

Horizons

Volume 4, Issue 2

Special points of interest:

- Comments from VA President
- Protests in Photos
- Upcoming events featured on final page

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History In The Making: Virginia/DC Protests in Photos



In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the killing of George Floyd by police officers ushered in protests across the country, including in Virginia and DC. Photos throughout this issue highlight this evolving moment in history.





President Audrey Davis

A Word From Our President

I hope you are well and safe. I bring you summer greetings on behalf of the VAA Board. Unfortunately, it has been a summer like no other!

We have all experienced many emotions over the last few months, in addition to experiencing a seemingly never-ending rollercoaster of tragic events. We continue to witness African American and Hispanic communities devastated by COVID-19 and we have watched our national COVID-19 death toll rise each day. We now know that this virus will be with us for the long-term and this nightmare does not have an end in sight.

In addition, we have witnessed too many African American deaths for *living while black* and watched more racist ac-

tions and events pop up in our news feeds almost hourly.

On a positive note, we are seeing a new generation of civil rights leaders emerge from the Black Lives Matters Movement. They give us hope as we watch them lead our country in the fight against systemic racism and discrimination. We also watch as this next generation follows in the footsteps of legendary civil rights activists C.T. Vivian and John Lewis who both died in July. Lewis and Vivian's strength, fearlessness and fighting spirit lead America to great equity. They were "woke" before it was a trending term. The VAA Board have been hard at work over the summer. We meet weekly and we are planning for our first virtual event scheduled for October 23rd in place of our annual conference.

VAA also released statements on the death of George Floyd and on Confederate Memorials. You can read them here.

Please share with us how you are doing. We know these times are hard and there is much uncertainty. In Alexandria, where I work, we are opening our museums with a phased approach and learning to push out more content on digital platforms. Our first museum opened in late July. We anticipate opening a second museum in August. As with anything now, we watch the national numbers and keep safety as our first priority. Send us your comments, cares and concerns. We want to be of assistance.

Wishing you safety, and peace...

The Amen Corner: Maintaining & Restoring African American Cemeteries

In recent years there has been much attention given to African American cemeteries. Much of this attention is due in part to the noticeable neglect and tremendous vegetation overgrowth that the cemeteries have experienced.

Many of these cemeteries are well known and familiar to the public, while others are hidden out of view, and not so popular. Whether formal and well-known cemeteries located in cities, or nestled on the grounds of a rural church, black cemeteries are now the focus of a lot of attention.

Many historic African American cemeteries were established in the 19th century or the early 20th century. During those early days, individual families, churches, and special organizations provided the upkeep of the cemetery either as a whole or for individual lots. For many

reasons that special care provided by families and organizations fell by the wayside, and over time, vegetation overgrowth, tremendous overgrowth has taken place. One of the reasons for this problem is that many black cemeteries do not have a "perpetual care" requirement associated with them. The importance of all facets of African American history has brought cemeteries into focus, and the plight of these cemeteries in particular.

In Richmond, Virginia three (3) cemeteries have gained public attention because of their neglect, they are Evergreen Cemetery (1891), East End Cemetery (1897) and Woodland Cemetery (1917). Thousands of African Americans are buried in these cemeteries including many notable citizens.

In recent years, teams of volunteers have dedicated them-

selves to tackle the overgrowth in these historic and beautiful cemeteries. Adhering to a regular weekly or bi-monthly cleaning schedule, these volunteers set a goal to bring these cemeteries back to their original glorious landscape. Armed with lawnmowers, weed whackers, pruners, rakes, gas-powered saws, gloves, hats, and goggles, these volunteers have committed themselves to stay ahead of the rapid vegetation growth.

Although maintaining these historic cemeteries can be a year-round job, the real work, however, usually begins in March through October when vegetation growth is rapid, and then slowing down during the winter months of November through February. Even during the winter months a periodic visit to the cemetery is
(Continued on Page 13)



On July 3, a team of volunteers gathered at Woodland Cemetery to clean the gravesite of Reverend John Jasper, who coincidentally was born on July 4, 1812.

Virginia/DC Protests Photo Journal (Continued from Page 1)



VIRGINIA AFRICANA IN ACTION



Protesters take to the street to bring about historic conversations that have been heretofore avoided like institutional racism and criminal reform. VAA's own president Audrey Davis participates in the protest to give voice to the inequities in the country. (Photo: A. Davis)

News to Use: Stay Safe From Coronavirus



Virginia's African American Museums in the Time of COVID-19: Focus BHMVA



African American museums in Virginia like the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia in Richmond have reopened with new protocols put in place to continue operations in the safest possible way for visitors, staff, and volunteers.

As the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia (BHMVA) along with a coalition of Richmond's cultural institutions confront the continuing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of visitors, staff, and volunteers remain our primary concern. Our individual sites have been working together since March to coordinate efforts, share best practices and develop a common approach to reopening to the public in a responsible, deliberate manner.

So as our City and our Commonwealth move forward, we want to assure all visitors that we are committed to providing everyone with safe, secure, and supportive access to our facilities. While we anticipate all sites to be open by July, we will continue to use these shared

principles and the most current facts to ensure the best experience for our visitors.

We are doing everything in our power to promote safety and comfort for all BHMVA visitors with an emphasis on more rigorous daily cleaning and frequent sanitization procedures.

