist and former political prisoner Dacajeweah (Splitting the Sky) John Boncore, 61, died March 13 on the Adams Lake Indian Reserve near Chase, B.C., Canada.

Dacajeweah was one of the 60-plus inmates indicted on charges stemming from the Attica prison uprising in 1971. As a young man, he became an outspoken organizer for the defendants. He was the only person to ever serve time as a result of the uprising, serving five years before having his sentence commuted and being freed in 1979.

Following his release from prison, Dacajeweah became an important organizer in the American Indian Movement (AIM). Among his major accomplishments were arranging for the testimony of Hopi elders against nuclear weapons at the United Nations in 1982; organizing a mass protest against the forced relocation of more than 10,000 traditional Navajo (Dine) sheepherders in 1986 that brought more than 5,000 to Washington, D.C.; and spearheading the 1992 Columbas Day rally at the U.N., the largest protest in history in support of Native American rights.

Dacajeweah was the primary moving force behind the establishment of the League of Indigenous Sovereign Nations of the Western Hemisphere (LISN). His vision was the establishment of a Pan-American Indian organization comprised of Native American nations from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic Circle, and dedicated to indigenous sovereignty.

The first LISN conference on Piscataway Land in 1990, with dozens of Indian nations represented, was followed by five other conferences in the U.S. and Canada. Fundamental to LISN principles was the idea that nations which have perpetrated genocide against Indian people have no moral or ethical right to determine their destiny, or represent them in the United Nations; Indian people should have their own sovereignty and voting seat at the U.N. According to many activists, LISN was Dacajeweah's single greatest political achievement.

In early 1993, Dacajeweah was invited to a conference in Edmonton, Alberta, to speak about Native American sovereignty where he met his wife, Sandra Bruderer (She Keeps the Door). They moved to Hinton Alberta where Dacajeweah played a central role in the Gustafson Lake sundance standoff.

An experienced sundancer, Dacajeweah was asked to be the 1995 Sundance Chief. The Shuswap Sundance had been held for years at Gustafsen Lake without serious incident, but in 1995 an explosion of violence was impending. The sundance was held under duress, and afterwards a small contingent of dancers and supporters remained on site for security.

A seige by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) ensued involving helicopters and armored personnel carriers. Thousands of rounds of live ammunition were fired. Dacajeweah and James Ignace (Wolverine), with help from attorney Bruce Clark, coordinated the resistance and negotiated the end of the standoff. Following the standoff, native people were indicted and tried on numerous charges. Dacajeweah coordinated the sundancer's defense team and forced their early release from prison.

Dacajeweah continued to speak out against injustice. He became a vocal critic of the official explanation of the 9-11 atrocity, and continued to speak out in support of Native American rights.

Most recently, Dacajeweah had organized resistance in northern B.C. to the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline to bring Alberta tar sands oil to the west coast.

In addition to his legacy as an internationally known human rights activist and political organizer, Dacajeweah enjoyed a career acting in movies and television, including the TV shows DaVinci's City Hall and Men in Trees, and films including The Last Rites of Ransom Pride and Deepwater.

Dacajeweah is survived by his wife, Sandra Bruderer, six children (John, Ora Star, Angela, Dylan, Rainbow Rose & Che Thunder), five grandchildren, his former wife Sandie Henderson-Boncore and an extended family. His son Nicosia preceded him in death.

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INSIDE THE RICHMOND CITY JAIL

Inmate grievances & Sheriff Woody's responses

Editor's Note: The Richmond City Jail is an aging, dilapidated, severely overcrowded facility that Mayor Dwight C. Jones has called unfit for human habitation. A new, \$134 million jail is now under construction. In addition to inmate charges about the current jail's physical conditions, the Defender also has received allegations of mistreatment by guards, as well as administrative procedures that, if true, raise questions of basic justice. We asked Sheriff C.T. Woody to respond to these charges, as well as to provide basic information about the jail itself. Following are his unedited responses.

How many inmates are now housed in the Richmond City Jail?

1,333.

Of these, how many are waiting for trial?

497.

How many have been tried, convicted and sentenced to more than 12 months imprisonment but have not yet been transferred to the state system?

287.

What percentage of inmates would you estimate regularly receive psychotropic drugs for mental or emotional conditions?

According to our Physician, at the present time about 200-230 residents are receiving Psychotropic or emotional medication. Monthly, about 15-20% of the jail's average daily population.

How many inmates are presently enrolled in jail programs, such as Recovery, Belief, GED, etc.?

156. Plus an additional 141 residents are enrolled in some college or computer skills course.

Are inmates charged \$1.00 a day while they are housed in the jail?

Yes, the Code of Virginia permits this.

Are they charged to see a doctor or other medical personnel? If so, how much?

Yes. This is also permitted under the Virginia Administrative Code for all jails and lock-ups. The fees vary from service to service.

What toiletries are provided free to the inmates and which ones do they have to purchase?

Upon entry into the facility all residents receive a care pack which contains basic items designed to last 15-30 days. These included a razor (unless removed for medical or security reasons), toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, deodorant and toilet paper. Some items are continuously provided for free on an as-needed basis, like toilet paper. Other items



Photo courtesy Kromatic Photography

Richmond City Jail, as seen from the Conrad Center on Oliver Hill Way.

like razors are free, but must be exchanged 1-for-1. There is a large listing of items that are permitted to be purchased by the residents through their canteen accounts. These items range from hypo-allergenic soap to deluxe shower shoes. If a resident can't afford to purchase items from canteen, they may be found to be indigent, and an indigent care package is provided to them at no charge. If they need a special item and can't afford it, like reading glasses, they drop a note to the chaplain.

You have said that religious and charitable organizations often donate toiletries to the jail for inmates who cannot purchase them for themselves. Do you feel the present supply of donations is sufficient to meet the need?

