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PHOTO BY SHAYLA BAILEY

# Students across the country rally for gun reform

SAFFEYA AHMED  
Staff Writer

More than 5,000 students and community members across the state participated in the “RPS Non-Violence March on the Capitol” March 24 in conjunction with the national March for Our Lives protest.

The marches were organized in response to the recent school shoot-

ing in Parkland, Florida that left 17 students and faculty members dead.

The student-led march began at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School where Mayor Levar Stoney and Sen. Tim Kaine spoke in support of student activists and in favor of gun reform.

Richmond Public Schools, in partnership with several other Richmond organizations, including Moms Demand Action-RVA,

the Richmond Peace Education Center and the NAACP-RVA, organized the march.

“It’s disgusting that (the government) allows these weapons that are hurting children to be handled by anybody who can legally purchase them,” said Maddie Cassidy, an eighth-grader at Tuckahoe Middle School who marched Saturday.

Marchers made their way to the Virginia State Capitol, walk-

ing nearly a mile and a half.

“I don’t feel like I’m safe sometimes when I go to school,” said Campbell Jebo, fifth grader at Tuckahoe Elementary. “It’s kind of scary to think that I’m going to school, but maybe I won’t come home today. I don’t think that’s fair.”

One sign read “My friends and I want diplomas, not bullet wounds.”

“This isn’t the America they taught us about,” said Darien Wy-

att, freshman at the University of Richmond and member of the Richmond Peace Education Center. “This isn’t the America of life, liberty and happiness.”

Members of the Richmond Peace Education Center remembered the lives lost to gun violence in Richmond and surrounding counties last year, reading their names and holding a moment of silence in their honor. After the mo-

ment of silence, a member of the Richmond Peace Education Center asked the crowd who had lost someone to gun violence to raise their hand — about one in every six hands in the crowd rose.

“Enough is enough,” said executive director of ACLU Virginia, Claire Guthrie Gastañaga.

*Continued on page 3*

## Flamenco fever hits Richmond



PHOTO BY HOLLY DESALVO

Over 100 people attended the VCU Flamenco Festival VII over the weekend.

SAFFEYA AHMED  
Staff Writer

The VCU Flamenco Festival VII brought southern Spanish culture to Richmond this weekend.

The festival consisted of three performances and one “master class,” in which a flamenco expert taught attendees the art of playing the guitar. Featuring renowned international flamenco artists — including Francisco Mesa, Ana Ines King and Torcuato Zamora — about 100 people frequented each performance.

“[Flamenco is] something that people usually don’t see, and it tends to surprise people,” said Leah Kruszewski, a flamenco guitarist who helped organize the festival.

Kruszewski studied classical guitar at VCU and studied flamenco in Spain, where she now lives. In addition to organizing, she performed at the festival Friday night.

Friday’s performance featured award-winning dancers, Francisco Mesa and Ana Ines King, performing alongside the Latin Ballet of Virginia. Kruszewski played the guitar.

“(Flamenco) has quite a different energy than most kinds of music,” Kruszewski said. “It’s really powerful and often improvised.”

Saturday night featured a concert-style show, in which flamenco guitarist Ricardo Marlow immersed the audience with ornate rhythm and song. Marlow was joined onstage for two per-

formances by his wife, flamenco dancer Sara Jerez and vocalist Hector Jose Marquez.

Attendees enjoyed Marlow’s renditions of traditional flamenco.

Halfway through his performance, he reflected on where his love for flamenco stems from.

“Flamenco is definitely a different type of music,” Marlow said. “It really resonated with me.”

The three performers ended the night with an improvised encore piece, as the audience cheered on. Marlow also taught the “master class” earlier on Saturday, showing attendees the technique behind his guitar artistry.

*Continued on page 8*

## Ex-Gov. Wilder sues VCU over assistant’s treatment

FADEL ALLASSAN  
Managing Editor

Former Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder is suing the dean of the VCU school with his namesake, claiming his administrative assistant was the subject of verbal harassment.

The lawsuit, first reported by Style Weekly, was filed in Richmond’s Circuit Court March 19. It asserts the dean of the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, John Accordino, verbally assaulted and abused Angelica Bega, Wilder’s administrative assistant, last November.