GUIDELINES:

1. Make reservations and purchase admission tickets online.
2. Group visits limited to 10 or less.
3. Face mask required covering nose AND mouth.
4. Check in providing name and contact info.
5. Answer health questions and have temperature taken.
6. Sanitize hands at stations throughout the museum.
7. Stay 6 feet apart from others not in your party.

8. Use plastic gloves on touchscreens.

9. Visitors under 16 require adult supervision.

10. Call in advance to make arrangements for guided tours.

Visitors who do not follow these guidelines will be asked to return when they are ready to do so.

Call Faithe Norrell with any questions at 804-780-9093.



Historic Cemetery Will Soon Showcase Opposing Civil War Statues



Norfolk's Confederate Monument celebrating white Civil War soldiers

Norfolk's Confederate Monument celebrating white soldiers who fought to preserve slavery will soon be relocated to Elmwood Cemetery where rebel soldiers are also buried with civilians.

The 18-foot tall monument will stand a short distance from the one honoring 58 Black Civil War soldiers who fought to end slavery as members of the Union Army and are buried in its shadow at West Point Cemetery.

The two cemeteries are reflective of the historical significance of both monuments and the respective burial sites.

Elmwood was built to bury the city's white residents.

Known initially as Potter's Field, West Point was built at the behest of Black residents who wanted to bury their loved ones in dignity.

When West Point was constructed in 1873, a tall red brick wall was built to separate the two burial grounds and the dead Black and White people. The wall still stands today.

The West Point Afro Union Soldiers Monument was dedicated in 1906, as a tribute to African American veterans of both the Civil War and Spanish American War.

While the Black churches and other civic groups raised money to build the structure honoring Black soldiers, the United Daughters of the Confederacy funded the construction of the one for "Johnny Reb". Its construction began on February 22, 1898 when the cornerstone was laid; it was completed in 1907. At the top of the Confederate monument, builders placed the image of "Johnny Reb" who fought to preserve slavery.

On the top of the West Point Monument for Black soldiers who fought in the Civil War is Norfolk native Sergeant William H. Carney of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. Carney, the first Black Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, escaped through the underground railroad in the 1850s northward.

The decision to move the Confederate monument to Elmwood came a month after Mayor Kenneth Alexander ordered city workers to take it down shortly after dawn on June 12. Until it is moved, the monument sits in pieces at the old armory in the Villa Heights section of Norfolk. Its removal from its pedestal at Commercial Place in downtown Norfolk, comes three years after council voted overwhelmingly to take it down. That decision came after a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville in 2017. One of their supporters killed a counter protestor when he drove his car into a crowd where she stood. Norfolk's decision to take down the monument was motivated by city leaders fearing it would be defaced. Another concern was that a protester might be hurt seeking to tear down the confederate monument, as was the case in Portsmouth two days earlier.

The demands to bring down Civil War monuments around the country have been sparked by the death of George Floyd. Floyd died after a Minneapolis Police officer used a kneeling chokehold to murder him, as he cried out over 20 times that he could not breathe.

Two decades ago, Civil Rights Attorney, James Gay filed suit to have the monument removed. His request was rebuffed by the local courts. One of his proteges, Roy Perry-Bey, a leader of the United Front For

Justice (UFJ), filed a suit two years ago to have it removed. It was still being considered by the federal courts when the city decided to take it down.

Two weeks ago, the Norfolk council formally voted to have it moved eventually to Elmwood Cemetery which sits along the 200 block of East Princess Anne Road in downtown Norfolk. Thanks to a law which came into effect July 1, the legislature freed Norfolk and other cities from a state law forbidding them to remove such statues if they honored heroes who fought in war and it was not owned by the city.

Norfolk owns the 113-year-old monument, built in the area where slaves were sold, and housed in the city's pre-Civil War Market Square where the Commercial Square is now.

At West Point Cemetery, there are over 100 Black servicemen buried near the monument of Sergeant William H. Carney. The headstones of 58 Black soldiers, who are Civil War veterans, are buried there. Others fought in the Spanish American War. One of the Civil War Patriots is Norfolk native Sergeant James Fuller, who was born in 1846 and died in 1909. He was the force behind the monument's installation.

Fuller was a former slave and a Civil War Veteran quartermaster in the First United States Colored (Cavalry) Troop (USCT). In 1885 Fuller, Norfolk's first African American Councilman, requested that Potter's field be named West Point Cemetery. Councilman Fuller insisted that a section of the cemetery "...be dedicated as a special place of burial for Black Union veterans..." Thus, Section 20 was "donated to the Directors of the Union Veterans Hall Association (Continued on Page 13)

Spotlight: Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site



Tour Maggie Walker's historic Richmond home and learn about her role in civil rights and empowerment for African Americans. The Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site commemorates the life of a progressive and talented African American woman. Despite many adversities, she achieved success in the world of business and finance as the first woman in the United States to charter and serve as president of a bank. The site includes her residence of thirty years, as well as a visitor center detailing her life and the history of the Jackson Ward community where she lived and worked. The house is restored to its 1930's appearance with original Walker family pieces.

Who Was Maggie Lena Walker?

In spite of humble beginnings in post-Civil War Richmond, Virginia, Maggie Lena Walker achieved national prominence as a businesswoman and community leader. Her business acumen, personality, and life-long commitment to a beneficial burial society fueled her climb to success. She was the first African American woman in the United States to found a bank. As a leader her successes and vision offered tangible improvements in the way of life for African Americans and women.