Our partnerships with faith-based and charitable organizations do a great job of helping to fill the needs of a large number of the jail's indigent population. We always seem to use everything that is donated, so I don't want to discourage giving. But I definitely want to thank those that give on a weekly basis and make it a part of their ministry to give to the jail. Donations of soap, toothpaste, lotion, shampoo, socks, undergarments, reading glasses, sanitary napkins, magazines, and paperback books to the jail are received throughout the year and shared with indigent residents. Tens of thousands of dollars worth of such items are donated each year, most notably from St. Paul's Baptist Church (Richmond), St. Stephen's Church (Richmond), St. Stephen's Church (Heathsville), Calvary Church (Hanover), Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church (Richmond), The Temple of Judah (Richmond), and Faith Landmark Ministries (Henrico). The entire list of churches and individuals who give supplies to the Jail is too long to list, but we consider all their gifts to be a blessing, and certainly, a savings to the Richmond taxpayer.

We are told that inmates are provided one roll of toilet paper per week. If

they run out, are they given more?

Yes.

We are aware that there is a formal grievance procedure for use by the inmates, but have been told that written grievances are sometimes ignored. Your comment?

I would be surprised and shocked that my employees outright ignore the grievances filed by inmates. We provide the jail residents with an inmate handbook upon their entry into this facility to assist them in their adjustment to jail as well as to inform them of what their rights are. Sometimes, residents do not receive the answers they want and perhaps this may lead to their feelings that their concerns are being ignored. We do our best to address the concerns that the jail residents bring to our attention as quickly as possible to provide some form of closure. In addition, we do have fail safe processes in place such as our Investigative Division which can field resident concerns from the resident or someone from outside of the facility on behalf of the resident.

We have received multiple reports of some deputies routinely verbally and physically abusing inmates, including beating them. Your comment?

There a host of circumstances that may be misinterpreted as abusive behavior versus what is a trained stern voice command which is part of the proper safety protocol and security measures. Let's not forget that the Richmond City Jail is secured facility which houses individuals who the police have charged with a crime and we are required to safely secure them. Deputies are trained via DOC and DCJS approved procedures to ensure the safety of jail residents as well as fellow employees in a potentially volatile circumstance. My expectations are that my deputies treat every single jail resident with dignity and respect while making sure they secure the facil-

ity. With that being said, we have procedures in place whereby my investigative division is responsible for investigating any and all reports of alleged misconduct by my deputies.

Does the jail include so-called "strip cells" that do not have toilets or running water?

This is an old term which was used by my predecessor and is NOT used by me and should not be used by anyone under my command. The proper term is isolation cell. For security purposes, I will not discuss the actual and physical layout of the cell.

What clothing are inmates allowed to wear in these cells? What are these cells used for? How long can an inmate be kept in such a cell?

Our medical personnel would make the determination as to when an individual is well enough to return to general population. This would mean whether the person is no longer considered to be a health or safety risk to himself/herself or any other jail resident.

Will the new jail have air conditioning in the residential tiers and other common areas?

Yes. The Justice Center will be Climate Controlled in all areas, and it has been designed to operate at a high rate of efficiency.

Do you feel the City is on track to reduce the number of people being sent to the jail so that when the new jail opens it will not be overcrowded?

I am excited about the new direction that the City of Richmond is taking towards reducing the jail population through its alternatives to sentencing options. Having served the City of Richmond for over 45 years in law enforcement as both a homicide investigator and now as Sheriff, I have seen the need to secure the most dangerous criminals versus the need to divert some of the most vulnerable members of our community, such as mentally ill folks from a jail. I have chased down Linwood Briley, caught Christopher Goins, and dismantled the Poison Clan gang, the Johnson, Flaxes and Brown gangs. These were all individuals who posed a severe threat to the safety of our community. These are the types of individuals who need to be secured in jail. The homeless person who has no where to go shouldn't be coming to jail. The vulnerable and mentally ill patient should not be at this jail or any other jail for that matter. These individuals would benefit from the City's alternatives to incarceration. So, yes, I truly believe the City is doing everything within its power to change the culture of doing business and I am fairly confident that they will do so when the new Justice Center opens.

Will you be running for re-election in November?

Stay Tuned.



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Photos by Phil Wilayto

Donald Miner, an International Representative with United Food & Commercial Workers Union Local 400, speaks at the panel discussion "Defending & Strengthening Unions in a Time of Anti-Labor Offensives."



'JOBS! PEACE! JUSTICE!'

2013 VPA helps build a united movement

Staff Report

By all accounts, the fifth annual Virginia People's Assembly was the best one yet.

More than 300 people from a wide range of communities and struggles gathered Jan. 5 at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Richmond's East End.

They came for a day of education, networking and movement building.

From union organizers to antiwar activists; fighters for the rights of immigrants, women, the disabled, lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and queer people; activists who have been struggling for decades and newly hardened veterans of the Occupy Wall Street movement, the VPA was a coming together of many different streams of activism, all united in the determination to make the conference theme of "Jobs, Peace, Justice" a reality.

There were eight morning workshops exploring different issues, 11 afternoon panel discussions, three plenary (general) sessions and an evening rally.

During lunch, there was the annual Black

Caucus meeting for people of African descent.

Resolutions that were submitted before the conference or that came out of workshops and panel discussions were presented, debated and voted on in the evening plenary.

All but one passed unanimously. In the interests of unity, a resolution endorsing gun control was tabled after it was clear there were deep divisions on the issue.

The VPA is not an organization, coalition, nonprofit or affiliated with any political party. It is a non-funded, grassroots effort to bring together activists from across the lines of race, sex, gender, age, ability, language, immigrant status and experience.

And it works.

For detailed information about this year's VPA, visit: www.vapeoplesassembly.org and www.vpa2013.blogspot.com.



Defender Ana Edwards, left, and immigrant rights advocate Carolina Velez exchange solidarity messages from their respective communities just before the Black Community Issues panel discussion and the Immigrant Rights workshop.



Lillie "Ms K" Branch-Kennedy of R.I.H.D. and Janet "Queen Nzinga" Taylor of Prisoners & Families for Equal Rights & Justice. The two organizations hosted the morning Criminal Justice Reform workshops at the R.I.H.D. offices. Prison issues are always central to the VPA, reflecting the crisis of mass incarceration as the economy cannot provide enough jobs for everyone, particularly young Black men.



Jameel Abed from Richmond's Palestinian-American community describes daily life for Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Support for Palestinians' right to self-determination has been a point of unity since the first VPA in 2009.



Elizabeth Ferris, Brandon Nastanski and Molly Taylor Vick were some of the many activists who pitched in and made the VPA a success.