Accordino called Bega “obscene names,” threatened to fire her, and accused her of violating human resources rules and “questioned and insulted her intelligence,” according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit says VCU Pres. Michael Rao refused to properly address Accordino’s actions and the university’s vice president and provost, Gail Hackett, conducted a “farical and corrupt investigation,” after Wilder met with her and Rao to notify them about Bega’s allegations. Rao and Hackett are both named as defendants.

When Wilder met with Rao, Hackett and Kevin Allison, Rao’s Senior Assistant, Hackett assured everyone present that Bega did not want to file a complaint against Accordino, according to the lawsuit, but Bega later denied to Wilder she had ever told Hackett that, and stated “unequivocally” that she wanted to move forward with a complaint.

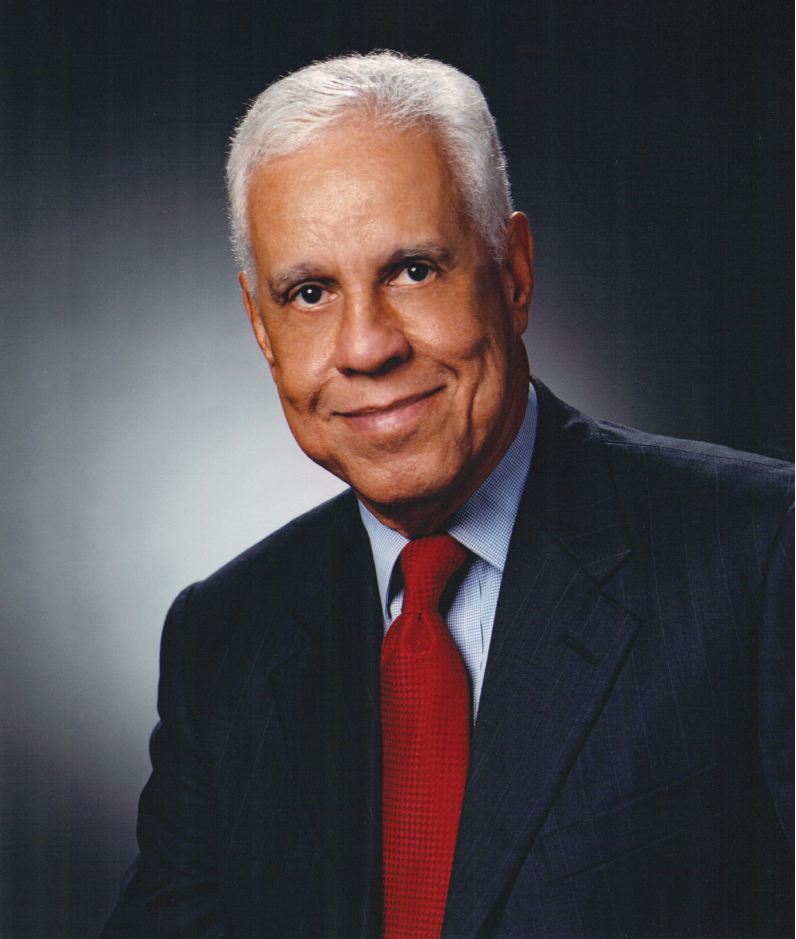


PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Pres. Michael Rao is named as a defendant in Wilder’s lawsuit.

“Upon being confronted with Ms. Bega’s statement, it was conceded Ms. Bega had never stated that she did not wish for her complaint to move forward,” the court document says.

The complaint says Wilder told Rao and Hackett the provost’s office was “compromised and unable to faithfully process” Bega’s complaint. He then reported Accordino to VCU’s Human Resources

department as sexual harassment.

The complaint says Wilder was not present when the incident between Accordino and Bega occurred, but Kristine Artello, a professor at the Wilder School, first notified Wilder of the incident.

A spokesperson for VCU refused to comment, but said the university has not been served with a lawsuit.





CNS BRIEFS

‘We Value Work’: Richmond Employers Recognized for Backing Living Wage

GEORGE COPELAND JR.

