

In the  
Spirit of  
Gabriel, Nan,  
Nat Turner,  
John Brown,  
Mary Bowser,  
Elizabeth  
Van Lew &  
John Mitchell Jr.

# DEFENDER

FREE

Bimonthly Newspaper of The Richmond Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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Still growing! Circulation: 16,000 copies

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## If RRHA succeeds in its plans for Gilpin Court, Where will the people go?

### A Defender Analysis

There used to be a public housing community in downtown Atlanta called Grady Homes. The more than 1,000 people who lived there were poor, but their housing was decent.

Then the Atlanta Housing Authority, an agency of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, decided Grady should be "revitalized." It was time, the AHA said, to break up the "concentrations of poverty" and replace them with "mixed-use, mixed-income" neighborhoods.

The AHA told the Grady residents their homes would be torn down and they would have to move. But, the agency said, new and better housing would be built on the same site, and the former residents would be able to come back. The residents were even invited to come to meetings where they could make suggestions on how the new neighborhood should look. How wide did they want the sidewalks? Where should the flowers go?



Photos by Phil Wilayto

This sign in downtown Atlanta, Ga., advertises "Auburn Pointe - An Urban Mixed-Use Community." Rental units will start at \$1,100 a month. The new development is to be built on the former site of Grady Homes, a HUD public housing community similar to Gilpin Court in Richmond.

### Grady becomes "Auburn Pointe"

Finally, Grady Homes was torn down. The houses are gone and the land has lain vacant for years.

But now there's a big sign on the fenced-in property. It advertises a new development called Auburn Pointe, to be built where Grady Homes used to be.

The cheapest apartments in the new development will rent for \$1,100.

### The Blackwell example

A similar thing happened right here in Richmond, when the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority

"revitalized" the Blackwell public housing community on the city's South Side.

Before the redevelopment, Blackwell had 440 units, with the rent subsidized so very low-income people could afford to live there. Today the new Blackwell has just 75 subsidized units.

Where did the rest of the people go?

### Targeting Gilpin Court

Fast-forward to 2008. Now RRHA has a plan to "revitalize" Gilpin Court, a public housing community of 783 units and 2,109 residents just north of downtown.

Again, residents are being told they will be the ones to benefit from the changes. RRHA is even holding public meetings, just like in Atlanta, to get input from the residents.

The public relations campaign sounds reassuring, but it's time to "follow the money."

### Too valuable for poor folks

Gilpin Court sits just north of Jackson Ward, the historically Black neighborhood that is being gentrified into an upscale, middle-class area. And both Gilpin and Jackson Ward are close to the new Philip Morris research center and the new Virginia Biotechnology Research Park, both of which are looking for downtown housing for their highly paid technicians.

What does this mean?

It means the land that Gilpin sits on has now become very valuable real estate – much too valuable for public housing.

### Gilpin becomes "Jackson Ward North"

A few years ago, RRHA hired a Washington, D.C.-based outfit called the Urban Land Institute to conduct a study of Jackson Ward and Gilpin Court. The Institute's task was to come up with a proposal for how the whole area should be redeveloped.

The study was supported by Philip Morris and the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park.

The Institute people released their report on March 24, 2006. It includes beautiful artists' drawings of a mix of townhouses, common green areas and retail shops – but nothing that looks remotely like low-income housing.

RRHA officials liked the report.

"We are excited about the recommendations of the panel," said Sheila Hill-Christian, who at that time was RRHA's executive director. "Their findings and strategies complement our interest for a vibrant mixed-income, mixed-use community for the Gilpin Court and Jackson Ward neighborhoods."

Except, of course, the community won't be called Gilpin. The new name used by the planners is "Jackson Ward North."

### Closing ranks

Mayor L. Douglas Wilder is on board. "We must address the dire need to create more flourishing neighborhoods across the city by taking steps to deconcentrate poverty and

public housing, which can be replaced with mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods," the mayor says, as quoted on RRHA's Web site.

Wilder has even set up an "Interagency Task Force" to help the process along. "It is critically important that all of the City entities work together effectively to advance the goals of the RRHA strategic plan," Wilder is quoted as saying.

And remember, the mayor's chief administrative officer is now Sheila Hill-Christian, the former RRHA executive director.



### 1-1 Replacement

So what can the residents of Gilpin Court do?

The biggest issue seems to be this: If RRHA tears down Gilpin Court, will the people who live there now be guaranteed a place to live at the same rent they are paying now?

This is called "one-to-one replacement."

In other words, if one low-income apartment is torn down, then another apartment with the same low-income rent must be made available.

And remember, the average household in Gilpin has an annual income of just \$9,128. (RRHA Web site.) With subsidies, that means the court's average monthly rent is \$185.

Besides public housing, there are no other apartments in the Richmond area that rent for \$185. Some residents are being told they can move into other public housing communities, but RRHA's Strategic Plan also targets those communities for "revitalization."

Some residents will be offered vouchers, but there's a problem there, too: the Bush administration has been pushing for fewer housing vouchers.

### Support for 1-1

Faced with this reality, the demand for one-to-one replacement is picking up support.

Marilyn Olds is the treasurer of the Richmond Tenants Organization and also the tenant representative and vice chair of RRHA's Board of Commissioners.

"If there's going to be a change, the Richmond Tenants Organization stands for a one-to-one replacement of existing housing," Olds told the Defender March 7.

Richmond City Council President William

J. Pantele, whose 2nd District includes Gilpin Court, told the Defender earlier this year that he's also for one-to-one replacement. However, he said, he hadn't "heard anything from the city administration about one-for-one replacement at all."

Housing advocates with the Virginia Legal Aid Justice Center also came out in another recent op-ed piece in a recent op-ed piece published in Richmond's daily newspaper.

### Up against HUD

However, as RRHA spokeswoman Valena Dixon told the Defender in an interview for the January/February issue, "... one-to-one replacement is no longer a [HUD] requirement for housing authorities across the nation."

She's right. And as RRHA Executive Director Anthony Scott pointed out in another recent op-ed piece, HUD in 2004 issued mandates requiring that all public housing authorities operate at a profit and "structure their housing developments as stand-alone businesses."

### Housing for people, or profit?

In other words, public housing is no longer to be viewed as a service the government provides to low-income people – it's to be seen as a business, with the goal of making profits.

The issue is important for more people than those who currently live in public housing. Every low-income rental unit that is torn down and not replaced means there's one less affordable home in the city as a whole.

It means less options for everyone, at a time when rapidly rising food and fuel prices and the housing mortgage crisis have even middle-class people worried.

### Decent housing is a right

Affordable housing can't be viewed as a just another way for the government and developers to make money. Every person who works for a living pays taxes. Every poor person who buys a loaf of bread or gallon of milk pays taxes. We have a right to expect something back besides war, police and prisons.

It's time for all of us to come together – public housing tenants, working people, labor unions, community and religious organizations, immigrant rights groups, the anti-war movement – all of us – and demand decent, affordable housing for all.

### PUBLIC HEARING

RRHA will hold a Public Hearing on its proposed 2008 Agency Plan at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 8, at the Calhoun Family Information Center, 426 Calhoun St. in Gilpin Court. The Defenders urge all tenants and supporters of public housing to attend.

"You can't separate peace from freedom, because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom." — Malcolm X, born, May 19, 1925



## THE DEFENDERS for Freedom, Justice & Equality

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The Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality is an organization of Richmond-area residents working for the survival of our community 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 bimonthly newspaper, a weekly radio program and a Web site. Our members meet twice a month to discuss issues and plan actions. We are affiliated with Blacks United for Action, the Virginia Immigrant Peoples Coalition and the Virginia Anti-War Network.

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 community.

### 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 Ana Edwards

**Unity is the Solution!** — Building unity among all oppressed peoples was the theme of the 25th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Support for Labor Banquet, held April 5 in Raleigh, N.C. This year the banquet's featured speaker was Latina activist Cindy Wiesner (pictured above), Political Coordinator for the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. The event was a benefit for Black Workers for Justice, a North Carolina-based organization that has been in the forefront of struggles for worker rights, peace and self-determination for the Black community.