The Rev. Rodney Taylor, Pastor of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, welcomes people to the 2013 VPA. At left are Bentley, from the I3ainbridge Collective, and Charles W. Hamilton Jr., of the American Postal Workers Union Local 199.



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NEWS & TALK ON RICHMOND'S



Felicia Dixon of Norfolk makes a plea at the Prisons, Jails & Criminal Justice System panel for support for her brother Jermaine Doss who is serving life-plus-38 years for a crime his family and supporters believe he did not commit. (See story on page 4.)

WOMEN, WAR, & PEACE

September 20-21, 2013

In honor of the Malian and Liberian peoples struggles for peace and sovereignty, Virginia Friends of Mali has partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond Peace Education Center and Richmond Sister Cities Commission to present a conference of student and professional research, documentary and dramatic films that describe conditions affecting and affected by women in times of war, including violence, displacement, livelihood, hunger, health, education, and peacemaking



strategies. Details will be posted at vafriendsofmali.org. Send a message to virginiafriendsofmali@gmail.com to receive updates by email.

vafriendsofmali.org



Volunteers prepared registration forms for each workshop and panel discussion.

In our opinion

Why Shockoe Bottom matters

It would be hard to find another place in the United States where more history is packed into such a small area than Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom.

Extending about eight blocks north from the James River, from Shockoe Hill to the west to Church Hill to the east, this former Indian trading area was where the city of Richmond was born.

Named for the creek that runs through Shockoe Valley, this was where, in 1737, William Byrd II laid out Richmond’s first city blocks and where, in 1782, Richmond’s first government was formed.

Located here are the sites of Richmond’s first Jewish synagogue and cemetery, its first Quaker Meeting House and its oldest existing house. Shockoe has the country’s oldest Masonic Lodge and one of its oldest continuously used farmers’ markets.

But undoubtedly the area’s greatest significance is the fact that, for the three decades preceding the Civil War, it was, after New Orleans, the largest market for enslaved Africans in this country.

This was where many of the 300,000 to 350,000 men, women and children of African descent sent in those years from Virginia to plantations in the Deep South were sold in the many auction houses that once lined 15th Street.

This hugely profitable marketing of generations of human beings — accompanied by the forced separation of families, beatings, floggings, rapes and executions — constitutes one of the greatest horrors the world has ever known, one that should never be forgotten.

At the same time, it is also a story of incredible courage. From Gabriel’s Rebellion to the mass escape on the hijacked slave ship Creole to thousands of individual acts of rebellion, this continuous resistance to injustice is a tribute to the deep resilience of the human spirit.

That story holds the potential for Richmond to become an educational center of international significance, as well as a unique place for racial learning, reconciliation and healing.

Shockoe Bottom is truly Sacred Ground, a place that belongs to all Richmonders, all Virginians and all peoples throughout the world — especially those of West Africa, from where so many African-Americans can trace their ancestry.

Properly reclaimed and memorialized, with a museum, genealogy center, meditative park, visitors center and reconstructed historic buildings, this small area — along with the reclaimed African Burial Ground, as properly displayed Lumpkin’s Jail site and the northern stretch of the Trail of Enslaved Africans - could become one of the most visited Heritage Tourism sites in the country.

Or, we can ignore this rich and vital history and instead use the publicly owned land for more profit-making commercial ventures.

Please reflect and make a commitment to help reclaim Shockoe Bottom’s history for us all.

Baltimore shuns the team Richmond embraces

Indian leaders in Virginia condemn it. The Richmond Free Press has editorialized against it. In January, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray condemned the name as racist, saying that if the team it refers to returned to the district, the name may have to go.

But Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones seems delighted to have the deeply offensive name “Redskins” associated with Richmond.

Richmond is struggling mightily with its past, shedding symbols of the Confederacy, making an honest effort to confront its long and sordid racial history. We didn’t need a setback in this difficult journey.

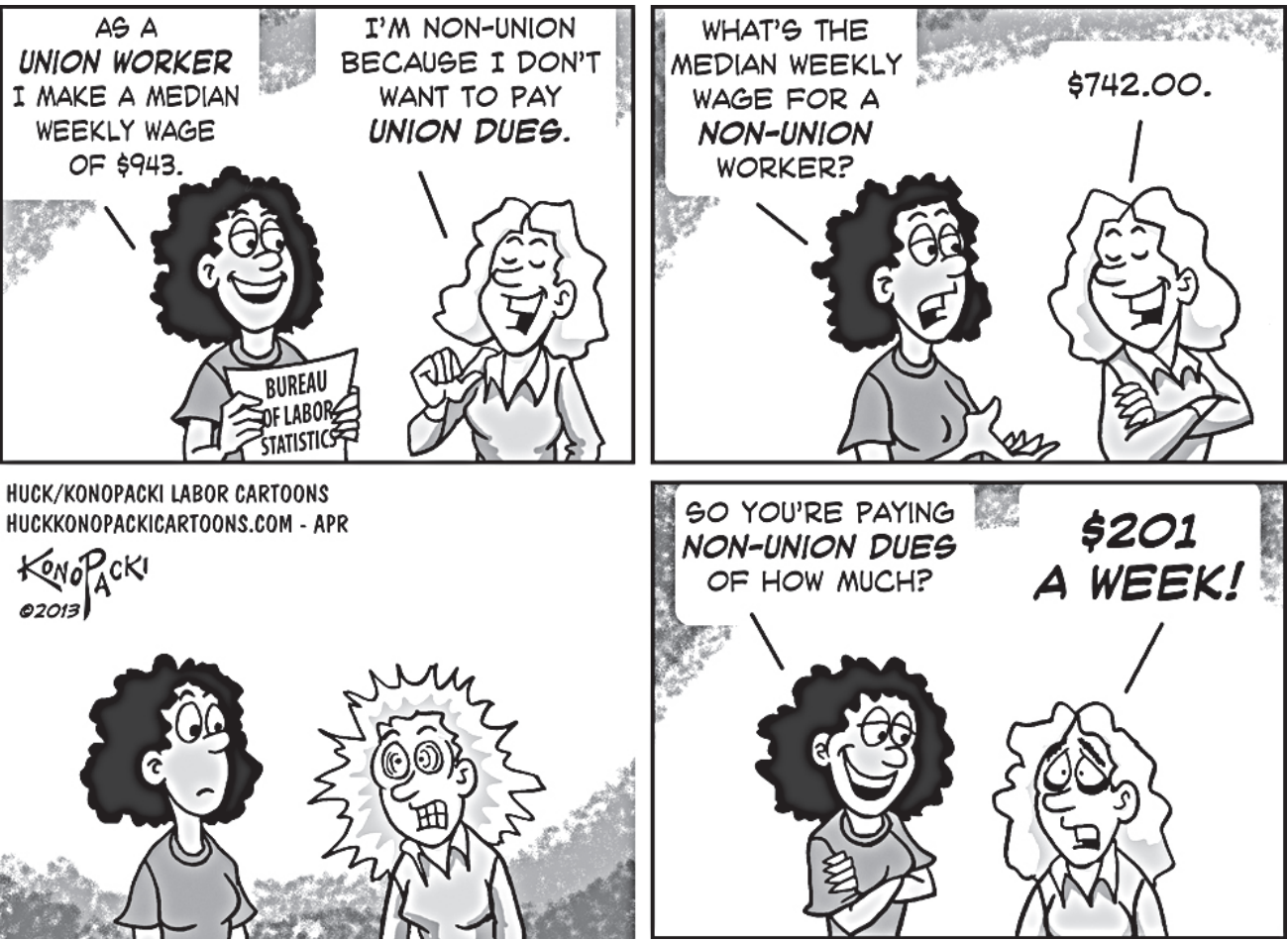
The team with the most racist name in major league sports has now found a home-away-from-home in Richmond.