Achievements

When she was a teenager, Maggie Mitchell joined the local council of the Independent Order of St. Luke. This fraternal burial society, established in 1867 in Baltimore, administered to the sick and aged, pro-

moted humanitarian causes and encouraged individual self-help and integrity.

She served in numerous capacities of increasing responsibility for the Order, from that of a delegate to the biannual convention to the top leadership position of Right Worthy Grand Secretary in 1899, a position she held until her death. Under her leadership the Order's membership and numbers of councils were significantly increased throughout the country and its finances achieved solvency. Through sound fiscal policies, a genius for public relations and enormous energy, she took a dying organization, gave it life and helped it thrive.

In 1902 Mrs. Walker established a newspaper, *The St. Luke Herald*, to promote closer

communication between the Order and the public. In speeches Mrs. Walker had reasoned, "Let us put our money together; let us use our money; Let us put our money out at usury among ourselves, and reap the benefit ourselves." In 1903 she founded the **St. Luke Penny Savings Bank**. Mrs. Walker served as the bank's first president, which earned her the recognition of being the first African American woman to charter a bank in the United States. Later she agreed to serve as chairman of the board of directors when the bank merged with two other Richmond banks to become The Consolidated Bank and Trust Company. Until 2009, the bank thrived as the oldest continually African American-operated bank in the United States.

Spotlight: Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site (Continued from Page 6)



Studio portrait of Maggie Lena Walker. (Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, National Park Service)

In addition to her work for the Independent Order of St. Luke, Maggie Walker was active in civic groups. As an advocate of African American women's rights, she served on the board of trustees for several women's groups. Among them were the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the Virginia Industrial School for Girls. To assist race relations she helped to organize and served locally as vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) and was a member of the national NAACP board. She also served as a member of the Virginia Interracial Commission.

Family Life

Maggie Lena Mitchell was born in Richmond, Virginia July 15, 1864. Her mother, Elizabeth Draper, was a former slave and assistant cook in the Church Hill mansion of Elizabeth Van Lew, a Civil War spy. Later, Elizabeth and her husband William Mitchell moved the family to their own home in an alley be-

tween Broad and Marshall streets where Maggie and her brother Johnnie were raised. After the untimely death of William Mitchell in 1876, Maggie's mother supported the family by working as a laundress and young Maggie helped by delivering the clean clothes.

Maggie Mitchell was educated in Richmond's public schools. After graduation she taught grade school for three years. Her teaching career ended in 1886 when she married Armstead Walker, Jr. She then directed her energies toward caring for her family and strengthening the Independent Order of St. Luke. Life was full and prosperous for the Walkers and their sons, Russell and Melvin.

Tragedy struck in 1915 when her husband was accidentally killed, leaving Mrs. Walker to manage a large household. Her work and investments kept the family comfortably situated. When her sons married they brought their wives to 110 1/2 East Leigh Street. A major addition to the house in 1922 enabled Mrs. Walker to provide a home for her sons and their families, her mother, and the household staff.

Mrs. Walker's health gradually declined, and by 1928 she was using a wheelchair. Despite her physical limitations she remained actively committed to her life's work including chairman of the bank and leader of the Independent Order of St. Luke until her death on December 15, 1934.

The House

The residence at 110 1/2 East Leigh Street was built in 1883. The address became a prime location in the heart of Jackson Ward, the center of Richmond's African American business and social life at the turn of the

century. The Walkers purchased the house in 1904 and soon began making changes. Central heating and electricity were added, and with the addition of several bedrooms and enclosed porches, the home increased from 9 to 28 rooms. In 1928 an elevator was added in the rear of the house to provide Mrs. Walker access to the second floor.

The Walker family owned the home until 1979, when it was purchased by the National Park Service.

Most of the furnishings throughout the home are original family pieces. They are valuable in understanding the 1904-1934 period of her occupancy. Together the house and the furnishings help us to learn more about Maggie Walker and the world in which she lived. Her community of Jackson Ward, a National Historic Landmark District, continues to exemplify the success of African American entrepreneurship.

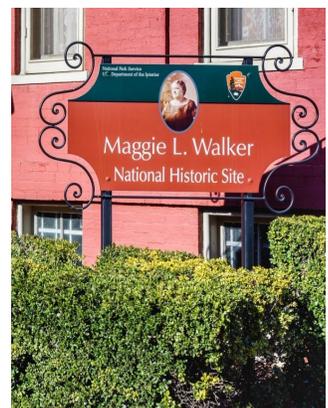
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Sign marking the site as a unit of the National Park Service.