### 'Longest Walk' to pass through Va.

A group of Native Americans inspired by a spiritual cross-county walk in 1978 left San Francisco on Feb. 11 and plan to arrive in Washington, D.C. on July 11.

According to their Mission Statement, their purpose in conducting the 4,400-mile "Longest Walk 2" is to "... walk with the message: All Life is Sacred, Save Mother Earth.

"We shall walk for the Seventh Generation, for our youth, for peace, for justice, for healing of Mother Earth, for the healing of our people suffering from diabetes, heart conditions, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other diseases."

The Walk's Southern Route, scheduled to pass through Virginia, is being organized and led by American Indian Movement co-founder Dennis J. Banks, elders and original 1978 Walkers.

The Longest Walk 2 is open to people of all nations and cultures willing to abide by the Walk's code of conduct.

For more information, visit the Web site [www.longestwalk.org](http://www.longestwalk.org).

### Va. white supremacist gets prison for child porn

Kevin Alfred Strom, founder of a neo-Nazi organization based in Charlottesville, Va., has been sentenced to 23 months in prison after pleading guilty to one count of possession of child pornography. Strom's sentencing took place April 21.

### MOVE 9 women denied parole

Three female members of the Philadelphia-based MOVE organization, imprisoned since 1978, have again been denied parole.

The April 22 decision was announced by a spokesman for the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole.

Leo Dunn said the three women were denied parole because they had minimized or denied the "nature and circumstances" of their offense, "refused to accept responsibility" and lacked remorse. In addition, he said, the prosecutor's office had issued a "negative recommendation."

Debbie Sims Africa, Janet Hollaway Africa and Jeanene Phillips Africa were among nine MOVE members arrested in 1978 after a police attack on their Philadelphia home in which a police officer was fatally shot. The nine were convicted in 1980 after a 19-week trial. Each was sentenced to 30 to 100 years in prison.

Four of the other convicted MOVE members were also eligible for parole consideration in April. An eighth defendant comes up for parole next year. A ninth died in prison.

The case began when police tried to evict 12 adults and 11 children from their communal home in Philadelphia's Powelton Village. Nine MOVE members were found guilty of third-degree murder in the shooting death of Officer James Ramp and the attempted murders of seven other people who were injured in the same incident.

MOVE members and their supporters maintain the Nine fired no shots and that Officer Ramp was accidentally shot by another officer.

Film footage of the aftermath of the arrests show a group of police officers viciously beating a MOVE member as he lay helpless on the ground.

In May 1985, Philadelphia police dropped a bomb on another MOVE home, also during an eviction attempt. Eleven MOVE members, including five children, died when the bomb ignited a fire, which police decided to let burn. [Philadelphia Inquirer, Apr. 22, 2008]

Altogether, 61 houses were destroyed in the predominantly Black West Philadelphia neighborhood.

Ramona Africa, the sole adult survivor of the 1985 police attack, issued a statement following the denial of parole to her three women comrades.

"Many, many people are outraged about the recent parole board decision on my MOVE sisters," Ramona Africa said. "Everybody is asking what they can do now to continue their support of MOVE.

"What people can do is write articles, Op-Ed pieces or letters to the editor in your local newspapers. Make this the national and international issue that is truly is. Don't let it go unnoticed or be swept under the rug. This is the first step toward exposing this conspiracy against my family."

MOVE members follow the teachings of their founder, John Africa, who espoused a radical philosophy of respect for all of nature. The group's adherence to a Natural Law that they maintain stands above conventional law resulted in hostile attention from the Philadelphia Police Department, an organization headed at the time by the notoriously racist Frank Rizzo.



Mumia Abu-Jamal

### Appeals Court denies Mumia a new trial

The long-awaited decision by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in the case of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal has finally been rendered.

On March 27, the court's three-judge panel denied the internationally known prisoner his request for a new trial. It rejected his charge of racism in jury selection in his original trial, as well as appeals dealing with prosecutorial misconduct and pro-prosecution judicial bias.

In the one bright spot in its ruling, the panel upheld a 2001 ruling by Federal Judge William Yohn that overturned the death sentence in the case.

In response to the panel's ruling, more than 1,000 people held a protest demonstration April 19 in Philadelphia.

The immediate result of the decision is that Mumia stays in prison. On the state's side, Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham can still call for a new penalty-phase jury trial in an attempt to get the death sentence reinstated.

On Mumia's side, his attorney, Robert R. Bryan, is appealing the panel's decision to the entire Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Bryan has also stated that, if necessary, he will appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, an author, award-winning journalist and former member of the Black Panther Party, has been on Pennsylvania's death row for 26 years in connection with the shooting death of a Philadelphia police officer.

### New book supports Mumia's claim of innocence

A new book, published on May 1, maintains that Mumia Abu-Jamal is not guilty of killing a white Philadelphia police officer more than 26 years ago.

Instead, the book asserts, Officer Daniel Faulkner died on Dec. 9, 1981, from shots fired by Kenneth Freeman, a business partner of Mumia's brother.

"Abu-Jamal's trial was a monumental miscarriage of justice," J. Patrick O'Connor writes, "representing an extreme case of prosecutorial abuse and judicial bias."

The book, "The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal," published by Chicago Review Press, received a favorable review May 2 in The New York Times.

To read the full review, log onto: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/us/02philadelphia.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/us/02philadelphia.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

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community news

NEWS U CAN USE

Alternatives to REACH

REACH has closed.

**Richmonders Enhancing Access to Community Healthcare** was the only organization coordinating health care for the Richmond region's uninsured and underinsured.

The **Richmond City Health District** will continue to produce and distribute several of the resource directories REACH had been compiling, including the one-page "Low Cost Healthcare Resources in Greater Richmond." That publication and others are still available on the REACH Web site ( www.reachva.org ), which will continue operating until July 2009.

Those in need of low-cost health care can also obtain information from **211 (United Way's Information and Referral Center)**.

To find low-cost health resources in other parts of Virginia, please visit the Web sites for the **Virginia Association of Free Clinics** ( www.vafreeclinics.org ) or the **Virginia Community Healthcare Association** ( www.vacommunityhealth.org ).

Black literary festival a success

By Queen Zakia Shabazz

Brother Kevin Sabio is on cloud nine after successfully hosting a first-time event in the city of Richmond.

The Black CapaCity Literary Arts Festival, held April 19 at Nubian Village Academy, drew nine vendors and between 150 and 200 attendees. The event was sponsored by the Prosser-Truth Division #456 of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL), the organization founded by the Honorable Marcus Garvey.

Brother Senghor Baye-El, the festival's featured speaker, presented in the Garveyite spirit, sharing valuable information about learning African history and the importance of supporting Africans in the marketplace whenever possible.

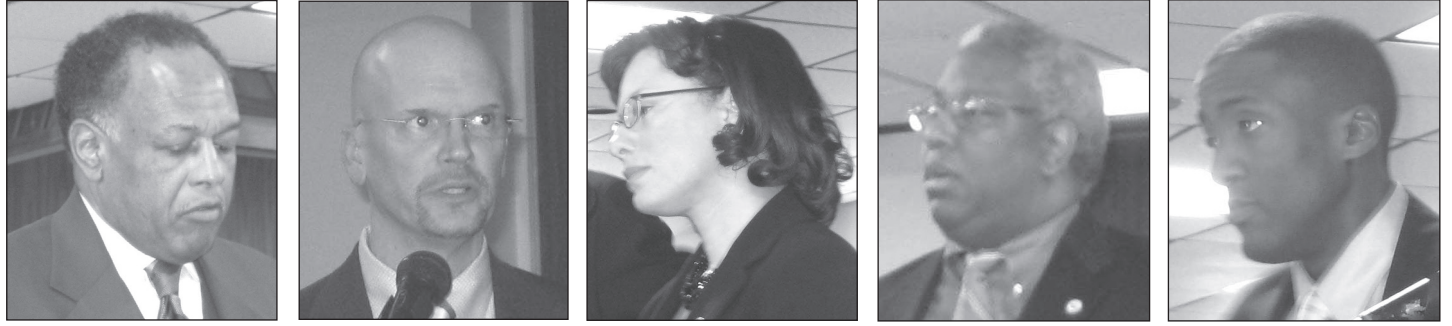
Queen Nzinga, the UNIA-ACL division's Lady President, agreed that the festival was a success, saying that a wealth of information was provided to all who attended.