Shame on us.

Hats off to a hero

When basketball center Jason Collins wrote his first-person story for Sports Illustrated, he became the first male athlete in a major U.S. pro sports team to come out as gay. The reaction was deeply welcome. Collins is Black, and major Black figures in sports, music, film and politics quickly hailed him as a hero: Kobe Bryant, Russell Simmons, Spike Lee, President Barack Obama.

Their public support is as welcome as is Collins’ courage, and is as important an example for the rest of us.



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Letters to the Editor

Liberation for all

“We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people.” – Huey Newton

Liberation movements are revolutionary because in attempting to lift one group out of oppression, they attempt to recognize the systemic inequality that shackles all people. The Queer Liberation movement seeks liberation for all people, not just those who identify as trans, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or intersex. Queer Liberation seeks to provide alternatives to the institution of heterosexual marriage and the gender binary it depends on.

Why? Because queer people recognized that it is time to stop letting the insidious voice of the white middle-class patriarchy continue to exert power over how we live, who we love, if and how we reproduce and how we live and express our genders.

Queer people have been fighting for freedom and justice in the U.S. for decades and have made huge strides for advocating for HIV/AIDS research and treatment, against discrimination in housing and employment, against hate crimes, youth homelessness, bullying, violence and for legal rights such as marriage and health insurance.

Marriage equality is now the most highly visible political struggle of mainstream queer America, mostly due to the fact that it is the primary agenda of privileged queers and their heterosexual allies. While it is important to not underestimate the tremendous importance of marriage equality and to thank those who have worked so hard on this issue, it is not an end goal for Queer Liberation.

The statistics that queer people face speak to this fact: 20.8 percent of the hate crimes reported to the FBI in 2011 were related to sexual-orientation. (1) 22 to 64 percent of transgender people report living in poverty (making less than \$25,000 per year). (2) Over 30 percent of teen suicides are committed by queer youth. (3) These statistics demand attention and the faces behind them demand real action — action that will help all oppressed people.

Vanessa Coleman
RICHMOND

(1) www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2012/december/annual-hate-crimes-report-released/annual-hate-crimes-report-released; (2) www.american-progress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2009/07/01/6430/poverty-in-the-lgbt-community; (3) www.pflagphoenix.org/education/youth_stats.html; (4) www.changelabinfo.com/2013/03/29/guns-and-god-the-right-wing-marriage-and-what-lies-ahead/#.UWkqo2S9Kc0; (5) southernerson-newground.org/2013/03/dawnstocomescotus

New youth group in C-ville

My name is Ammon Winder (13), and I’m one the founders of the Anarcho-Communist Youth Front (ACYF). We are

a youth-based Anarchist group with a goal to educate comrades of our age. Once Cadre is formed we can work for social justice and the foundation of a peoples state. We had an event (on Feb, 2nd) to introduce our group and got a good reaction. The ACYF accepts members between 13 & 18 years old.

facebook.com/anarchocommunist-youthfront
anarchocommunistyouthfront@gmail.com

Thanks.

Ammon Winder
Founder, Anarcho-Communist Youth Front
CHARLOTTESVILLE

Sacred Grounds reflections

How appropriate and fitting it seems on a warm Friday afternoon in Richmond’s sacred district to be writing about the importance, and yes, the honor, of discovering, remembering, preserving and ultimately reclaiming our Sacred Grounds.

It’s quite mesmerizing, peaceful and quiet, reminding me of how fragile and perpetual life is. This makes me reflect upon the thoughts, questions and decisions of our great ancestors as they contemplated the wonders of the universe and the meaning of their life within it all.

Are we any different than those who settled dilemmas and decided to move on out with undaunting courage to explore the unknown or face the challenges of their time and to search for total freedom?

I gaze into the dark, eerie distance and I see Imhotep, the world’s first genius,

deep in thought, calculating the mysteries of life; there are the beautiful, regal Queens Nefertiti, Hapshetsut and Harriet Tubman, along with the courageous and wise Hannibal and freedom fighters Gabriel, Nat Turner and the U.S. Colored Troops of the Civil War. They all come to visit me now, to comfort me and reassure me that my efforts, my striving to do right, though unrecognized, is not in vain.

Still, I marvel at the dizzying heights of their god-like accomplishments as I realize they were only human, flesh and blood, just like me. And this gives me the courage, the strength and the audacity to ask in my frailty: where are we, my people, why do I oft feel alone? Are not you as excited about your greatness, your potential, your unparalleled contribution to humankind as I am? Do not you feel the pain and insult as others, foreigners, steal your legacy and culture and take your precious, sacred artifacts as mere curiosities or worthless frivolities?

Where are you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, filled with hot, Afrikan blood coursing through your veins?

