

## Judge Cavedo

Events and new information arising during the past few days give us grave concerns about the continued involvement of Richmond Circuit Court Judge Bradley B. Cavedo in the legal cases regarding the Confederate statues on Monument Avenue.

Judge Cavedo has issued an indefinite injunction barring Gov. Ralph S. Northam from removing the state-owned statute of Confederate Robert E. Lee from Monument Avenue.

He also, in a separate case, has issued a 60-day injunction barring Mayor Levar M. Stoney and the City of Richmond from removing any more Confederate statues. That order was issued late last week, after work crews had removed the last of the city-owned statues on Monument Avenue and others in Monroe Park and on Libby Hill. At least one city-owned Confederate statue remains standing and is impacted by Judge Cavedo's order.

We believe that Judge Cavedo should never have heard these cases for several reasons. He lives in the Monument Avenue Historic District where the Lee statue stands and where many of the city-owned statues stood before being taken down. We believe that's a conflict and should preclude him from hearing any of these cases because he potentially stands to financially benefit – or lose – in property value and tax treatment with the statues gone.

Also, Judge Cavedo's comments from the bench show that he has too much of an emotional investment or attachment to the statues and cannot render an impartial decision. He has called protesters "rioters" and a Confederate an "American war veteran," and criticized Mayor Stoney for his handling of the early protests that resulted in Richmond having three different police chiefs over the course of a little more than two and a half weeks.

Judge Cavedo also has shown flagrant disregard for the public when it comes to these cases. He allowed a plaintiff seeking to block the statues' removal to file anonymously, which, in our humble opinion, should not fly in a case with this much public interest. In this highly contentious and significant case that greatly impacts the residents of this city, the people — as well as the defendant, Mayor Levar M. Stoney — have a right to know who has filed the lawsuit to block the statues' removal. For all we know, it could be Judge Cavedo or one of his family members. By allowing an anonymous filing, Judge Cavedo has given a cloak of protection to someone who may not even live in Virginia or have legal standing to bring the suit.

The judge also held two initial hearings in the Lee statue case without notice to the public, to the media or to Attorney General Mark R. Herring as the lawyer for the Commonwealth. The hearings also were held without a court reporter present, so there is no record of what was said and done, all issues that have been criticized by Mr. Herring in his efforts to defend Gov. Northam's directive to remove the Lee statue.

Chillingly, an editorial Judge Cavedo wrote 43 years ago while an undergraduate student at the University of Richmond shows his disdain for Black people and many of our concerns.

In the editorial page column published in the April 14, 1977, edition of The Collegian newspaper, the longtime Richmond resident who attended Thomas Jefferson High School during the early years of school busing, complains about school desegregation and the "solicitous paternalism of the federal courts, which ... nearly wrecked my high school education by instituting a massive busing plan that caused more upheaval in my school and life than most people could imagine."

He also criticizes then-President Jimmy Carter's proposal to allow instant voter registration.

"This scheme will allow the parasites of this nation to become the dominating force in politics," he wrote. He said they "soak billions from the government" and "do not bother to register in advance ... and usually do not vote."

We know who he was talking about.

We have long held that neo-Confederate, neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan members and sympathizers may not be among those marching around the Lee statue carrying assault-style rifles and waving Confederate flags. Instead, they wear suits and robes and sit on our state and federal courts, hold CEO positions at our workplaces and run our schools, banks and criminal justice system, all making decisions that can have major negative consequences for the lives, livelihoods and opportunities for success for African-Americans and people of color.

Judge Cavedo's college editorial has gone viral on social media, raising the concern of several members of the General Assembly, which elects our state's judges.

While we acknowledge that a person's perspective can change over 40 years, this person clearly hasn't. Judge Cavedo's words then, and his actions now, speak loudly and clearly to African-Americans, people of color and people of conscience. They also bring into question his own biases and whether anyone of color standing before him in court has received a fair and impartial hearing.

For the best interests of our future and his reputation, we urge him to step down from hearing any of the cases regarding Confederate statues.