Brother Sabio says he was prompted to organize the festival by Richmond's lack of Black-owned bookstores and the scarcity of Black-owned community media. He said he set out to accomplish three goals:

1. feature African-American authors, publishers and illustrators and their works;
2. connect aspiring writers with published authors and others in the literary field;
3. provide a networking opportunity for local authors and African vendors.

Judging from the positive feedback offered by the vendors and attendees, all three goals were evidently achieved.

Brother Sabio says he is looking forward to hosting the event again next year.



Photos by Phil Wilayto

The monthly meetings of the Richmond Crusade for Voters are must stops for Richmond-area politicians. Above, from left, some recent attendees: Delagete Dwight C. Jones, 70th District; Richmond Councilman Chris A. Hilbert, 3rd District; Delegate Jennifer McClennan, 71st District; and state Sen. Donald McEachin, 9th District. At right is Crusade President Antione Green.

Richmond Crusade for Voters' influence growing

The Richmond Crusade for Voters was started in 1956 to increase effective Black participation in Richmond's political process. Today its monthly meetings regularly draw an array of elected officials and hopefuls, who present their views on the issues of the day and also are available to answer questions. The following interview with Crusade President Antione Green was conducted by Defender Editor Phil Wilayto.

What is the Crusade's mission today?

It's the same [as when it was started], to the extent that it's our mission to facilitate greater voter empowerment — voter registration, voter education and voter mobilization.

Is the Crusade growing in membership?

Yes, under my leadership and under the watch of this administration, particularly among those under 30. At the time I was elected

president, there were about 200 members. Now it's 340.

Is it growing in influence?

I would definitely say its political influence is growing, to the extent that elected officials are beginning to take notice again of our actions and positions on various public issues.

When will the Crusade be endorsing candidates for the November elections?

Probably as early as September. The process is that a candidate interviews with the research committee and the research committee makes recommendations to the full body and it's up to the full body to accept or reject the recommendations.

Who can become a Crusade member?

Anyone in the city, and we also have mem-

bers who live in Henrico and Chesterfield counties.

What is its political composition?

It's heavily Democrat, with a handful of Republicans, and we have one member of the Green Party and one member of the Socialist Party. I definitely want to extend the opportunity for readers of the Defender to become members of the Crusade. We are the only organization that provides a monthly forum to voters of Richmond to come in and engage, ask questions and state their concerns to elected officials.

The Richmond Crusade for Voters meets on the third Tuesday of every month at the Military Retirees Club, 2220 Sledd St. Membership dues are \$10 a year. For more information, contact Crusade President Antione Green at (804) 908-7400.

Supercans, super fines  
New refuse ordinance could cost you plenty

By Phil Wilayto

The notice that came with a reporter's last utility bill sounded pretty cheery: "[Richmond] City Council recently passed an ordinance that will keep our City's neighborhoods both clean and safe."

Clean and safe — sounds good. Must be something about global warming.

But no, the notice stated that Supercans — those big, green, plastic trash cans you get from the city — must be placed at the curb no earlier than 4 p.m. the day before collection and must be removed from the public right-of-way by 7 a.m. the day after.

Otherwise, the notice stated, you can get fined up to \$50 per day, per trash can.

OK, so far it's just one more example of the government picking up a little extra revenue under the guise of helping out the public.

But then came the kicker: the fee "will be assessed on your next utility bill."

Wait a minute — what if you can't pay the fee? \$50 a can, times two cans, times, say, two days, adds up to \$200. Does that mean you could lose your gas and water?

Yes, it does, according to a woman who answered a reporter's call to the Utility Department. And her supervisor agreed.

The next call went to Bruce W. Tyler, the 1st District Councilman who introduced the ordinance. Did the councilman know the fine could result in someone losing their water and gas? No, he said, he did not.

"I don't know why we're talking about

utilities," Tyler said. "The Supercans and gas and water are two different things."

He promised to look into the matter and asked the reporter to call back in a few days.

The reporter spoke again with Councilman Tyler on May 6.

"My own position," he said, "is that the responsible party for the trash can should be the one paying the fine. I don't believe the water should be cut off. That was not the intent of the ordinance, the intent was to get the trash cans and Supercans out of the right-of-way and the quality-of-life issues.

"The fact that they chose to put it in the utility bills was a billing question, so again that was the way the mayor chose to handle that. Again, that is not my position."

Well, it was in the ordinance.

Ordinance No. 2007-230-275, introduced July 23, 2007, by Councilman Tyler, states that a utility customer who violates the ordinance will get a warning to move the Supercan. If the can isn't "timely removed," they get the fine. "Such civil penalty shall be included on the account holder's monthly utility statement and shall be subject to collection in the same manner as other utility charges including delinquent charges for utilities."

In fairness to Councilman Tyler, the ordinance itself was probably drawn up by the city attorney's office.

In fairness to the public, Councilman Tyler might have read the final version before submitting it to Council.

The ordinance passed 8 to 0 on Nov. 26,

and went into effect 90 days later.

Enter the mayor.

On March 10, Mayor L. Douglas Wilder sent Council a letter requesting a repeal of the section of the ordinance that calls for the \$50 fine per can per day. And no, this isn't a weird example of the mayor suddenly getting soft on poor people. Turns out, according to the mayor's letter, the "assessment of the civil penalty amounts to an unlawful exercise of the City's taxing authority."

Wilder's request was originally to be voted on at Council's April meeting, but a decision was postponed until the next scheduled meeting, on Tuesday, May 27.

Meanwhile, watch your Supercans, or you could be hauling water.

Patrick Henry Initiative

Word is that a decision on whether to grant a charter to the Patrick Henry Initiative will be made at the May 19 meeting of the Richmond School Board.

Here's a few questions that board members may want to ask:

Will the proposed charter school be open to all Richmond children, including the disabled?

Will the school's requirement of "parental involvement" and a staggered, year-round school schedule be an obstacle to working parents?

And what will be the involvement of the Lexington Institute, the neocon Virginia think tank that has been advising the project?

AlterNatives reopens

When a fire last December devastated the building that houses the AlterNatives fair trade store in Richmond's Carytown neighborhood, prospects for renewal looked bleak.


But as Guadalupe Ramirez, one of the store owners, put it, "In Mayan culture we believe that fire is a part of creation. The ancients have taught us that you need it to grow."

Maybe the words of the ancients were heard. In response to an appeal for help, churches and individuals donated \$20,000 to the recovery effort, allowing the store to reopen in April.

AlterNatives' sister nonprofit organization, the Highland Support Project, organizes delegations to Guatemala that visit Mayan communities that are organizing an alternative to the corporate business model, focusing on environmental sustainability and fair trade.

AlterNatives is located at 3320 West Cary St.

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## cops, courts &amp; prisons



Photo courtesy Richmond City Jail

**State Sen. Henry L. Marsh III, left, speaks to a group of inmates at the Richmond City Jail during a tour led by Sheriff C.T. Woody Jr., second from left.**

## Sen. Marsh tours Richmond Jail

By Phil Wilayto

The Richmond City Jail is still overcrowded and in need of serious repair or replacement, but under the administration of Sheriff C.T. Woody Jr. there have been

some important changes, including a new openness to public scrutiny.

Case in point: on April 29, Sheriff Woody led state Sen. Henry L. Marsh III on a tour of the facility, visiting male and female housing areas, the mental health unit and the education tier.

In a press release issued after the tour, Woody praised the senator as an important partner in his efforts to improve conditions in the aging facility.

In the same release, Sen. Marsh expressed his commitment to supporting rehabilitation over warehousing.

Sen. Marsh, a 16-year veteran of the Senate whose 16th District includes Richmond, chairs the senate's Courts of Justice committee.

## our working lives

## West Coast dock workers shut down ports to protest war & attacks on immigrants

For the first time in decades, a U.S. labor union has carried out a political strike.