Dubois Miller, Co-Editor

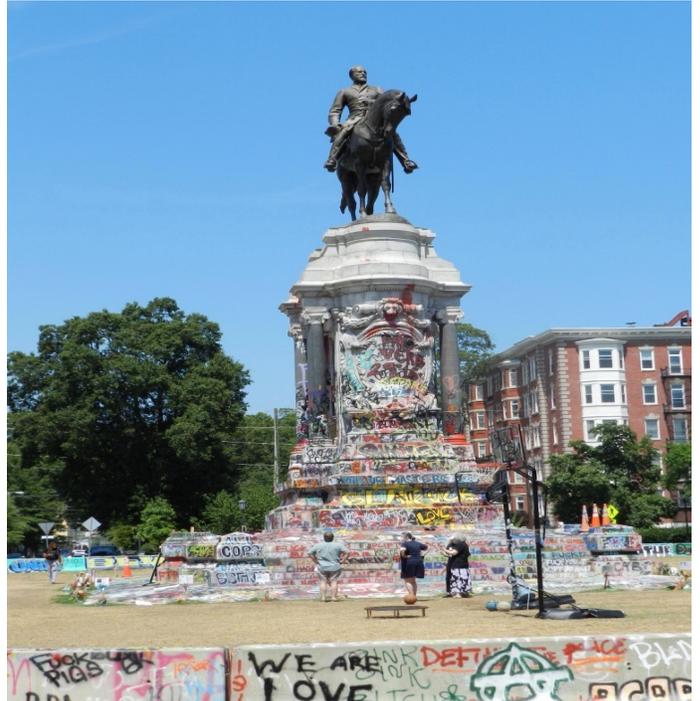
Editorial Opinion: Reflections on Monument Avenue

When I moved to Richmond from Lynchburg in 1974, I lived within walking distance of the statues on Monument Avenue. As I black man, I was more amused than offended at the lengths that white people went through to worship losers in the unrighteous rebellion against the Constitution of the United States. White supremacists fought hard for the right to treat people as property, to withhold civil rights and to promulgate their false doctrine. They lost.

As a work of art, the statue is impressive, but the emotions it evokes are divisive, which is why Robert E. Lee was opposed erecting it or any such monuments dedicated to Confederate soldiers. Counter to Lee's requests, white supremacists erected the monuments to the traitors of our nation so they could maintain their symbolisms of superiority. But their monuments were built on the sands of time thereby dooming the statues to shrink in their importance to the values of citizenship that we hold dear.

The current level of protests has eroded the false narrative of white supremacy that is endemic in our nation. The whole world has revolted against the hypocrisy of this ilk.

Although protest activity around the monument started in earnest after the George Floyd murder, it would be another two months before that I would gaze upon what was once the colossus statue of the Confederacy. The Lee statue is now a target of massive ridicule, emblazoned with words of protest to the arrogance of corruptible power. The Lee statue and the other ones that have been removed from Monument Avenue stood for over a century as reminders of a false glory built upon the backs of slavery, segregation, and the ill-treatment



Robert E. Lee Statue on Monument Avenue with graffiti.

of minorities. Their places in history are secure, but now they are seen for who they really were.

Believers in white supremacy will suffer the same fate as this statue. They will be scorned for holding on to delusions while their support crumbles. As more people begin to understand why the treatment of minorities is worthy of extended

protests, they are finding out what it truly means to be a United States citizen.

When I look at the photos I took of the graffiti-adorned statue, I chuckle as I have always done when I passed it. Now though, my amusement is augmented with hope, because a different generational movement is taking place in our country.



Another vantage point of the Robert E. Lee Statue on Monument Avenue with graffiti.

A Culture of Racism and Discrimination In Museums



The Smithsonian National Museum of African Art on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. (Photo: Carol Highsmith/Buyenlarge/Getty Images)

Staff members of art museums around the country have recently disclosed instances of racism, discrimination, and bigotry they have experienced within their institutions. Nearby, former staff members of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) in Washington, DC, wrote a letter to Smithsonian secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III calling for leadership to address their concerns of bigotry and to institute real change.

The letter's signatories are calling for the resignation of the NMAfA's deputy director and chief curator Christine

Mullen Kreamer to "enable real, systemic changes in the museum's practices and policy implementation."

On several occasions, managers at the museum have attempted to promote white employees into vacant roles while disregarding the institutional policy requiring a competitive application process, former staffers said.

"Persistent racial disparities at NMAfA are apparent in the application of institutional policies," the letter reads.

"Recent events have brought deeper attention to systemic racism within museums across

our country. In this spirit, we write to you to express our outrage about the current state of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. "Our goal is to collectively express our concerns and to engage in building an equitable and inclusive museum for our community."

One former staffer claims just five full-time Black employees worked at the museum at the time they left — out of more than 40 staff members — which is solely dedicated to the arts and culture of Africa.

They also say there were no Black curators at the museum and, for more than 10 years, its entire cu-

ratorial team had been exclusively white despite what the letter's authors describe as a "demonstrated interest amongst Black arts professionals and scholars in joining the institution."

The Smithsonian Institution did not comment on claims about the diversity of the museum's staff.

Kreamer, deputy director and chief curator at NMAfA, has allegedly had "multiple complaints" filed against her by employees concerning racism, aggression and mismanagement, according to **(Continued on Page 12)**



Carla Whitfield, Retired Superintendent, National Park Service

Personal Remembrances of Two Civil Rights Icons

I served twenty-six years in the National Park Service. During that time, I met thousands of people. Two among the masses were Congressman John Lewis and Reverend C. T. Vivian, both who died this past month within hours of one another. It was most assuredly my great honor to have known them both personally.

As the first park ranger on the then newly developing Selma-to-Montgomery National Historic Trail, it was not uncommon for me to meet movers and shakers from across this country and around the world, especially those of the Civil Rights Movement.