Don’t let others apathetically decide what, when, where and how in regards to our legacy, our heritage, our rituals. Come one, come ALL! Let’s stand up and pull together in force, in strength, in numbers and let our voices be heard, let our unity be seen. EVERYBODY’S VOICE is important. Not one individual but ALL OF US! How proud and strong we look when

Continued on bottom left of next page.

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Blog: www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com

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Reflections on TARP

By Kat McNeal

On Friday, April 12t, 2013, the Virginia Board of Health passed a package of regulations colloquially referred to as TRAP, or Targeted Regulations of Abortion Providers. It’s about what it sounds like: a group of rules intended only for clinics which provide abortions. As is common, the regulations themselves were spurious architectural requirements unrelated to patient care or procedural safety. It was an intentional, successful attack on abortion access in Virginia and it’s going to have widespread and severe side effects, predictably hitting low-income women and families the hardest.

There were three things which I found especially notable in this fight: the fervor and determination of Republican politicians to end abortion for poor women regardless of the consequences, the energy and resiliency of grassroots reproductive justice organizers and the almost complete lack of Democratic Party motion on the subject.

The TRAP regulations themselves were a Republican ploy from the start, The legislation that would eventually result in the new rules was initially proposed by Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli while he was a state representative. As AG, it was Cuccinelli who refused to certify the Board of Health’s amended rules, which would have done less damage, and who threatened to refuse to defend Board members should they be targeted by lawsuits. The actual legality of this threat is contested, but it worked and the Board capitulated.

In response to this aggressive anti-women, anti-poor and anti-working-class-people maneuvering, the Democratic Party of Virginia wrote a letter, but only after the fight had been lost at the Board of Health. The letter underscored the importance of voting Democrat for the governor’s race, to beat out Cuccinelli. At the hearings, no Democrats were anywhere to be seen, but for a single candidate who had just begun her race for state representative.

There were three relevant meetings and



one online public comment period. Grassroots organizers -- not salaried political aides, not budget-backed, long-time players -- dominated the four action opportunities. They got the word out so effectively that they shifted the balance in a crowd that would otherwise have been majority Family Foundation. These local activists, mostly Richmond-based and many very young, were the reason the media bothered to show up at all. They are why there was any concerted public resistance at all, except for the operators of the threatened facilities.

Because of the passage of the unamended regulations, it is expected that 18 of the 22 clinics which provide abortions in Virginia will shut down, due to the high cost of retrofitting. This means that there will only be four remaining locations in the state where women who can’t afford to go to a private practice can receive abortion care, cancer screenings, STI testing, family planning counseling, prenatal care and contraceptive consultation. The consequences will be dire and numerous, and it’s clear to me who cares and who does not.

Kat McNeal is a student and activist in Richmond. She runs Active-RVA, a political and community calendar.

Taxes

Continued from page 1

federal discretionary budget. By contrast, we spend something like 6 percent of the discretionary budget on education, 5 percent on housing and 2 percent on transportation.

The discretionary budget consists of all the programs for which Congress appropriates money and funds through income taxes and borrowing. It excludes Social Security and Medicare, which are funded separately by dedicated taxes that come out of your paycheck. In other words, spending for these programs does not affect the national debt.

As huge as the base Pentagon budget is, it represents just a fraction of the total cost of U.S. military and war-related expenditures. That’s because a lot of other war-related spending gets tucked away into other budget categories.

For example, actual war spending (e.g., for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) is counted separately from the base Pentagon budget. In 2013, war spending alone amounts to \$88 billion, more than the federal government spends on education.

Amazingly, nuclear weapons expenditures aren’t considered military expenses.

we all stand together.

Don’t let them cover up and pave over our painful but contributing history in Shockoe Bottom. A baseball stadium, a sports arena, as if our past was a mundane sport; they may as well cover it up with a smelly dump. No, we can’t let it happen silently. Let’s be heard. Let’s re-erect our legacy in all of its full glory once again. We can do it.

Let not Imhotep weep! Let not Queen Nzinga shed every drop of blood, warriors. I say tell these people who the real Mothers and Fathers are; scold your children when they get out of line.

“Today is OURS! The Sacred Grounds is OURS!” we proclaim!!!

Sincerely,

Brother “OM”
RICHMOND

Needed: Justice for VCU Workers

By Camila Borja & Jamshid Bakhtiari



Camila Borja



Jamshid Bakhtiari

As Virginia Commonwealth University students who have been part of the VCU community for several years, we have dedicated a substantial amount of time to studying various aspects of social justice.

Semester after semester we learned about social issues that seemed to be happening all around the world, yet it seemed that there was rarely any attention paid to actively engaging in a process aimed at successfully addressing these concerns.

It was not until last semester, while taking a course on the local history of Richmond, that it became clear that these global problems manifest themselves every day in the local Richmond community.

Aware of our privileged position in society, a group of curious students began to wonder how our presence in Richmond affected these inequalities and, furthermore, how has VCU, the largest employer in Richmond, affected the poverty, gentrification and lack of community cohesion that was addressed in our coursework?

After contacting a group of students that were dedicated and passionate about social justice, we began to do some research and talk to community members in order to get a better understanding of the dynamics of VCU and its affects on the community.

After talking to professors, service workers, other students, VCU administrative staff and private contracting firms, we began to recognize that there was a clear pattern regarding university policies: VCU is being run like a business.

We learned the harsh consequences of what the “quest for distinction” has brought to students, professors, employers and the Richmond community. Professors are being overworked and underpaid, service workers are kept at part-time to avoid benefits, student tuition keeps going up, VCU expansion and recognition is on the forefront of the schools priorities and private companies are making unethical decisions about the wages and benefits for hundreds of hourly workers with our tuition money.

Additionally, we found that VCU and Aramark (VCU’s largest service contractor) were able to get away with paying so little to cafeteria, janitorial and grounds workers because the women and people of color who occupy these employment positions are left with few to no alternatives in Richmond. This leads to the tragic irony that the children of these workers are not able to afford to attend the school that their parents’ labor created.

sive economic conversion. Virginia’s economy, and its workers and communities, would only benefit from such a shift in priorities.

My child attends a Richmond public elementary school that has been considered for closure because our city cannot afford to maintain the building. But the cost to build a single F-35 fighter jet is on average \$137 million, according to the The New York Times.