On May 1 — celebrated around the world as International Workers Day — ports up and down the West Coast were shut down as thousands of union longshore workers conducted a one-day, one-shift protest against the war in Iraq and in solidarity with immigrant workers.

Cranes, forklifts and other machinery were idled and ships were forced to wait at sea while the workers held anti-war rallies.

"We're loyal to America, and we won't stand by while our country, our troops and our economy are being destroyed by a war that's bankrupting us to the tune of \$3 trillion," said Bob McEllrath, president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. "It's time to stand up, and we're doing our part today."

The strike was not just a symbolic action. According to its contract, the ILWU is entitled to schedule a "stop-work meeting" each month to discuss union business. These "meetings" are sometimes used to make a point to employers. The union must give advance notice, but the employers, represented by the Pacific Maritime Association,

routinely grant permission.

However, those meetings are normally held during the slower evening shift. For the May Day protest, the union wanted to stop work during the eight-hour day shift, when most cargo is handled.

The PMA refused permission, but the union held the work stoppage anyway.

"This is genuine defiance," said PMA spokesman Steve Getzug, whose position was that the strike was a violation of the union's contract, which is up for renewal this summer.

In addition to protesting the war, the strike was held to show support for May Day marches and rallies being held around the country to demand rights for immigrant workers. News stories by the major news media, such as The New York Times, conveniently omitted this fact.

Longshore workers who are veterans of the Vietnam War were reportedly the strongest supporters of the resolution, which was introduced by Local 10 of San Francisco.

[Information from the San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Times and the ILWU.]

## Seminar explores ex-offender voting rights

By Queen Zakia Shabazz

How long should someone have to keep paying for a crime?

That was one of the questions discussed during a day-long seminar on the restoration of voting rights for ex-offenders. The seminar, held April 22 at Richmond's Omni Hotel, was hosted by Third St. Bethel A.M.E. Church.

"How can we have the promise of democracy when so many are excluded?" asked Richmond City Council President William J. Pantele, who described the restoration of voting rights as the most important civil rights issue of this century.

In 2001, Virginia had 378,000 disenfranchised voters, of whom 20 to 25 percent were African-Americans, according to figures presented at the seminar. These Virginians had lost their voting rights after being convicted of felonies. Also lost were their rights to serve on a grand jury, become a notary public or run for public office.

Pastor and mayoral candidate Dwight C. Jones of the Virginia House of Delegates and the Legislative Black Caucus said that for the past 15 years the caucus has offered legislation to restore voting rights to ex-offenders.

Jones said there are 10,000 disenfranchised citizens in Richmond who should not have to "beg and grovel" for the right to vote. Instead, he said, this right should be automatic the day after release from prison. Jones noted that if this were the case, election outcomes would be significantly different.

Third District Virginia Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott charged that the United States is on an "incarceration binge." He stated that work must be done on the local level, "unless and until the Constitution is amended."

Another seminar panelist was Deputy

Secretary of the Commonwealth Bernard Henderson, representing Gov. Timothy M. Kaine. Henderson reported that the governor had so far restored the rights of 1,340 ex-offenders. He made available a one-page voting rights restoration application form and announced a deadline of Aug. 1 for applications to be approved in time for the November 2008 election. He said Gov. Kaine has approved additional funds to hire staff needed to process the applications.

Melvin Law, president of the Richmond Branch NAACP, connected the problem to a deliberate reduction in registered voters, saying a "mean and evil spirit seeks to control others for an entire lifetime."

Gwen C. Hedgepeth, a former Richmond City Council member and now author and voting rights activist, was one of two ex-offenders on the panel. With a fiery and impassioned delivery she called individuals to be watchful, saying the issue being discussed is "much bigger than voting rights."

Ex-offender Hasan Zarif said he entered prison in 1973 with a 6th grade education and exited in 1990 with a college education, rising to the level of provisional chaplain at the James River Correctional Center and James River Work Center. Still, it took him until 2007 before he had his rights restored.

Rounding out the panel were Bishop Adam J. Richardson; Antione Green, president of the Richmond Crusade for Voters; and Sasha Davenport, president and CEO of Road to Redemption, an organization that works with female ex-offenders.

The voting rights symposium was organized by Rita H. Willis of the Virginia Annual Conference and co-sponsored by the Second Episcopal District and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

## Restoring voter rights in Hampton Roads

By Tom Palumbo

Individuals from groups such as the Virginia Beach NAACP, Veterans for Peace and Hampton Roads Peace and Justice Coalition are laying out a strategy to register 10,000 new or disenfranchised voters for the November presidential election.

Work has begun with assistance from the Legal Guild and the American Civil Liberties Union to apply for restoration of voting rights

for ex-offenders. Virginia is one of three states in the country in which convicted felons, despite completion of sentences, must seek relief from the governor's office to have their voting rights restored.

Groups interested in supporting the efforts in the Hampton Roads region should contact James Bailey Sr. at (757) 490-7799 or e-mail 10000Voters@gmail.com. A Web site will soon be set up with more information on the project.

## Police complete, but do not release, fatal shooting review

By Phil Wilayto

The Richmond Police Department has completed its internal review of the city's latest fatal police-related shooting. However, details of the review of the Feb. 1 shooting of Richmonder Darnell Elliott are not being released to the public.

"We have completed the investigation, he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. That is the statement and that's all we have to say," police spokeswoman Wendy Jenkins told the Defender May 2.

In response to a follow-up question, Jenkins said that a gun recovered at the scene was a different type of weapon than those used by Richmond police officers.

Elliott, 45, died during a raid by narcotics officers at his home in the 2200 block of Wright Avenue in the city's South Side. According to a police statement released shortly after the incident, the officers had a search warrant, knocked on the door and announced their intention to enter. Receiving no response, they entered the house, without the use of force.

According to the statement, the officers then heard a gunshot and saw a person fall to the floor, a gun beside him. The officers recovered a pistol and quantities of heroin and cocaine, according to police.

An autopsy conducted the same day by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Virginia determined that the cause of death was "a gunshot wound to the head, and the manner was suicide," according to Central District Administrator Arkuie Williams, who spoke with the Defender March 5.

The police statement issued after the shooting stated the incident was to be investigated by the department's Police Force Investigation Team, which includes the Homicide and Internal Affairs units. Such an investigation is now standard procedure for a police-related shooting.

Note: At its April 6 statewide meeting, members of the Virginia Anti-War Network (VAWN) unanimously passed a resolution supporting the longshore workers strike. Further, they urged all VAWN's members and affiliates to follow the ILWU's example by taking off from work or school on May Day and joining the regional march and rally for immigrant rights in D.C.



Photo by Phil Wilayto

**Members and supporters of Jobs with Justice outside the city's main post office at Brook Road and School Street.**

## 'All workers deserve a living wage!'

The Richmond chapter of the labor/community organization Jobs with Justice marked Tax Day with a vigil outside the city's main post office. Their signs declared that "All workers deserve a living wage!"

The site was chosen because the large number of people who file their tax returns there on April 15 makes it a well-trafficked area.

After a vigorous campaign by groups such as the Richmond Coalition for a Living Wage, the city government now guarantees a living wage to its full-time employees.

However, it has yet to extend that benefit to workers hired by companies contracted by the city. As a result, contract workers are making up an increasing percentage of city workers.

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'there are no borders in the workers' struggle'



Photo by Phil Wilayto

Cultural workers present songs of hope and struggle to participants at an immigrants rights rally in Malcolm X Park in Washington, D.C.

## D.C. regional May Day protest demands 'hands off immigrants'

Close to 1,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C., on May 1 to march and rally for immigration reform and an end to arrests and deportations of undocumented workers.

The coalition of organizations also demanded that Prince William County, in Northern Virginia, rescind its recently enacted resolution directed against the undocumented, a measure widely considered one of the harshest in the country. A third demand was for immigrant worker centers to be established in D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

Dubbed "May Day 2008: Mobilizing for Immigrant Rights," the D.C. protest was one of many held around the country and followed a series of raids on immigrant workers throughout the region, including Harrisonburg and Amelia and Prince William counties in Virginia.