I remember the day that I first met Reverend Vivian in person. I had heard him speak on countless occasions, but this time I met him face to face. The meeting took place just before the National Park Service opened the trail's Lowndes County Interpretive Center. It was my good fortune to take him on a private tour of the facility that was then set to open in a matter of days. As I guided Reverend Vivian through the new interpretive center, starting with the quote that I had personally selected for placement at the entrance of the exhibit area, I was giddy with excitement. The quote was one of my favorites of his; and, I felt that it was perfectly chosen to open the center's exhibit story that highlights the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and serves as the foundation for the entire exhibit. This I shared with him. He was incredibly humbled and honored by the quote selection. The quote is, "You can't keep anyone in the United States from voting without hurting the rights of all other citizens."

Throughout the tour, Reverend Vivian was witty, charming, and freely shared his memories of his voting rights efforts. As we



Congressman John Lewis, civil-rights leader and politician who served in the United States House of Representatives for Georgia's 5th congressional district from 1987 until his death, standing on the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge where he had been beaten by the Alabama State Police for marching for voting rights in 1963.

ended the facility's tour, Reverend Vivian shook my hand and said, "The story was well told. I have faith that you and your fellow park rangers will continue to faithfully share our story with the world. None of us can take voting rights for granted. I charge you to continue to do your part to keep this effort moving forward." With that, our tour ended; but it was clear that my work to protect the history of African Americans was just beginning.

For the last two decades, congressional lawmakers have joined a pilgrimage to Selma, Alabama, to walk where Con-

gressman John Lewis and other civil rights activists walked to cross the bridge they crossed in their fight for the right to vote. Every year, Congressman Lewis has led this pilgrimage to memorialize the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the event that happened on March 7, 1965 when peaceful protesters for voting rights attempted to march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama and were brutally beaten by Alabama State Police Troopers. A young John Lewis was among the horde of marchers who were beaten, he was one of the leaders of the March. The televised brutality



Congressman John Lewis makes a speech at the end of the Annual Jubilee Commemoration to memorialize the Voting Rights March, specifically Bloody Sunday. Wonder who is under that Ranger hat? Notice all the other celebs around us.

Personal Remembrances of Two Civil Rights Icons (Continued from Page 10)



Photo 1: John Lewis during the Voting Rights March of 1965. Photo 2: Rev. C. T. Vivian during the same march in front of Brown Chapel A.M.E Church.

was a turning point in the civil rights movement.

The objective of the three-day pilgrimage, sponsored by the nonpartisan The Faith and Politics Institute, was to bring U.S. congressmen to Alabama as a

reminder of the powerful change that ordinary Americans can make. Lewis used a bus to transport up to 50 congressional members and White House staff to historic Civil Rights sites throughout Alabama.



Lowndes County Interpretive Center of the Selma-to-Montgomery National Historic Trail, a unit of the National Park Service. The mission of the Trail is to celebrate the history of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



Rev. C. T. Vivian civil rights pioneer, minister, author and close friend of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In 2004, I hopped on that bus and rode with the group from the State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, stopping at meaningful Civil Rights sites along the way, ending at Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church. Riding the entire course of the Voting Rights March, I interpreted the story of that March, with Congressman Lewis adding personal experiences to enhance the moment.

At the end of the tour, everyone disembarked from the bus and thanked me for my efforts, so many of them are folks that we read about in the daily news. Congressman Lewis, lingering in the background, came up to me and said with a rye smile, “Ranger Whitfield, you are a troublemaker...a very good troublemaker. Keep up the good trouble.”

I’ll never forget that moment; and, I have tried to stay true to Congressman Lewis’ comment and charge.

Typically, both gentlemen would attend “Jubilee”, which is what the annual celebration of the Voting Rights March is known as in Alabama. Reverend Vivian

would often render a sermon at one of the local Selma churches, always giving a firebrand speech. He was quite a stirring speaker.

Congressman Lewis could be found making his way through the throngs of Jubilee attendees shaking hands, taking pictures and giving hugs to anyone whom he met. At the end of the commemorative march, Congressman Lewis would make a passionate speech at the base of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Freedom Park.

Over the years, it has been my pleasure and privilege to get to know these incredible heroes better as I carried out my duties as an employee of the National Park Service. And while I am not naïve or presumptive enough to call them friends, I will instead call them part of my pool of inspirers. I have been inspired by their words as well as their deeds. Always gracious and humble in countenance, these two gentlemen possessed the hearts of lions. For me, the world is less rich with their absence...and with their own brands of good trouble.

A Culture of Racism and Discrimination in Museums (Continued from Page 9)

the former staff members. These complaints include alleged abuse of her hiring and promotion authority in favor of white employees and “consistent bullying and hostility” directed toward Black colleagues who raised concerns about her behavior, the letter claims. Kreamer, who joined the curatorial staff at the National Museum of African Art in 2000 before being promoted to her current role in 2009, did not respond to HuffPost’s request for comment.

The letter’s signatories are calling for a replacement to be selected from a diverse pool of candidates — and the position of deputy director and chief curator “to be separated to ensure effective management of the museum.”

From 2019 to 2020, two senior Black employees in key roles were suddenly dismissed without any evidence of underperformance or unethical behavior, former employees have said. By contrast, the letter claims, white colleagues who exhibited “sub-par performance” were offered special counseling, expanded job responsibilities or redeployment to new positions. Black staffers claimed NMAFA managers created obstacles to their ability to do their jobs, but gave white employees chances to develop such as speaking engagements and conference work, the letter says.