Richmond community and business leaders gathered Thursday at the Washington NFL team’s training center to celebrate and discuss efforts to ensure a living wage for workers.

Census Data Shows Growth in Northern Virginia, Decline in the South

RYAN PERSAUD

Population is booming in Northern Virginia and shrinking in many rural localities in the southern and southwestern parts of the state, according to data released Thursday by the U.S Census Bureau.

New Law Would Lower GED Age Requirement

SCOTT MALONE

It will be easier for Virginians who drop out of high school at 16 or 17 to earn their high school equivalency diploma if Gov. Ralph Northam signs a bill approved by the General Assembly.

Virginia Health Rankings Reveal Disparities Among Regions

CAITLIN BARBIERI

The affluent suburbs of Northern Virginia are the healthiest communities in the state, and lower-income localities, especially in the southern and western parts of the commonwealth, have the most serious health problems, according to a recent study.

Final Hearing on Carbon Bill; Northam to Veto GOP Measure

TIANNA MOSBY

Proposed regulations on power plant carbon emissions to help lower pollution 30 percent by 2030 drew a variety of responses from citizens and environmental advocates at a public hearing by the state Air Pollution Control Board. prevention training available to all school employees.

These stories are courtesy of VCU’s Capital News Service. The full stories can be found at [vcucns.com](#).

Aashir Nasim wears many hats, and he just added a new one: VCU’s chief diversity officer

SARAROSE MARTIN  
News Editor

The Division for Inclusive Excellence is VCU’s most important asset, according to Aashir Nasim.

“You have seen the surveys and you’ve heard the anecdotal evidence — the comments from faculty, staff and students that say, “what attracted you to VCU?”, Nasim said. “Almost everyone says it’s the diversity.”

Nasim ended the nationwide search for the division’s vice president early March, taking effect April 2. His passion for inclusivity began when he was a student himself, diving into social justice with a desire to transform lives.

“I saw psychology as a discipline, as an opportunity to allow me to do that and work with people, collaborate with individuals and communities,” Nasim said.

He studied psychology and biology as an undergrad, and transferred to Howard University to study developmental psychology as a graduate student. He went on to teach at James Madison University before coming to VCU in 2008.

In 2012, Nasim had the opportunity to serve as interim chair of the Department of African American Studies. In this role, he was able to transform the curriculum, increasing the number of students in the program from 12 to more than a hundred in a couple years.

He got students involved in more research, internships and community engagement internships. This opportunity launched Nasim into becoming a pioneer for innovative urban problem solving.

It began with an idea to bring together multiple disciplines to solve problems.

“But you know, everyone thinks their ideas are the best thing until other people start talking about them and I think the way that we see iCubed now is dozens upon



PHOTO BY ERIN EDGERTON

After a nationwide search, Aashir Nasim was appointed as VCU’s new vice president for the Division of Inclusive Excellence.

dozens of hands that have touched it to shape it into what is today,” Nasim said. “And there’s going to be more hands that touch is to shape it and what it could mean for VCU tomorrow.

In 2015, Nasim went to the Office of the Provost as a special assistant to develop the Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry, and Innovation or iCubed. The institution enables collaboration between VCU and the Richmond community through research programs, ultimately helping develop solutions to urban challenges.

As director, Nasim brings together faculty from different disciplines, working with community partners to develop trans-

disciplinary teams.

“These teams really focus on particular community challenge and these community challenges could be related to health disparities, it could be related to racial and social injustice issues,” Nasim said. “My goal is really to facilitate the development and success of these teams.”

Along with directing iCubed, Nasim works as the interim senior vice provost for Faculty Affairs, focused on faculty recruitment and retention and is a member of the Massey Cancer Center Research Program where he researches health disparities.

“My research over the past decade and a half is really focused on tobacco related health dispari-

ties to really understand the burden of health disparities for vulnerable populations,” Nasim said. “And to really understand the social determinants of health and use that information to develop prevention interventions.”

With the collaboration of these skills, Nasim became the perfect candidate to implement the new Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Action Plan, with an ultimate goal of making VCU a model university for inclusivity.