After rallying in Malcolm X Park in Columbia Heights, the protesters marched north on 16th Street through the largely Latino Mount Pleasant neighborhood. All along the route, residents stood on their front porches or leaned out of their windows, waving and yelling greetings to the marchers, most of whom were also Latino, along with smaller numbers from Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Among those who spoke at the rally were Sue Frankle-Streit and Jeff Winder, two white activists from the Virginia group People United. The two had just returned from crossing the U.S.-Mexico border into the United States, without documentation, to dramatize the hardships experienced by immigrants from south of the border.

Earlier in the day, protesters delivered letters to the Republican and Democratic national committees, asking the presidential candidates to enact immigration reform.

Just before the May Day protests, it was reported that Prince William County had amended its resolution to instruct its police officers to only ask about a person's immigration status if the person were arrested, not just detained. The county's police chief, who had spoken out against the resolution when it was first proposed, had demanded that all police cars in the county be equipped with video cameras as a way of countering possible false charges of police brutality while enforcing the ordinance. The county's Board of Supervisors balked at appropriating the \$3 million required to equip the cars, opting instead to amend the controversial resolution.

The D.C. mobilization was sponsored by the May 1st 2008 Coalition, which included Mexicanos Sin Fronteras, People United and the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality, all of which are affiliates of the both the Virginia Immigrant Peoples Coalition (VIPC) and the Virginia Anti-War Network (VAWN). Security for the march and rally was coordinated by the Defenders.

from the anti-war front

## 'Stop the War at Home & Abroad!'

Drawing the connections between struggles here at home and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan was the focus of a public forum held in Richmond March 19, the 5th anniversary of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Among other issues, participants pointed out how the half-billion dollars now being spent every day on the war in Iraq alone is affecting issues such as health care, public workers, public housing, services for prisoners and immigrant rights.

The forum, held at Asbury United Methodist Church, was particularly notable in that all the panelists as well as the moderator were women of color.

The forum was sponsored by Richmond-area members of the Virginia Anti-War Net-



Photo by Garrie Rouse

work (VAWN). Earlier that evening, more than 100 people attended a vigil outside Richmond City Hall co-sponsored by VAWN and the Richmond Peace Education Center.

Top row, from left: Queen Zakia Rafiq Shabazz (forum moderator), founder and director, United Parents Against Lead National, Inc.; Simin Royanian, co-founder, Women for Peace & Justice in Iran; Joanne Davis, Petersburg city worker and organizer, Petersburg City Employees Association - UE Local 160; Dieyah Raheed, community organizer, Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. Bottom row, from left: Lillie Branch-Kennedy, founder and director, Resource Information Help for the Disadvantaged (R.I.H.D.); and Teresita Jacinto, Mexicanos Sin Fronteras.



Photos by Phil Wilayto

'Drop Beats, not Bombs!' — Richmond student activists offer an alternative to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: "Drop beats (as in musical), not bombs!" After a brief rally April 18 in Monroe Park, the 40 or so young people marched and danced without a permit through surrounding streets, briefly blocking traffic at Laurel and West Franklin streets, and then again at Belvedere and West Franklin. The action was organized by the Richmond Chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

### PUBLIC FORUMS

**ROANOKE — "ON THE HOME FRONT: The wars in Iraq & Afghanistan; impact on military families, veterans & communities"** — Sat., May 17 — Panelists: Dr. David Cooley, staff psychologist, VA Medical Center; David Frackleton Jr., executive director, Military Family Support Network; Yuji Hairston, Iraq veteran and Ferrum College student. Each panelist will speak briefly to the issue of the impact of current U.S. wars on families at home and on returning veterans, followed by audience discussion. Free. Co-sponsored by: Unitarian-Universalist Church of Roanoke Social Action Committee and Plowshare Peace & Justice Center of Roanoke. 7-9 p.m., Unitarian-Universalist Church of Roanoke. Information: George Loveland (540) 365-4427.

**RICHMOND — "IRAN: Stopping the next war before it starts"** — Thurs., July 3 — The 20th anniversary of the day the USS Vincennes shot down an Iranian civilian airbus in the Persian Gulf, killing nearly 300 men, women and children. We will rededicate ourselves to working to prevent any U.S. military attack or sanctions against Iran. **Presentation** - A group-reading of a letter written to Capt. Will Rogers of the USS Vincennes by Capt. Habib Ahmadzadeh of

the Iranian Navy on the 10th anniversary of the Iran airbus disaster. Members of the People's Peace Delegation to Iran met Capt. Ahmadzadeh during our

### 'No War Against Iran!'

Three VAWN members brought this message to a national conference of **Historians Against the War**, held April 11-13 in Atlanta. Speaking at a panel titled "Iran and the U.S.: The Current Crisis and the Emerging World Order" were **Rostam Pourzal**, U.S. president of the Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran; **Simin Royanian**, co-founder of Women for Peace & Justice in Iran; and **Phil Wilayto**, editor of The Richmond Defender and organizer of the 2007 People's Peace Delegation to Iran.

journey to Iran. He asked us to share his letter with the people of the United States, in the hope that it would lead to a world in peace, not war. **Video: 'BAM 6.6'** — In 2003, a devastating earthquake with a magnitude of 6.6 leveled the southern Iranian city of Bam, killing more than 30,000 people. "Bam 6.6" explores the aftermath of this disaster through the story of two California tourists, one of whom is Jewish. The film strips away cultural and religious differences to provide a glimpse of the deep humanity of the Iranian people. Introduced by Rostam Pourzal, U.S. President, CASMII. 7 p.m., Asbury United Methodist Church, 324 N. 29th St. Presented by the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. Information: (804) 644-5834; DefendersFJE@hotmail.org.

**STAUNTON — "EYEWITNESS IRAN"** — Thurs., May 29 — A slide show and talk by Phil Wilayto, Editor of The Richmond Defender and organizer of the 2007 People's Peace Delegation to Iran. Sponsored by the Augusta Coalition for Peace & Justice. Free. 7 p.m., Staunton Public Library Public Meeting Room, 1 Churchville Ave., Staunton, VA 24401. Information: (540) 294-1932 or union4you@gmail.com.

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An interview with **RICARDO JUAREZ**  
Coordinator, Mexicanos Sin Fronteras  
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## In our opinion

### Police oversight, or lack thereof

In this issue we report on the results of an internal investigation by the Richmond Police Department into a fatal police-related shooting. ("Police complete, but do not release, fatal shooting review," page 4.)

Darnell Elliott, 45, died Feb. 1 of a gunshot wound during a police raid at his South Side home.

The Police Department immediately declared Mr. Elliott's death to be a suicide.

A few days later, the Defender received a call from a woman who said she had talked with a relative of Mr. Elliott. She said the relative had told her he had witnessed the shooting and had said that Mr. Elliott died from a gunshot wound to the back of his head.

So we called the state Medical Examiner's office. We were told that an autopsy completed the day of the shooting had determined that the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head, the result of a suicide.

However, no further details, such as the point of bullet entry, were being released, we were told.

On March 7 we were told by a Police Department spokesperson that an internal review had not yet been completed, but that at any rate, details would not be released to the public.

Meanwhile, we were able to speak with Mr. Elliott's relative. He stated that he had in fact not seen the body and didn't know where the gunshot wound was. He just felt strongly that his relative would not have killed himself.

At this point we have no reason to think that Mr. Elliott's death was the result of anything other than a self-inflicted gunshot wound, just as the police reported.

However, we have no idea what is in the police report, which we were told on May 2 had been completed.

"We have completed the investigation, he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. That is the statement and that's all we have to say," a police spokeswoman told the Defender.

Now, here's the problem:

Between June 2001 and February 2008, there were at least 21 police-related shootings in Richmond.

Of these, 15 were fatal.

Of the 15, four were described by the police as self-inflicted.

Five of the fatal police-related shootings occurred since February 2005, when Chief Rodney Monroe took over the department: Yobani Sosa, on April 9, 2005; Billy Thigpen III, on Jan. 29, 2006; Tony James Wood, on May 5, 2006; Wesley Wright, on May 24, 2006; and now Darnell Elliott, on Feb. 1.