## Crepe myrtle in Downtown



Sandra Sellars/Richmond Free Press

## The enemy within

At least six Black children were killed during the "Fourth of You Lie" weekend. They weren't doing anything wrong, just attending a community picnic, or going to visit a grandmother, or riding in a car.

One of the children, Secoricia Turner, 8, lived in Atlanta. The day after the killing, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, emotionally addressed the killers.

"You shot and killed a baby," she said. "This random Wild, Wild West, shoot 'em up because you can, has got to stop. It has to stop." She went on to say, "Enough is enough. You can't blame this on a police officer. You can't say this is about criminal justice reform. This is about some people carrying weapons who shot up a car with an 8-year-old baby in the car. For what?"

In Washington, 11-year-old Davon McNeal, ironically attending an anti-violence cookout organized by his mother, was shot in the head. An 18-year old has been arrested, and there are two other suspects.

In Atlanta, Philadelphia, Chi-



cago, San Francisco and New York, our children are being murdered. We can get thousands to the streets for a Black Lives Matter protest. How many can we get out for Natalia Wallace, 7, killed in Chicago, or Jace Young, 6, of San Francisco who was killed attending a birthday party?

In 2019, 692 children under

### Julianne Malveaux

the age of 12 were killed or injured. In 2014, 603 were killed or wounded. The Gun Violence Archive, which has been counting gun deaths since 2013, states there were 733 child deaths or injuries in 2017, the peak year since the organization began collecting the data.

The murdered children are never the intended victims. Instead, somebody with more firepower than sense shoots into a crowd, not caring who they hit. And they've been killing our children.

I could write dissertations about why angry and unemployed young men are running around with guns, settling scores and securing reputations with no regard for others. But I'm sick of the sociological explanations and the excuses. I'm with Mayor

Bottoms. Enough is enough.

How do we stop it? How do we dismantle the gun culture that dominates so many of our inner cities? Will it take new laws? Harsher penalties for illegal gun use?

Conservatives are right to say we may lose fewer Black lives to police violence than to street gun violence. Even as we resist police brutality, structural racism and other inequities, we must fight the enemy within, the callous young men who engage in gunplay on public streets when anybody could be walking by. How to get through to them?

Dr. Cornel West, a professor emeritus at Princeton University, once described these young men as nihilistic, believing that life has no intrinsic value, simply not caring about social norms and moral values. Anyone who would shoot a deadly weapon into a crowd has no regard for human life. And perhaps one could argue that these young men do not value human life because human life has not valued them.

But I'm sick of making excuses for sociopaths, even as I understand the forces that created them. These shootings have to stop!

I love looking at Black children, looking at their small, partly

unformed faces and wondering what kind of adult they will evolve into. Too many gun-toting criminals ensure that some of our children won't have the opportunity to grow up.

Class differences among African-Americans mean that some fall asleep to the sounds of gunfire while others know shooting from television.

When we say it takes a village to raise a child, what happens to the villagers that would rob a child of life? We need to call these villains out. We need to ask their associates to call them out.

When you say Black Lives Matter when you march and chant, think of 11-year Davon McNeal, 6-year-old Jace Young, 8-year-old Secoricia Turner or 7-year-old Natalia Wallace. Their Black lives matter, too. What must we do to protect our children?

The writer is an author, economist and educator.

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## Rezoning best for schools

Headlines have ricocheted across the nation about Richmond City Council's support for removing the Confederate monuments.

While this is an important step, let us not be too quick to celebrate symbolism that is not accompanied by other sweeping and concrete changes to fundamentally improve our city.

One such change needs to be ensuring equity within our schools by demanding that the Richmond School Board again take up the initiative to drastically rezone Richmond Public Schools.

The state Department of Education's guidance for reopening schools calls for physical distancing and sanitation requirements. But attendance phases, masks and desks 3 to 6 feet apart are not enough.

As a Ph.D. candidate studying race, inequality and language at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education and a former RPS teacher, I am compelled to call on the Richmond School Board to finally put children before politics by rezoning across our racially and socioeconomically segregated schools.