The cost of two of these jets is more than this year’s entire Richmond Public Schools operating budget. We are investing needlessly in fighter jets and other weaponry while shortchanging the futures of the 23,000 students in Richmond Public Schools and millions more nationwide. I fear that the biggest existential threat to our country’s fu-

After coming to this stark conclusion, we realized that if we were willing to indebt ourselves for 10 or more years, that we, along with more than 30,000 other students at VCU, should have a say in where our ever-increasing tuition money should go each semester.

We could not stand idly and watch VCU raise tuition, expand our campus, pay a basketball coach more \$1.5 million annually and spend thousands of dollars on “branding,” This is a school, not a corporation. We are not consumers, we are here to learn and play an active role in the surrounding community.

We believe that no worker in this university should have to endure being paid such low wages while a small percentage of this university prospers. We do not think it is right that the service workers with whom we interact every day, who have been working here for more than 10 years, have not received a raise, while students and corporate sponsors continue to pay the university more every year.

We do not believe that it is right that hundreds of Aramark workers have to apply for state unemployment for five months out of the year when school is not in session. No one who works for this school should have to live in poverty, especially while they watch the campus where they work grow and prosper due to their hard labor.

It is time we get together and demand respect for everyone in this community. We have a right to demand answers, to have opinions and to try to change our university into a better place. We need to be conscious about the decisions our university is making and we cannot remain apathetic to the things happening in the Richmond community.

VCU’s contract with Aramark is scheduled to be renewed for the first time in 10 years on June 30. Let’s demand that student money does not perpetuate and exacerbate localized racism, poverty-level wages and undignified working conditions. Instead, let us demand that this money go toward the prosperity of the Richmond community that has created VCU through its labor.

We end with a quote from an anonymous VCU service worker: “I have worked for VCU for the past 10 years, I love this school, I wished they loved me back.”

Camila Borja and Jamshid Bakhtiari are students at VCU and members of the VCU Living Wage Campaign.

ture is our own misplaced priorities.

We have reached a fork in the road. We must make a choice. We can continue to pour most of our resources into war and militarism, or we can choose to build a more equitable and humane future for our children.

We simply cannot afford to sustain military spending at this scale. Period. That is a completely rational, indeed obvious, observation. The only surprising thing is how rarely this idea enters the public discourse.

I hope that changes - because our future as a society depends on our changing course.

Adria Scharf is Director of the Richmond Peace Education Center.

international news

Antiwar activists launch national anti-drone campaign



A coalition of peace and justice groups calling themselves the Network to Stop Drone Surveillance and Warfare carried out national protests against drones in April. The network includes the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), with which the Defenders are affiliated.

A draft Statement of Purpose was adopted at a national meeting held Dec. 15 in New York City. It read in part:

Venezuela: Millions line up to pay last respects to 'el comandante'

In the U.S., we were told that socialist President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela was a repressive dictator. In Venezuela, the rich and formerly powerful thought so too.

But the poor loved him.

Chavez, known to his people as "el comandante," died March 9 after a two-year battle with cancer. Here's what the international news agency Reuters had to say about his funeral:

"Chavez was immensely popular among the poor Millions have filed past his casket to pay their last respects

"Chavez was a hero to millions of mostly poor supporters for using Venezuela's oil wealth to finance heavy social spending, but he was seen as an autocrat by his opponents."

Hated by the rich, loved by the poor.

Must have been doing something right,

Cuba still offering MD scholarships to poor youth - in the U.S.

Are you a young person from a low-income family who dreams of becoming a doctor, but can't afford medical school?

If you could become a doctor, would you be willing to serve other low-income people?

More than 100 young people from poor communities in the United States are now studying to become doctors – for free – in Cuba. They are among more than 10,000 students from 29 countries enrolled in the Latin American Medical School in Havana.

These students receive full scholarships for six years of education, plus board and room – all without charge. The only thing the school asks for in return is a commitment to serve low-income communities.

If you are a low-income person between the ages of 18 and 30 and want to help provide medical care to poor communities, you might want to check out this unique program.

For more information, google "Pastors for Peace," the U.S. organization that selects candidates for the Latin American Medical School.

"Horrified by the facts of the era of drone warfare and surveillance technology, we declare our commitment to establishing an ongoing network of groups and organizations.

"The Network to Stop Drone Surveillance and Warfare seeks to initiate and coordinate events and actions that will raise a united and spirited voice for justice and peace, and to stop weaponized drones and related technology applications. These activities are aimed at highlighting the illegality, immorality, and unconstitutional nature of using drones to spy on and/or kill human beings."

The Network called for the following actions:

April 4 - 6: Drone Manufacturing

Identifying local drone manufacturing facilities and organizing demonstrations, teach-ins and other actions calling for an end to drone attacks and an end to the manufacture of weaponized and surveillance drones.

April 16 - 18: Drone Research/Training

Identifying local colleges and universities doing drone research and/or training of drone pilots and calling for an end to research and training related to drone warfare.

April 27 - 28: Drone Bases

Organizing protests at local drone bases. People also were encouraged to participate in demonstrations planned during this period at the Reaper drone base at Hancock Air Base near Syracuse, N.Y.

In addition to UNAC, other network member organizations include Veterans for Peace, Black Agenda Report, Upstate (NY) Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Voices for Creative Non-Violence, Code Pink, American Friends Service Committee, Occupy Wall Street, Pakistan Solidarity Network, World Can't Wait and the Pakistan Solidarity Network.

For further information, log onto: <http://nodronesnetwork.blogspot.com>.

For information about the United National Antiwar Coalition, visit: UNACPeace.org.

Note: In Virginia, both Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Tech have received grants to conduct drone research.

Please see the ad for VCU SDS below.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Ana Edwards, upper right, addresses the issue of U.S. and French intervention in Mali at an International Women's Day program in Rocky Mount, N.C. Edwards, a co-founder of the Defenders, is President of the nonprofit Virginia Friends of Mali, which has been helping to address water and sanitation issues in the central Malian city of Segou, which has a sister-city relationship with Richmond. Edwards, who was in Segou when the French military arrived in February, will be a speaker on Mali at the annual Left Forum to be held June 7-9 in New York City. The Rocky Mount forum was sponsored by the Women's Commission of Black Workers for Justice.