Of these five shootings, two have been described by police as self-inflicted: those of Mr. Wright and Mr. Elliott.

By all accounts, Chief Monroe has been able to establish a strong rapport with communities suffering from a high rate of crime and violence. That rapport has reportedly resulted in a greatly increased flow of information from the community to the department, resulting in a higher rate of arrests and convictions, particularly in homicide cases.

It seems illogical that this new thaw in previously tense police-community relations would be happening if the chief hadn't taken steps to curb what had previously looked like a department with more than its share of out-of-control thugs.

But each new shooting, whether by police officers or by someone who is said to have shot himself while near or in the custody of police officers, raises questions.

And it should.

And now Chief Monroe has indicated that he may not, in fact, be as committed to staying in Richmond as he previously indicated. It's possible he may accept a lucrative job offer from a place like, oh, Charlotte, N.C., whose officials have been aggressively wooing him.

At any rate, someday Chief Monroe will leave or retire, and there will be a new chief in charge.

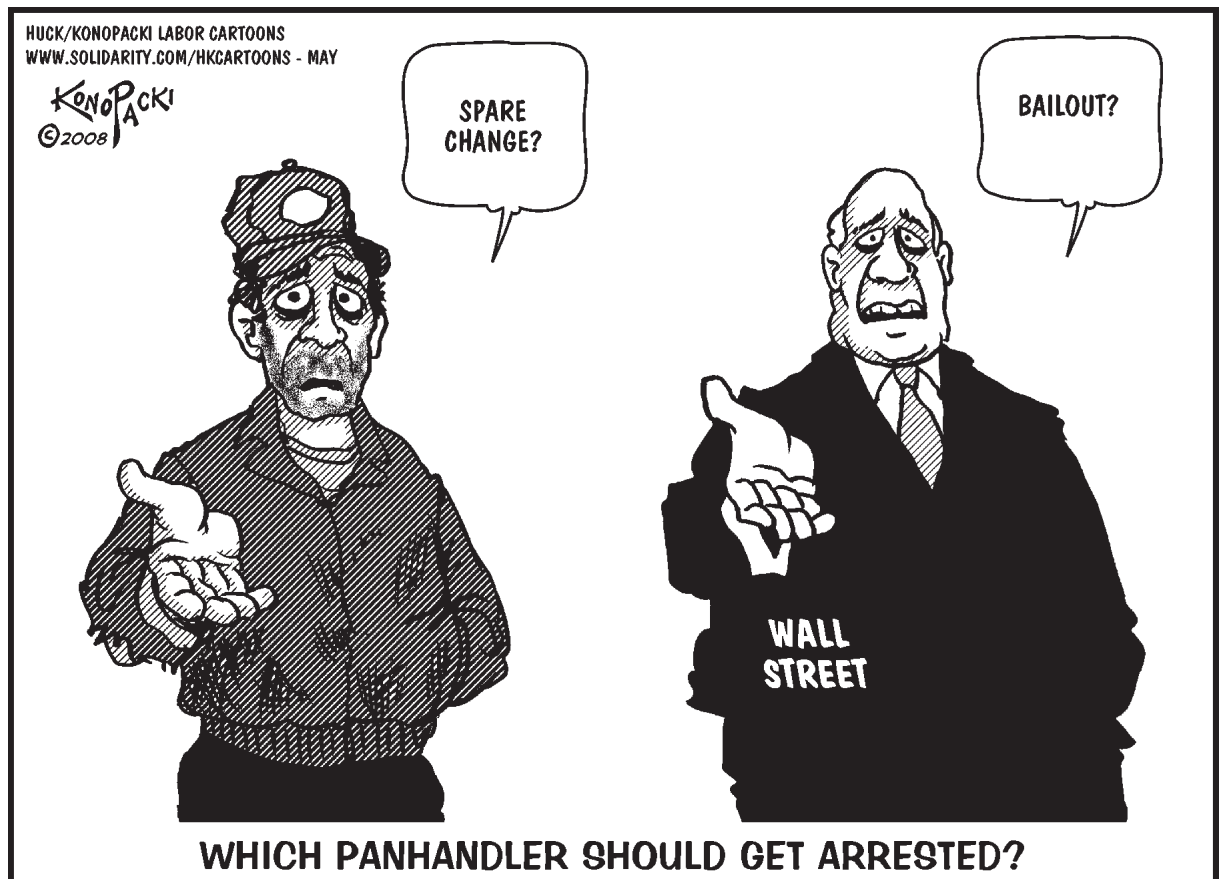
And when there is the inevitable police-related shooting, we'll have to take the word of the new chief about what really happened.

A police department that respects the community and pays attention to what its officers are doing in the field has nothing to fear from civilian oversight.

But a civilian public that has no oversight can have a lot to fear from the police.

It's far, far past time that Richmond had an elected, Civilian Police Review Board.

And that's a proposal on which every candidate for mayor and City Council should be asked their position.



## Letters to the Editor

### Public housing residents: Know your rights!

Thank you for your recent coverage of RRHA's plans to redevelop public housing. These plans could pose a serious challenge for current public housing residents, and it is vital that their interests be respected.

If you could pass along the following information to readers of the Defender, I would greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely,  
Pat Lavelle  
Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Justice Center  
RICHMOND

Public housing residents have a number of legal rights regarding their housing. For example, residents have the right to participate in resident organizing. Residents who face eviction due to their homes being torn down ("demolition") or sold off ("disposition") also have certain legal rights.

#### WHAT HOUSING RIGHTS DO I HAVE?

##### Resident Organizing

Residents can, and should, feel free to participate in organizing to express their views about housing issues.

Under federal and state law, RRHA cannot use your participation in a resident organization or other organizing activities as a basis to evict you.

##### Demolition and Disposition

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority has been making plans to tear down or sell off portions of Richmond's public housing stock. Public housing residents have a stake in these decisions, and can make their voices heard by coming together and organizing. City leaders and RRHA need to hear that they should not reduce housing for low-income Richmond families. If you are interested in learning more about how residents can work together for positive change, or want to help, call Andrew at Legal Aid Justice Center, at (804) 643-1086.

Even if some residents are displaced by demolition or disposition, they still have certain legal rights.

For example, in most cases RRHA must give impacted residents a written notice at least 90 days in advance of the date by which they are expected to move.

Additionally, RRHA must relocate all impacted tenants before demolition or disposition can occur.

RRHA also has the responsibility to provide replacement housing options to displaced tenants. These options must include comparable housing that is located in an area "generally not less desirable" than the location of the home to be torn down or sold off.

RRHA also must pay the actual, reasonable costs of relocating displaced

tenants, and must provide necessary counseling to assist displaced tenants in moving to their next residence.

Finally, depending on the situation, residents in buildings RRHA plans to tear down or sell may have other legal options to stop RRHA from getting rid of their homes.

#### Other Rights

Public housing residents have many other rights, some of which apply generally to tenants in Virginia and others which are unique to public housing residents. These rights address the circumstances in which a landlord may take a tenant to court, the manner in which security deposits should be handled, the way in which rent should be calculated, and many other situations.

#### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BELIEVE MY HOUSING RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED, OR I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT MY HOUSING RIGHTS?

Clearly, every situation is different. The facts of your case will play an important role in determining what housing rights and options you may have. Because of this, this description of some legal rights is intended as general information, and should not be considered legal advice.

Legal Aid Justice Center provides advice, representation, and advocacy to income-qualified individuals and families. If you have questions about their legal rights with respect to your housing, call (804) 643-1086.

#### Concerned about likely Gilpin displacement

HOME supports the efforts of RRHA to improve housing conditions and revitalize neighborhoods. Mixed income neighborhoods will increase social

and economic opportunities for lower income residents, as well as contributing to a healthier community.

However, we are concerned about the likelihood that some existing public housing residents will be displaced as a result of the redevelopment. The solution is to ensure that all residents who are not able to live in the newly rebuilt community are given a voucher and help in finding affordable housing in good neighborhoods.