Many of our most impoverished schools are too overcrowded to safely reopen. The elementary schools in South Side, and many other schools across the district, carry an average capacity of more than 100 percent. Of the two new elementary schools that thankfully will open in the fall, both will only replace

current buildings and will still not completely alleviate the overcrowding problem.

Trying to keep school-age children apart will be challenging enough, but will be impossible in schools bursting at the seams.

This overcrowding is not a new consideration. It is unlikely that residents have forgotten the months of public debate over

### Danielle M. Greene

rezoning that led to a lukewarm decision by the School Board that changed little, even in the face of severely overcrowded and strikingly racially segregated schools. With more than 24,000 students in the district, a mere 1,500 were affected by rezoning.

The board appeared more swayed by the thinly veiled "Massive Resistance 2.0" talking points from West End parent-advocates. Other concerned parents were instead offered a dangerous social experiment to move small numbers of Black students into wealthier white schools by lottery.

Despite claims to have the best interest of children at heart, little was done to balance the racially and economically stratified city. The decision was not "a step forward," as claimed by members of the School Board; it was a step to nowhere.

Nine of Virginia's Top 20 most segregated schools are in Richmond and nothing has been done about it.

In the wake of COVID-19, a responsible plan to reopen the district's schools must include a method to see the numbers balanced. If we are indeed serious about the safety of our most

marginalized students, then we must take action to see that their schools are capable of enacting measures that allow them to be distant from one another. As it stands, there are many schools in RPS that cannot meet that present challenge.

Rezoning will not happen overnight. But now is the time to think about big sweeping changes in education because the problems that we face are great. Any School Board member who is not committed to re-imagining what "could be" inside of Richmond schools does not deserve his or her seat. If the board's only concern is making it back to the inequitable status quo from which we came, then now is the time to reflect on whether those concerns are community-based or self-serving.

As we look toward reopening schools responsibly, focus should be centered on how to protect the city's most vulnerable students and families.

In 2019, the argument of prioritizing our students' ability to obtain equal and equitable educations through aggressive rezoning policies did not work. In 2020, in the light of public pressure for a more just society and for the sake of public health, the School Board should return to the table to make a good faith effort to reduce overcrowding through rezoning.

While they are at it, the board also should work to get rid of the racially and socioeconomically segregated schools. We cannot return to schools post-COVID-19 without it.

For the sake of this city, put our children first. Removing symbols and names is important, but it isn't nearly enough.

## The Free Press welcomes letters

The Richmond Free Press respects the opinions of its readers. We want to hear from you. We invite you to write the editor. All letters will be considered for publication. Concise, typewritten letters related to public matters are preferred. Also include your telephone number(s). Letters should be addressed to: Letters to the Editor, Richmond Free Press, P.O. Box 27709, 422 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23261, or faxed to: (804) 643-7519 or e-mail: letters@richmondfreepress.com.

## Buyer beware

We were not surprised that the developers of the defunct new Richmond Coliseum and Downtown development project ran to the welcoming embrace of Henrico County when their costly \$1.5 billion Navy Hill project was rejected last year in Richmond.

Instead of working out a solution to overcome the obstacles to a new Coliseum in Richmond, the developers took the easier route — a move to the county, where the planned project is larger and even more expensive.

The project, now called GreenCity, would cost \$2.3 billion and would be located on 250 acres in Henrico off Parham Road between Interstates 95 and 295, on the headquarters site of the former Best Products.

It, too, would have retail and office space, two hotels (compared with one in the Richmond proposal), 2,400 housing units (compared with 2,300 in the Richmond plan) and a 17,000-seat arena (compared with a 17,500-seat new coliseum in the Richmond proposal).

It also would have more greenspace than the Navy Hill project in Richmond and supposedly would create jobs and tax revenue to help pay for the bonds to finance the arena.

That all sounds fine and good. But we hope members of the Henrico County Board of Supervisors — and the voters in the county — will scrutinize the plan with the same intensity as Richmonders and the City Council to ensure the project's short-term and long-term viability and to protect the financial interests of Henrico taxpayers.