U.S. to Israel: You have the right to attack Iran - and here are the weapons you'll need to do it

In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly last September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened that Israel may attack Iran by the middle of this summer unless the rest of the world is able to stop Iran from producing a nuclear weapon.

This is a serious threat — particularly since there is not one shred of evidence that Iran is trying to build a nuclear weapon.

In fact, U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate Intelligence Committee March 13 that it would be impossible for Iran to try and build a bomb without being detected.

So when U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel visited Israel in April, you would think he would have read Netanyahu the riot act.

Instead, he publicly hailed the "very special relationship" between the U.S. and Israel and declared that Israel had the right to defend itself "in a very dangerous, combustible

region of the world."

Note: Israel is the only country in the Middle East that actually has nuclear weapons and has carried out conventional bombing raids against Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007.

Iran, for its part, hasn't attacked another country in more than 200 years.

Then Hagel announced the U.S. is selling Israel a new arms package that includes "a new generation of aerial refueling tankers and advanced missiles that home in on radar signals to destroy air-defense sites ... important in any attack on Iran's nuclear facilities."

How will tiny Israel pay for these expensive weapons?

Each year, the U.S. gives Israel \$3.1 billion — the largest amount it gives to any country in the world.

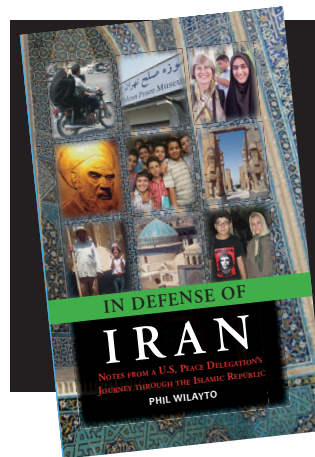
(Quotes are from *The New York Times*, April 21, 2013.)

In the event of
any military attack on

Iran

by the U.S., Israel
or any other country,
the Defenders and the
Richmond Peace
Education Center
are calling for a protest
to take place at 5 p.m.
the following day outside
the Federal Courthouse,
701 E. Broad St.,
downtown Richmond.

"An excellent book on the history of Iran and U.S. relations."
Lt. Col. Ann Wright (Ret.) - Anti-War Activist



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No War Drones at VCU!

Students for a
Democratic Society
vcusds2@gmail.com

Bring home the cost of war.

Host Eyes Wide Open-Virginia in your community.

This powerful display educates about the human and economic cost of the war in Afghanistan. It includes:

- Combat boots tagged with the name, age, hometown, and military rank of Virginians killed in Afghanistan.
- Shoes representing civilian casualties.
- Signs describing the human and economic cost of the Afghanistan war.

Eyes Wide Open is available for free to community groups to host in their communities. An Iraq war display is also available.

Contact rpec@rpec.org with questions or to reserve Eyes Wide Open-Virginia in 2011.



Richmond Peace Education Center

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

May 1 – INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Sat., May 25— **50th ANNIVERSARY OF AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY** – 1-5 pm: Symposium; 6-9 pm: Diplomatic reception. Free, but RSVP required at: a-aprc-gc.org. Festival Center, 1640 Columbia Road NW. Information: All-African People's Revolutionary Party (GC) - www.a-aprp-gc.org - ald@a-aprp-gc.org - (202) 719-0529.

FORT MEADE, MARYLAND

Sat., June 1 – **MASS DEMO AT START OF BRADLEY MANNING'S TRIAL** – June 1 will mark the beginning of Bradley Manning's fourth year in prison and the start of his trial. People from across the country and around the world will converge on Ft. Meade to stand up for the Army whistle-blower who risked everything to give the public real facts about our government's wars in the Middle East and foreign policy worldwide. 1 pm: Gather at Reece Road and US 175, Fort Meade; 2 pm: March/Action; 3 pm: Rally & Speak Out. Sponsored by the Bradley Manning Support Network and Veterans for Peace, with the help of Courage to Resist, and many other groups.

ONGOING - RICHMOND

DEFENDERSLIVE! - Every Monday with host Ana Edwards. Noon-12:30 pm on WRIR, Richmond's community radio station. 97.3 FM or worldwide online at www.wrir.org. (The program is rebroadcast online Tuesdays at 11 am.)

BYRD HOUSE FARMERS MARKET – "The freshest and localest foods." 3 pm-sunset, Tuesdays at the William Byrd Community House, 224 S. Cherry St. Information: (804) 643-2717; ByrdHouseMarket@gmail.com; www.ByrdHouse-Market.blogspot.com; www.WBCH.org

FOOD NOT BOMBS – Sundays at 4 pm. Free vegan meals served in Monroe Park, corner of Main and Belvidere streets. (804) 303-544, a16rva@hotmail.com or www.myspace.com/richmondfnb

FAMILY GAME NIGHT AT THE GAY COMMUNITY CENTER OF RICHMOND - Second Saturday of every month from 6-10 pm. "Come for an hour or come for the whole evening. We have board games, a Wii and a PS2 and Legos and arts and crafts, puzzles for the little ones. Bring your own favorite board game, or your favorite game for the Wii or just play what we have. Game Night is for all ages. We provide a few snacks or bring some

to share. Bring your friends, neighbors, and of course your family, however you define that." 1407 Sherwood Ave. Free. Repeats the second Saturday of every month.

ACTIVISTS EVENTS ONLINE CALENDAR – An online calendar to announce local news and opportunities for local action. Check it out at: <http://active-rva.tumblr.com/calendar>.

RICHMOND EVENTS

Thurs. May 2 - **LUNCH & LEARN: YOGA, A USEFUL TOOL** - Yoga Instructor and Massey Center Research Associate Angela Rathbun will lead a brown bag luncheon on yoga for patients, survivors and caregivers. Noon-1 pm, VCU Massey Cancer Center at Stony Point Patient Research Library, 9000 Stony Point Parkway. Free. Prior registration required. Visit <http://lunchandlearnyoga-eorg.eventbrite.com> or call 804.628.1550.

Thurs., May 9 - **RICHMOND IN THE 2000s: COMMUNITY CONVERSATION 5** - "The Future of Richmond's Past and the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities are holding a community conversation and presentation on Richmond in the 2000s." 6-8 pm, 1015 E. Clay St. Free. Hosted by the Valentine Richmond History Center.