The Federal government historically bears great responsibility for creating segregated communities with concentrations of poverty, and should provide the resources to fix the problem.

Connie Chamberlin  
President/CEO, Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia Inc.  
RICHMOND

#### Thoughts on the presidential campaign

I was thinking — if Obama wins, then we'll have a Black president, but he'll still be a man. And if Clinton wins, then we'll have a woman as president, but we'll still have another white president.

Why can't we just have a Black woman as president?

Taimir Gore  
(10 years old)  
RICHMOND

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# A Palestinian View

An Interview with Richmond's Jameel Abed

[EDITOR'S NOTE: May 8, 2008, is the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel. Locally and nationally, there will be many celebrations and lots of media coverage. To find out how the Palestinian community views this day, Defender Editor Phil Wilayto spoke with Jameel Abed, a Richmond businessman who was born in 1950 just outside Jerusalem. Mr. Abed emigrated to Virginia in 1967. He is a co-founder, vice president and treasurer of the New Dominion PAC, a lobbying group that functions as the voice of the Arab-American community in Virginia. He is also a former president of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee in Richmond and, with his wife, Saba Abed, is a founder of the Iben Rushd Cultural Center. He frequently visits Palestine, most recently in April 2007.]

## Mr. Abed, how is the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel being viewed in the Palestinian community?

This is a very sad day for us. This is what is called the "Nakba." It means "the Catastrophe." The Palestinians lost everything in 1948. So we view this as a very sad day.

## What is the situation for Palestinians today? In Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, the diaspora?

There has been virtually no change. Actually, the situation is worse today than it was under the occupation, because in the past we thought we would have a Palestinian state, but nothing of that sort is coming up. President George Bush has talked about a two-state solution, but since he's come to office, nothing has been done. I'd like to know, when the administration talks about a Palestinian state, define the boundaries. Because Israel itself does not have boundaries. They never say, this is the boundaries for the state of Israel. George Bush says that by the end of the year we will have a Palestinian state, but I don't think that will happen. Israel is building more settlements, there's the wall that disrupts the Palestinian economy, the Israelis are constantly attacking people in Gaza and on the West Bank, so I don't see that the Israelis are looking for peace. And for the Palestinians who left in 1948, the 700,000 who left into exile, until now nothing has been done for them. On Dec. 11, 1948, the United Nations passed Resolution 194, which affords the Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes, or that they would be compensated for having to leave. This has not been done, and this is probably one of the reasons that there is not a state, that there has been no peace settlement with the Israelis. But to tell you the truth, there have been many, many UN resolutions about Palestine, but none of them have been fulfilled. And especially Resolution 194, for the right to return.

## What is your view of a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

There was an Arab Summit held in Lebanon where the Arabs offered Israel land for peace. That proposal said that the Palestinians would accept the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem in return for recognition of Israel and the normalization of relations between Israel and all Arab countries. When the United Nations divided the country in 1948, it gave the Palestinians almost 49 percent of the land. What the Arabs accepted in the Summit proposal amounts only to 22 percent of the land. Israel used to dream of a solution like that, before 1967, but now when they are offered that, they refuse. A viable Palestinian state, independent, without any restrictions by Israel, in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the right of return — I don't think there will be any solution unless this happens for the Palestinians.

## Today there is a division in the Palestinian community, with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in charge in the West Bank, and the Hamas organization in control in Gaza. How do you think this affects prospects for peace?

I don't think this is a good thing for the Palestinians, to be divided, and sooner or later they should come together. I am not a Hamas supporter, but fair is fair. Hamas won the elections. The United States asked the Palestinians to have elections in Palestine, and they did it. There were many international observers who watched it, it was fair, no hanky-panky like in other countries, and Hamas won. And then the United States and Israel did not accept that. They refused to recognize the results of the elections. And I think that their pressure on Abbas is what is keeping him from dealing with Hamas. If you want elections, democracy, then you have to accept the results.

## Recently, Hamas said it would be willing to let President Abbas negotiate with the Israelis on behalf of all Palestinians, but that they wanted any solution to be put to a referendum.

Yes, they are going along with that, but they want the Palestinians to be able to vote. And that's fair.



Jameel Abed

# Winter Soldier Hearings

By Tom Palumbo

The New York Times recently exposed a Pentagon recruiting program that recycled former generals, admirals and other high-ranking brass to provide military analysis to the news media about the supposed success and effectiveness of our Armies and weaponry.

The Defense Department had used these former military officers as "Force Multipliers" to promote and sell the U.S. invasion by American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Retired generals and arms merchants were telling us there was such a thing as a "smart" bomb and that victory in Iraq and Afghanistan was just one more surge, one more year or one more trillion dollars away.

A different word from the troops came March 13-16 during the largest gathering of members of Iraq Veterans Against the War since the occupation of Iraq.

"Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan – Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations" was a four-day event sponsored by IVAW and held at the National Labor College in Silver Springs, Md. Hundreds of veterans who have served in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters were there. The testimony of these young men and women was often upsetting and disturbing as they described a culture which rewarded war profiteers such as Blackwater and minimized the growing body count of civilian men, women and children.

In stark contrast to the paid Pentagon pundits, these service members talked of racism, torture and the dehumanizing of the enemy as tools to justify years of occupation. Videotapes and pictures often accompanied the soldiers' presentations.

Mental health professionals were available during the long weekend.

The stage was shared with civilians, families and independent experts who bore witness about the impact of the wars on our communities and the world as a whole.

Hundreds were on-site to participate in panel discussions such as GI Resistance,

## What can non-Palestinians in Virginia do to support the Palestinian community today?

The main thing is to write letters to your Congressman or your senator, the State Department, the White House, and to explain to them that your tax money is given to Israel every year. I think, according to an article I was reading in the Christian Science Monitor, it's over \$1.2 trillion just since 1975, not since the creation of Israel. So if the average American knows what is going on, the U.S. has so much leverage over Israel. Enough is enough. Abide by the UN resolutions, accept the Arab Summit proposal and have a two-state solution.

The Crisis at the Veterans Administration and Rules of Engagement.

Outside the formal presentations, solidarity and camaraderie was the order of the day, as many affinity groups informally met. State and local police provided a buffer against a few dozen counterprotesters. Inside the college's compound, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace stood watch as red-shirted security.

Due to limited space, the event was closed to the general public, but audiences were able to listen or watch the hearing simulcast on Democracy Now!, Pacifica and other Indy Media outlets. There is also a growing online library of the testimony available at [www.IVAW.org](http://www.IVAW.org)

*Tom Palumbo of Norfolk is a 13-year veteran of the U.S. Army. He is a member of Veterans for Peace, the Tidewater Coalition for Peace & Justice and the Virginia Anti-War Network. He is currently working to establish "Off Base," a GI coffeehouse for Norfolk-area military personnel. He can be reached at: [DissentingSoldier@yahoo.com](mailto:DissentingSoldier@yahoo.com).*



Tom Palumbo

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR - May / June 2008

The Richmond Defender is published on the first Friday of every other month, starting with the January/February issue. Information for the Community Calendar must be received by the Friday before the publication date. Please include the name of the event, the event sponsor, contact information, time, date, place and any admission cost.

Be sure and call ahead to make sure the information listed is current.

Note: Listing of an event does not necessarily imply an endorsement by this newspaper.

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



"This Woman's Work" by Cheryl Clayton. (See "Various Exhibits" item under "Richmond - Ongoing.")

Through May 30 — CREATIVE JUICE — An exhibit featuring work by adult art students and instructors from Pine Camp Arts & Community Center. Painting, pottery, weaving, jewelry, photography. Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-7p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Spotlight Gallery at Pine Camp, 4901 Old Brook Road. Information: (804) 646-3674.

Through May 31 — TRANSLUCENCE — Paintings by Cheryl Clayton, a Virginia artist who creates through acrylic, watercolor, charcoal and pencil. "Her works illustrate the human experience and form within African American culture." Elegba Folklore Society's Cultural Center, 101 E. Broad St. Information: (804) 644-3900; story1@efsinc.org.