The former employees claim the “toxic” culture of racism at NMAFA did not improve under former director Gus Casely-Hayford’s tenure between 2018 and his departure in 2020. “This situation became particularly distressing under Gus Casely-Hayford, resulting in negative impacts on Black staff, as well as NMAFA’s reputation within the broader community,” they wrote about the Black British curator in the letter.

Casely-Hayford did not respond to a request for comment.

One letter signatory, who asked not to be named, told HuffPost: “Unfortunately these incidents and concerns about systemic racism only grew during Gus’ tenure. He did nothing to address them. [...]

“It’s so important that there’s self-examination within the Black community and there’s a discussion about internal racism.”

The letter’s signatories say the police killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement that followed have presented the opportunity to raise their concerns with fresh optimism about being heard. “I think about George Floyd’s life and this would not be happening right now if it wasn’t for what happened,” one told HuffPost.

“Six months ago, if we had tried to speak out in this way, talking to journalists or galvanizing in this way, I think there would be a reluctance to address this issue, and it’s even harder to do this when there’s a Black person in leadership.” Another signatory, who also didn’t want to be named for fear of repercussions, echoed these sentiments.

“It is a pivotal moment for people of color to be able to speak their truth and, where people of color have had bias affect them, be able to talk about it with the mindset that there is a platform now that supports the ability to do that,” the signatory said.

“The Black Lives Matter movement focuses specifically on police brutality and the vulnerability of people of color — but if you look at many different industries, organizations are now self-reflecting and, at the same time, people of color are looking

at this as a time to speak up,” they said.

It is not the first time a letter has been sent to the Smithsonian outlining these concerns, according to the former employees.

In early 2020, nine members of the NMAFA’s 13-person advisory board wrote of their concerns about the treatment of Black staff members following the dismissal of a Black employee on the museum’s senior leadership team by Casely-Hayford. The worker had just one week left of her one-year probationary period, and there were no grounded complaints about her performance or behavior, it is alleged.

Casely-Hayford, a successful Black man who was in a powerful position at the Smithsonian, stands accused of not doing enough to help Black people subjected to racism within an organization that champions Black art. “As a person of color in a titular position, I think there’s a responsibility to make sure that diversity and inclusion — particularly inclusion — are at the front and center of the organization,” the first signatory said. “It’s not just about hiring people of color to make up the numbers. It’s about making sure there is fair and equitable opportunity in that particular organization for people to be seen, heard and able to progress.” They added: “There’s often a tendency to open the door for yourself and do well in your career — but the mark of your legacy is that you open the door behind you and bring more people forward.”

Seven recommendations for improvements have been suggested to the Smithsonian’s leadership in the letter, including a pay equity plan for Black employees; a review of all firings, alleged racially driven

A Culture of Racism and Discrimination in Museums (Continued from Page 12)

incidents and complaints during the past five years; and a public commitment from the museum to improve representation and career advancement of Black employees.

UPDATE: July 15 — Following the publication of this article, a Smithsonian spokesperson sent the following statement to HuffPost on Tuesday.

At the National Museum of

African Art, we are committed to increasing diversity across the museum and all disciplines; equally essential, we are cognizant of the need to recruit, employ and empower more curators and artists that represent diverse fields and backgrounds. While our collections and exhibits represent a rich diversity of thought, artists and scholarship, we recognize that we must continue to increase

diversity within the museum, and drive inclusive behavior among all Smithsonian staff.

As a federal entity, we have established policies and processes in place to review employee complaints, and other human resources matters. Museum supervisors receive training and must abide by government wide federal regulations. At the Smithsonian, not

only do we adhere to these rules — fairness and equity are core to our culture, mission and who we are as a leader in the museum field.

NOTE: Article written by Nadine White, News reporter, HuffPost UK.

Amen Corner (Continued from Page 2)

recommended, which allows you to see the “bones” of the landscape, allowing you to decide what can be eliminated or cut back.

In addition to the rigors of constantly cleaning the cemeteries,

volunteers also have developed a directory of the many individuals who are buried in the cemetery, often with a photo of the monument or head stone.

Some have taken to research the individuals to learn more about their lives, and share this

information with families, churches, organizations, and others who have an interest in history, i.e. libraries, societies, museums, and archives.

Recently, on July 4th, a team of volunteers gathered at Wood-

land Cemetery to clean the gravesite of Reverend John Jasper who coincidentally was born on July 4th, 1812.

NOTE: Article written by Benjamin Ross, VAA Treasurer.

Historic Cemetery Will Soon Showcase Opposing Civil War Statues (Continued from Page 5)

for the burial of the members of the Grand Army of the Republic.” Fifty-eight Afro-Union soldiers are interred in Section 20.

Under the leadership of Fuller and the Norfolk Memorial Association, the West Point monument was erected in honor of African American soldiers and

sailors of all wars. The base of the monument was completed in 1906 and the statue depicting Sergeant Carney was added in 1920.

Although Fuller died in 1909, the African American community continued to work for another 11 years to bring his vision to fruition. It was listed on the

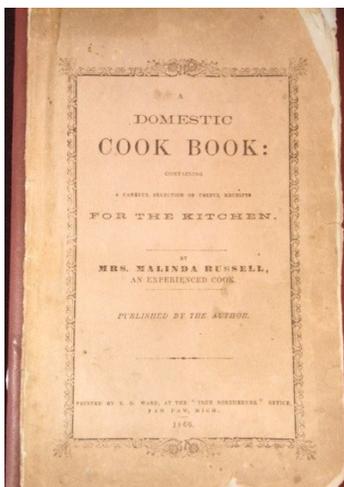
National Register of Historic Places in 2007.[1] It is contiguous with Elmwood Cemetery, listed in 2013. Fuller’s grave is a short walk from the monument.