Certainly, while the developers believe making the project larger will help make it easier to pay off the 30-year debt, Henrico residents should look at the attendance and financial projections underpinning the arena. The rosy projections offered by the developers in Richmond were just that — too rosy, according to analysts. Those involved with the project claimed a new Coliseum would generate attendance of more than 600,000 people a year to concerts, sporting and other events. But in 2018 before it closed, the Richmond Coliseum had paid attendance of only 130,651, according to a firm that tracks such data nationwide. Of the top 200 arenas worldwide based on ticket sales, Richmond ranked 131st at the time.

The closer the time came to the vote by City Council, the more pressure the developers put on the city, with promises of bringing in a minor league hockey team and a top management company to run a new Coliseum and to attract top acts if it was approved. The developers also had at least one company promising to expand into the planned office tower and promising to create 1,000 new jobs if the Navy Hill project went forward.

We hope Henrico voters and the Board of Supervisors don't get sucked into that same high-pressure sales vortex that may cause a whirlwind of shortages for county taxpayers to make up.

We also expect that Henrico officials ultimately will ask the City of Richmond for financial support for the new arena because it is being touted as having a regional benefit and draw. But we never heard Henrico or Chesterfield officials volunteer to help pay for or support a new Richmond Coliseum.

Nor have we heard any early talk about creating affordable housing in the new GreenCity plan, or any assurance of minority participation in its construction. There are so many unanswered questions.

When the newness and excitement of the GreenCity announcement wears off, we hope that astute and level heads will prevail with a heaping amount of discernment.

As a region, Richmond and its neighbors are all connected. What happens to one jurisdiction can impact us all.

We are eager to see how this plays out with our Henrico neighbors.

## Step aside, Ms. Showalter

When a public servant fails to serve the public, then she or he should step down from office or be removed.

That's why we join with Mayor Levar M. Stoney, two recent Richmond City Council candidates, the state Democratic Party and others who believe Richmond Voter Registrar Kirk Showalter should resign or be fired.

Ms. Showalter has done a disservice to Richmond voters for years, with a trail of documented problems and issues for which she has been called before state elections officials to explain. Most recently, Ms. Showalter failed to properly plan and handle the mounds of mail-in ballots officials across the state and the nation correctly anticipated in the Nov. 3 election because of the pandemic.

According to reports, Ms. Showalter left until the last minute the opening and processing of thousands of ballots mailed in by Richmond voters. She apparently didn't have the number of workers needed to help with the important job and failed to inform her bosses — the Richmond Electoral Board — about that fact until it was too late, according to James M. Nachman, the board's chairman.

Additionally, was it poor training — a complaint that has dogged Ms. Showalter in the past — that caused election officers in six city precincts to close up shop and go home on election night without reporting results?

How could something like that happen — and in six different precincts?

That, combined with other issues under Ms. Showalter's control, caused voters to believe — based on information that her office reported to state officials — that a candidate had won an open City Council seat by a slim two dozen or so votes, only to find out days later when all the votes were reported that he actually had lost the race by more than 1,000 votes.

We understand that the pandemic forced changes during this election that we all had to adjust to. But we found it difficult to understand how and why Ms. Showalter's staff gave incorrect information about the time, places and dates of early, in-person voting three different times to Free Press staffers who called inquiring about it. Two of those calls were made within 30 minutes of each other.

We believe providing incorrect information to the public about when and where people can vote is an impediment to voting. When informed about what the Free Press staffers experienced, Ms. Showalter bristled at this factual report and said she didn't "need a lecture" and that many of her workers were making meager hourly wages.

By also failing to keep an adequate list of problem mail-in ballots so that those voters could be contacted and remedy the problems, Ms. Showalter was a roadblock to untold numbers of voters whose ballots may not have counted.

Was this intentional?

We don't want to surmise.

But any registrar whose actions impede the keystone of democracy — voting — should be fired.