Through June — VARIOUS EXHIBITS FOCUSING ON AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY — Exhibitions include: The Gift of Black Inventors, Chester Higgins Jr.; Invoking the Spirit: Worship Traditions in the African World; The Negro Leagues 1920-1960; Souls Dancing: An Exhibition of the Art of Darrick Claiborne. Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia, 00 Clay Street. Information: (804) 780-9093.

Through Aug. 31 — TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE MARCHING, TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE BOUND — Photography of former Richmond slave sites, including "Manchester Docks, Lumpkin's Jail and the Negro Burial Ground or, rather, the asphalt parking lots and empty fields that now cover these landmarks." By guest curator and photographer Shanna Merola. Valentine Richmond History Center, 1015 E. Clay St. Information: (804) 649-0711; www.richmondhistorycenter.com.

Through Jan. 9, 2009 — BATTLE FOR THE CITY: THE POLITICS OF RACE 1950s-1970s — "With stunning imagery and artifacts, the History Center revisits citywide conflicts over integration, civil rights, urban planning, transportation, and political representation, the outcomes of which affected Richmond's physical and social landscape." Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sun. noon-5 p.m.; closed Mon. Admission: \$10; \$5 members. Valentine Richmond History Center, 1015 E. Clay St. Information: (804) 649-0711; www.richmondhistorycenter.com.

## Richmond Farmers Markets

17th Street Farmers Market — Thursdays, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. - FRESH Market (Growers' & Bakers'). Saturdays, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. - BOHEMIAN Market (Growers' / Mixed). Sundays, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. - VINTAGE Market (Mixed). 100 N. 17th St. (corner

17th & Main streets). Information: (804) 646-0477; www.17thstreetfarmersmarket.com.

Byrd House Market — Tuesdays, 3:30-7 p.m., starting May 6. Behind William Byrd Community House, 224 S. Cherry St., in Oregon Hill neighborhood. Park on Idlewood & nearby streets. Information: (804) 643-2717; e-mail: byrdhousemarket@gmail.com; Web: http://byrdhousemarket.blogspot.com.

South of the James Market — Saturdays, 8 a.m.-noon through Oct. 25. Forest Hill Park, Shelter No. 2 near 42nd & New Kent. Information: (804) 513-3100.

## RICHMOND - Events

Thurs., May 8 — RRHA PUBLIC HEARING — On RRHA's proposed 2008 Agency Plan. 5:30 p.m., Calhoun Family Information Center, 426 Calhoun St. in Gilpin Court. Information: RRHA Office of Technology, Planning & Research, (804) 780-3496.

Fri., May 9 — OPENING RECEPTION FOR "think" — "An art exhibition featuring the letter-pressed publication of the poetry journal think, published at the Bove House Press at VCU." 7-9 p.m., Chop Suey Books, 1317 W. Cary St. Free. Information: (804) 497-4705; www.chopsueybooks.com.

Sat., May 17 — KRISTIAN WILLIAMS — Author of "Our Enemies in Blue" and "American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination," will read from recent writings. 4 p.m., Chop Suey Books, 1317 W. Cary St. Free. Information: (804) 497-4705; www.chopsueybooks.com.

Sat., June 28 — JUNETEENTH, A FREEDOM CELEBRATION — Information: Elegba Folklore Society, http://www.efsinc.org.

## Save these dates:

Thurs., July 3 — IRAN: STOPPING THE NEXT WAR BEFORE IT STARTS — (See announcement on page 5.)

Aug. 29-31 — 6TH ANNUAL HAPPILY NATURAL DAY - BLACK FREEDOM/LABOR DAY WEEKEND — 2008 Theme: Hip Hop for Social Change. A community festival dedicated to holistic health, cultural awareness & social change. Information: http://happilynaturaldays.com.

Fri., Oct. 10 — 6TH ANNUAL GABRIEL FORUM — A day to show honor and respect to Gabriel, Richmond's own freedom fighter, executed on this day in 1800 by the state of Virginia for the crime of rising up against oppression. Presented by the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project of the Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality. Information: Call (804) 644-5834 or e-mail: Defenders-FJE@hotmail.com.

Wed., Dec. 3 — 5TH ANNUAL DEFENDERS FIGHTING FUND & COMMUNITY AWARDS DINNER — Presented by the Defenders.

## Important Dates in Black History

May 4, 1961 - "Freedom Riders" begin protesting segregation of interstate bus travel in the South.

May 7, 1878 - Joseph R. Winters patents first fire escape ladder.

May 8, 1983 - Lena Horne awarded the Springarn Medal for distinguished career in the field of entertainment.

May 10, 1950 - Boston Celtics select Chuck Cooper, first Black player drafted to play in the NBA.

May 17, 1954 - U.S. Supreme Court declares segregation in public schools unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education.

May 18, 1896 - In Plessy v. Ferguson, U.S. Supreme Court upholds the doctrine of "separate but equal" education and public accommodations.

May 19, 1925 - Malcolm X born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Neb.

May 24, 1854 - Lincoln University (Pa.), first black college, is founded.

May 27, 1919 - Madame C.J. Walker, cosmetics manufacturer and first Black female millionaire, dies.

May 28, 1948 - In South Africa, National Party wins whites-only election and begins to institute policy of apartheid.

June 2, 1971 - Samuel L. Gravely, Jr. becomes first African-American admiral in U.S. Navy.

June 4, 1972 - Angela Davis acquitted of all murder and conspiracy charges.

June 5, 1987 - Dr. Mae C. Jemison becomes first Black woman astronaut.

June 7, 1917 - Poet Gwendolyn Brooks, first African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize (Poetry 1950), born.

June 11, 1912 - Joseph H. Dickson patents player piano.

June 12, 1963 - Medgar W. Evers, civil rights leader, is assassinated in Jackson, Miss.

June 13, 1967 - Thurgood Marshall nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court.

June 16, 1970 - Kenneth A. Gibson elected mayor of Newark, N.J., first Black mayor of a major eastern U.S. city.

June 18, 1863 - The 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry attacks Fort Wagner, S.C.

June 19, 1865 - Blacks in Texas are notified of Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863. "Juneteenth" marks the event.

## HAMPTON

Thurs., May 15 — GOVERNOR'S TOWN HALL MEETING ON TRANSPORTATION — One of a series of statewide town hall meetings to discuss the upcoming transportation special session. No sign-in is required to attend or ask questions. All meetings are open to the public and media. 7:30-9 p.m., Hampton Roads Convention Center, Conference Rooms A & B, 1610 Coliseum Drive.

## NORFOLK

Sat. May 17 — TIM REID CELEBRITY WEEKEND EVENT ALL-STAR BASKETBALL GAME — To benefit local students through scholarships. 6 p.m., Joseph G. Echols Memorial Hall on the campus of Norfolk State University. Tickets \$5 for general admission and \$10 for reserved seating. Information: (877) 993-8499.

## RADFORD

Thurs., May 22-Sun., May 25 — BUILDING A NEW WORLD CONFERENCE — "How do we fix our country and the world?" Cindy Sheehan, Kathy Kelly, Michael Parenti, Father Ray Bourgeois, David Swanson and many others. \$110.00 for full conference, plus lodging. Information: www.wpaconference.org.

## WASHINGTON, D.C.


Tues., May 15 — PALESTINIANS & THE JEWISH STATE: 60 YEARS OF EXILE & DISPOSSESSION — 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., The Palestine Center, 2425 Virginia Ave. NW. Information: (202) 338-1985, ext. 11 or e-mail rsvp@palestinecenter.org.

## WOODBIDGE

Tues., May 13 — GOVERNOR'S TOWN HALL MEETING ON TRANSPORTATION — One of a series of statewide town hall meetings to discuss the upcoming transportation special session. No sign-in is required to attend or ask questions. All meetings are open to the public and media. 7-8:30 p.m., Dr. A.J. Ferlazzo Bldg., 15941 Donald Curtis Drive.

## RICHMOND - Ongoing

Tuesdays — TUESDAY VERSES — Open mic presented by Upside Promotions and Design. 8 p.m., Tropical Soul, 314 N. 2nd St. \$7. Information: www.tuesdayverses.com.



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