The Portsmouth City Council voted recently to approve an ordinance to transfer \$250,000 from the non-

departmental general fund budget to the department of engineering budget to remove the Confederate monument that sits at the intersection of Court Street and High Street.

NOTE: Article written by Leonard E. Colvin, Chief Reporter New Journal and Guide.

A Taste of History: A Peek into this Country’s First African American Cookbook



In 1866, the first African American cookbook was published by Malinda Russell. Russell was born in Tennessee around 1820, Russell lived most of her life as a freewoman. At age 19, she intended to migrate to Liberia, but her plans were stymied. She married and had a son, worked as a washerwoman, and, in time, learned to cook. After her husband’s death, she kept a boarding house and then opened a pastry shop. During the Civil War, she was attacked and robbed for supporting the Union and

fled to Michigan. Then in 1866, she published her cookbook to raise funds to return to Tennessee, where she hoped to recover her property. Although her entire life remains unknown, her cookbook lives on. The receipt for her Soft Ginger Bread from the cookbook follows...

Soft Ginger Bread

One quart molasses, one cup sugar, 1-4th lb lard, three eggs; beat sugar and eggs well together; one **gill** sour milk, one tablespoonful soda dissolved

in warm water, two table-spoonfuls ginger, flour enough to make a smooth dough. Knead well, roll and bake in a quick oven (450 degrees F). **NOTE:** The **gill** (pronounced like Jill) is a unit for measuring volume. It is equal to 1/4 pint or 5 fluid ounces.



A Call to Action**NAACP****Arlington Branch 7047**

July 27, 2020

Contact: Keshia Tensley, Branch Secretary
 Phone: 1-877-501-6417
 E-Mail: 7047@arlingtonnaacp.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Authors:

Mr. Julius D. Spain, Sr., President, Arlington Branch NAACP
 Ms.Carolynn Kane, Member, Arlington Branch NAACP
 Dr. Emma Violand-Sánchez, former Arlington School Board Member and Chair

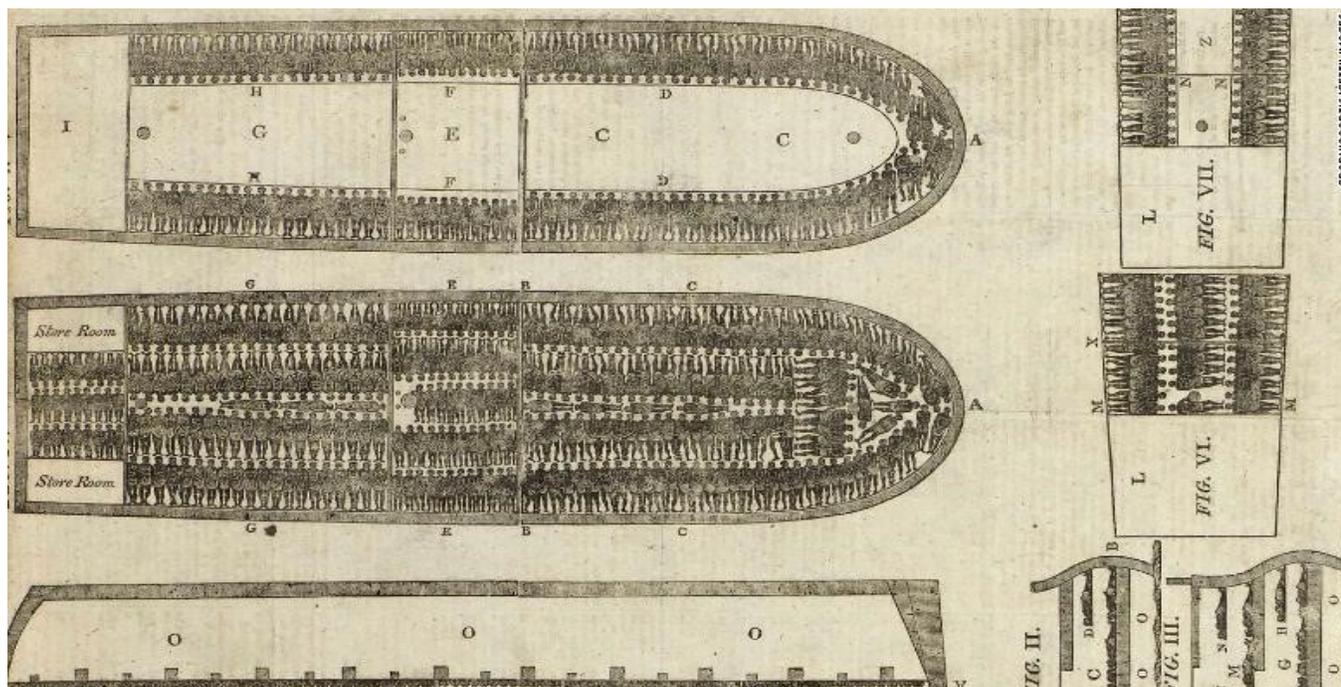
SYMBOLS MATTER

Arlington County's most prominent symbol is its logo and seal. A symbol that is everywhere ... on government correspondence, uniforms, buildings, vehicles, websites. A symbol of a slave labor camp. A symbol of the southern plantation economy designed to ensure White privilege and Black subjugation. A place that the National Park Service named, "Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial." This is the symbol placed in the center of our flag. A divisive and racist branding of our diverse, usually progressive community. It is a symbol that divides, rather than unites us. Yet, despite community members bringing this problem to their attention, it appears that the County Board is uninterested in changing its logo. Instead the County proudly states in its manual that this symbol reflects its "values ... identity ... traditions;" and tells residents that there are "good sides" to this racist plantation symbol.