## Sunset at The Carillon in Byrd Park



Regina H. Boone/Richmond Free Press

# The DNA of a Black woman

There is something magical about a fearless, intelligent, incorruptible Black woman — a woman willing to sacrifice and face any obstacle she must for a greater cause than herself. Black women have been, and continue to be, the crucible of fortitude. Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Fannie Lou Hamer and thousands of others have been the bedrock of African-American progress.



Chuck Richardson

I realized in my late 20s that if you want to get it done, you better have Black women involved. That was when I, in 1977, ran for and won a seat on the first majority Black City Council in Richmond. It

and profound personal battle. She admonished the men who chose to disregard my history of service to my country, and more directly, to the African-Americans in Richmond. Rev. Goshen stood with the same solidarity and courage that defined her foremothers, "Don't abandon the bridge that brought you 'cross!" she demanded. My spirit rose to the ceiling.

It has indeed been a bridge, one more river to cross for Black Americans. Two hundred fifty years of slavery and Jim Crow seems to have developed a certain DNA in Black women, because to watch as your child is torn away, or your man absolutely emasculated and denied any dignity, to have your body raped and to endure a brutalized life of labor, something had to evolve in the DNA of Black women.

A new measure of courage, strength, dignity and faith saved them — the crucible of fortitude. They marched on and we march on today. America is more divided perhaps since slavery itself, but Black women have our backs, still enduring, fighting the good fight.

Women like my own sister, Valerie Richardson Jackson, the former first lady of Atlanta, who persevered with me as one of the first students integrating our high school, becoming one of the first Black women to attend the Wharton School of Business — which is now led by a Black woman — working and paying her way through, earning her MBA. She went on to market General Foods products and gained a regional role at Trans World Airlines corporate headquarters in New York. Because a strong, smart Black woman is not to be passed over, she won the heart of and married a man who was certainly the most consequential politician in the history of Atlanta — the late Mayor Maynard Jackson. Maynard always said of Valerie, "She enables me."

The nation recently has come to know two more amazing Black women — Democratic activist Stacey Abrams, and Sen. Kamala Harris, now the Vice President-elect. Ms. Abrams showed her ability early, in front of the very Atlanta City Hall that Maynard occupied. She led a large group of university students calling on the mayor to address student issues. Maynard was impressed and invited her to meet with him. Afterward, he gave Ms. Abrams her first job in politics. The rest is history — a heroic race for governor of Georgia and a voter registration movement that is unprecedented and driving the numbers to heights heretofore unseen. She



From left, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, former Atlanta First Lady Valerie Richardson Jackson and Democratic activist Stacey Abrams.

was the determination of Black women, some more than twice my age, that made the history possible.

When those Black women spoke, weathered by storms of racism, deprivation and personal abuses, it changed the atmosphere. A crowd of timid, doubtful or unfocused lambs became ferocious lions. People today might speak of my legacy of achievements in Richmond, but they don't know the source of my confidence. I can't recall the number of times strong Black women lifted me and forged new inspiration.

There were older women, some who did not walk easily, who would return with the full number. One of them said to a young person, "You don't win elections with good excuses — you need voters!" Women like Bessie Jones, Elaine Dunn or Luetta B. Wooldridge, who were managers and coordinators for my campaigns. And they stood with me in difficult times when very few had the will.

The Rev. Sarah Goshen, an older Black woman with a calm but convincing demeanor, stood up in a storm of attacks on my character during a controversial

and profound personal battle. She admonished the men who chose to disregard my history of service to my country, and more directly, to the African-Americans in Richmond. Rev. Goshen stood with the same solidarity and courage that defined her foremothers, "Don't abandon the bridge that brought you 'cross!" she demanded. My spirit rose to the ceiling.

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launched a democratic movement that already has become a model for the nation.

Valerie has always been a strong supporter of both Stacey Abrams and Kamala Harris. Three friends, three Black women, three lessons we should take from them — and history. With a Black woman becoming vice president, we should keep in mind what it took because we will need it going forward — patience with diligence, courage with wisdom, boldness with conviction. In other words, Black women.

*The writer, a former 18-year veteran of Richmond City Council, is founder of the National Organization of Rehabilitated Offenders.*

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