Wed. May 15 - **GALLERY WALK: VIRGINIA BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR** - "The myth of 'Old Virginia' emerged as a result of a society in flux. This tour explores how the growth of industrial cities and improvements in transportation combined with political decline, the continued suffering of slaves, and the emigration of thousands of Virginians to the West to threaten the old order." Noon-1 pm, Virginia Historical Society, 428 North Blvd. \$6/ adults, \$5/ seniors 55+, \$4/ students and children under 18, free for members. Sponsored by the Virginia Historical Society.

Thurs. May 16 - **LECTURE: BUILDING OF SCHOOLS FOR THE SEGREGATED SOUTH** - "Stephanie Deutsch offers a fascinating glimpse into the partnership that would bring thousands of modern schoolhouses to African American communities in the rural South." 12pm--1pm, Virginia Historical Society, 428 North Boulevard, Richmond, Virginia 23220. \$6/ adults, \$5/ seniors 55+, \$4/ students and children under 18. Sponsored by the Virginia Historical Society.

Sat. May 18 - Sun. May 19 - **MALCOLM X DAY BOOK EXPOSITION** - "UBUS and Elegba Folklore Society are combining forces to present the largest Black Literature Expo

of the century. The Exposition will feature a vast, awesome display of Black literature." Live jazz and refreshments on Saturday evening. Open Sat. 10 am-8 pm, Sun. 2-6 pm, Elegba Folklore Society's Cultural Center, 101 E. Broad St. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/163801167117994/>

Mon., May 20 – **ASHLEY WILLIAMS TRIAL** – 9 am, Room 301, John Marshall Courts Building, 400 N. 9th St. (See story on page 4.)

Mon., May 20 - **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING WORKSHOP WITH TAMI SOBER** - Tammy Sober of the Virginia Education Association leads a community organizing workshop. 4:30-6 pm, Unitarian Church of Richmond, 800 Blanton Ave. Free. Hosted by Richmond Teachers for Social Justice.

Mon., May 25 - **RICHMOND MARCH AGAINST MONSANTO** - "A march to protest the policies and activities of Monsanto, agribusiness giant. Monsanto has lead the industry in producing pesticide resistant plants, destructively virulent GMOs, the practice of seed and genetics patenting, and the production of pesticides, including those that have been implicated in the mass deaths of bees." 2-3 pm, City Hall, 900 E. Broad St.

Thurs. May 30 - Sun. June 2 - **38TH ANNUAL GREEK FESTIVAL** - "Come share our legendary food, dancing and music. Tour our sanctuary; listen to beautiful voices of our Cathedral Choir in a concert at 8 pm on Thursday. Browse through the beautiful art, jewelry and amazing finds in the International Bazaar." Thurs., 11 am-9:30 pm; Fri.-Sat., 11 am-10 pm; Sun., Noon-7 pm. Saints Constatine & Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 30 Malvern Ave. Information: 804.358.5996 or www.greekfestival.com.

Sun. June 2 - **6TH ANNUAL BROAD APPE-TIT FOOD FESTIVAL** - Featuring "the best local restaurants our fine city has to offer - and all at \$3 a plate! Bring your appetite and cash and plan on grazing your way down Broad Street." 11 am-6 pm, West Broad Street between Henry and Adams. Free. Hosted by the Downtown Neighborhood Association. To benefit FeedMore. Information: <http://www.broadappetit.com>.

Sun. July 14 - **GALLERY TOUR: PATHS TO FREEDOM** - "Join Museum Educator Sean Kane for a guided tour of our signature exhibit In the Cause of Liberty. This program will highlight artifacts and displays relevant to the African-American experience before, during and after the Civil War." Starting at 1 pm, The American Civil War Center, 500 Tredegar St. \$8/ adults, \$6/ seniors 62+, \$4/ children 6-17, free for children 5 and under. Sponsored by The American

Civil War Center. Information: 804.780.1865.

Fri., June 14 & Sat., June 15 - **JUNETEETH, A FREEDOM CELEBRATION** - Performances, speakers, Freedom Market, children's activities, symposium, Annual Torch Lit Night Walk on the Trail of Enslaved Africans. Sponsored by the Elegba Folklore Society. Information: 804-644-3900 or story1@efsinc.org.

Sat. June 15 - **RICHMOND VEGETARIAN FESTIVAL** - "Richmond's annual celebration of vegetarian food featuring cooking demonstrations, tastings, speakers, crafts and entertainment. Noon-6 pm, Azalea Gardens at Bryan Park, Hermitage Road and Lakeside Avenue. Free. Information: www.veggiefest.org.

Mon., June 17 - **BIKE SAFETY PROGRAM AT BROAD ROCK LIBRARY** - A workshop taught by Amy George. Bring your bicycles and questions. Free. No registration required. 4-5 pm, Broad Rock Library, 4820 Old Warwick Road.

CHARLOTTESVILLE

Sat., May 25 – **C-VILLE ANTI-RACIST PARADE** – "The city of Charlottesville Virginia has a history of the celebration of racism and slavery. From the Statue of Robert E. Lee to the angles holding a confederate flag under "Stonewall" Jackson's stone monument C'ville is overrun by bigoted propaganda. All people fed up with this pro-racist bigotry should come for a march/parade from Mac Intire Park to Lee Park. March Begins at 4pm (at MacIntire) ending at 6 with a rally at Lee Park." Sponsored by the Anarcho Communist Youth Front. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/anarchocommunistyouthfront/events>.

HENRICO COUNTY


Wed. May 29 - **RECOGNIZING AND UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION** - Dr. Catherine Bledowski from VCU Department of Psychiatry discusses the facts about depression and the latest treatment options. 5:30-6:30 pm, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden Education and Library Complex, 1800 Lakeside Ave. Free. Prior registration recommended. For information or to register: 804.828.0123 or seminars@mcvh-vcu.edu.

SUFFOLK

Sat., June 15 - **HAMPTON ROADS JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL** - Bennett's Creek Park. Many activities, including theater arts connecting the past to the present. Sponsored by THE City of Suffolk and WOW Gospel Ministry. Free. Information: Festival Director Marcel Sykes: 757-932-0101.

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