We ask, how can the County have courageous conversations on race, tackle the inequities in Arlington, heal the deep historical wounds here or enact its platform to address racial inequities when it will not confront and change its own symbol? If it refuses to acknowledge its own blindness to the logo's meaning, it cannot. The County Board must end its embrace of this symbol of Black bondage, oppression and pain. The County's Robert E. Lee Memorial logo, flag and seal needs to be "retired" and a new era of inclusiveness and equity ushered in immediately. We call on the County Board and County Manager to stop delaying, put this item on the Board's Agenda, and vote. Now.



A New DNA Study Offers Insight Into the Horrific Story of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade



This drawing of the Liverpool slave ship Brooks was commissioned by abolitionists to depict the inhumanity of the slave trade by showing how Africans were crammed below decks.

(CNN): Much of what we know about the horrors of slavery in the Americas comes from historical records. But new research shows that evidence of the slave trade's atrocities can also be found in the DNA of African Americans. A study conducted by the consumer genetics company 23andMe, published Thursday in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, offers some new insight into the consequences of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, from the scale at which enslaved Black women were raped by their White masters to the less-documented slave trade that occurred within the Americas.

It's one of the largest studies of its kind, thanks in part to the massive database of 23andMe customers that researchers were able to recruit consenting participants from. The authors compiled genetic data from more than 50,000 people from the Americas, Western Europe and Atlantic Africa, and compared it against the historical

records of where enslaved people were taken from and where they were enslaved. Together, the data and records tell a story about the complicated roots of the African diaspora in the Americas. For the most part, the DNA was consistent with what the documents show. But, the study authors said, there were some notable differences. Here's some of what they found, and what it reveals about the history of slavery.

It shows the legacy of rape against enslaved women. The enslaved workers who were taken from Africa and brought to the Americas were disproportionately male. Yet, genetic data shows that enslaved women contributed to gene pools at a higher rate. In the US and parts of the Caribbean colonized by the British, African women contributed to the gene pool about 1.5 to 2 times more than African men. In Latin America, that rate was even higher. Enslaved women contributed to the gene pool in Central America, the Latin Caribbean and parts of

South America about 13 to 17 times more. To the extent that people of African descent in the Americas had European ancestry, they were more likely to have White fathers in their lineage than White mothers in all regions except the Latin Caribbean and Central America.

What that suggests: The biases in the gene pool toward enslaved African women and European men signals generations of rape and sexual exploitation against enslaved women at the hands of White owners, authors Steven Micheletti and Joanna Mountain wrote in an email to CNN. That enslaved Black women were often raped by their masters "is not a surprise" to any Black person living in the US, says Ravi Perry, a political science professor at Howard University. Numerous historical accounts confirm this reality, as the study's authors note. But the regional differences between the US and Latin America are what's striking.

The US and other former British colonies generally forced enslaved people to have children in order to maintain workforces – which could explain why the children of an enslaved woman were more likely to have an enslaved father. Segregation in the US could also be a factor, the authors theorized. By contrast, the researchers point to the presence of racial whitening policies in several Latin American countries, which brought in European immigrants with the aim of diluting the African race. Such policies, as well as higher mortality rates of enslaved men, could explain the disproportionate contributions to the gene pool by enslaved women, the authors wrote.

NOTE: For article's conclusion, follow link <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/26/us/dna-transatlantic-slave-trade-study-scen-trnd/index.html>



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Steward Today to Preserve the Past

*****Members, highlight your events below. Get the word out at no charge!*****

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Upcoming Events 2020

- August 1-Oct 15
Virginia Africana Assoc.
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COVID and African American Sites

Please write to us to let us know how your site is fairing during this challenging epidemic. Detail lessons learned and best practices as your museum struggles to get through. Experiences will be developed into a report to be shared across the state of Virginia and in the summer issue of *Horizons*.

- August 8
City of Alexandria
Black History Museum
901 Wythe St.

Alexandria, VA
Contact:
703.746.4356

Equal Justice Initiative

1 pm-3 pm

The City of Alexandria invites the public to attend the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) Community the *Remembrance of the Lynching of Benjamin Thomas* Project. The meeting will memorialize one of two documented lynchings in Alexandria's history.

- Entire Month of August
City of Alexandria
Black History Museum
901 Wythe St.
Alexandria, VA

Contact:
703.746.4356

30-Day Challenge

Build your social justice

muscles this summer! As our nation comes to terms with their legacies of racial injustice, take the 30-Day Challenge to exert positive change.

- Oct. 23
Virginia Africana Assoc.
VAA 2020 Virtual Conference
Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone. Address to be provided closer to event. You can also dial in using your phone. Phone number will also be provided closer to event. Access code will be provided closer to event.

**What's going on in your area?
Let members know here!**