“Aashir is a respected scholar who is admired around the nation and who brings an important lens of diversity and inclusion to his work and to our university community,” said VCU President Mi-

chael Rao told VCU News. “He is a thoughtful and passionate leader who embodies VCU’s mission of tackling difficult problems to serve the public good.”

Nasim said he hopes to shape the discourse for diversity and inclusion using what he’s learned within the Psychology and African American Studies Departments and with iCubed.

“We wanted to model that and take it to scale and see if there’s some of the same things we can do at the division level for Inclusive Excellence,” Nasim said.

Oregon Hill residents are upset about plans to demolish historic buildings



PHOTO BY MIKEY MAULDING

J.D. Lewis Construction Management purchased the buildings on the 800 block of West Cary Street with plans for a \$18.5 million apartment complex.

SAFFEYA AHMED  
Staff Writer

Oregon Hill residents are protesting plans to tear down four historic buildings on the 800 block of West Cary Street, where a four-story, 100-unit apartment complex is set to take their place.

The \$18.5 million project, 805W will encompass the four vacant buildings and area behind them, according to Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Richmond residents and members of the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association held a rally Mar. 18 in opposition to the construction of 805W. More than 50 people stood outside the buildings set to be torn down, demanding the

property be saved from demolition.

Todd Woodson, president of the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association, said the buildings are particularly pertinent to Richmond’s historic character.

“(These buildings) are the gateway to our neighborhood and to downtown,” Woodson said. “(They) should be conserved and used as a part of the development.”

All four properties are separately listed on both the State and National Register of Historic Places, Woodson said.

Two of the buildings date back to the 1830s, making them two of the oldest buildings in the Oregon Hill Historic District, according to a history about the structures by Charles Pool of the

Oregon Hill Home Improvement Council. The other buildings date back to the early 1900s.

The two oldest properties were built by Benjamin Green, an architect who played a pivotal part in the early stages of Oregon Hill’s development. In detailing the history of the block, Pool said the properties cannot be torn down.

“These structures connect with the ... legacy of Benjamin Green in constructing modest working class dwellings in the neighborhood,” Pool said. “The highest priority should be placed on preserving these important landmarks.”

A statement released by the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association expressed the organization’s belief that the structures

hold enough historic significance to stay standing.

“The existing buildings on this block are profoundly important to the intrinsic fabric of our historic district,” the statement read. “These buildings stand as a testament to the craftsmanship and ingenuity of our forefathers. They deserve to be saved and preserved for the future.”

The 805W project isn’t the first time new building projects have resulted in the demolition of some of Richmond’s most historic structures. Woodson said construction around the Oregon Hill overlook had a similar result back in 2002 – when more than three full blocks of antebellum housing were torn down to make space for a student housing development.

In addition to public demonstrations, Richmond residents are protesting the 805W project through an online petition. The “No805W — Save Oregon Hill Historic Buildings” petition has garnered local support, with more than 900 signatures since its publication on Mar. 18.

Woodson said the Oregon Hill Neighborhood Association is fighting the project construction and plans to take the matter to the Board of Zoning Appeals, if necessary.

“Oregon Hill has a big heart and soul to its community,” Woodson said. “Part of that soul is in our love for the history and the architecture that has drawn us here and we are committed to preserving it.”



# Mumps cases appear on Virginia campuses

NIA TARIO  
Staff Writer

At least 20 confirmed cases of mumps emerged on Virginia college campuses in the past month. One confirmed case at VCU came shortly after nineteen cases were confirmed at James Madison University — where at least 14 students and five faculty and staff members have been diagnosed with the viral infection. According to VCU Student Health Services, at least two measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccines are required for full-time students. The list of required shots also includes at minimum three Hepatitis Bs, one Meningococcal, one Tetanus and one polio — or documentation of positive titers to prove immunity or exemption. Dr. Michael Donnenberg, VCU Department of Internal Medicine professor, supported the provision that all students should have two MMR vaccines by the time they enter college. “Everybody should have up-to-date vaccinations, so I would advise people to check,” Donnenberg said. “There is no 100 percent effective vaccine. The mumps one is pretty

good. The reason you need two is that not everybody is protected by one and that you may lose protection over time.” Mumps outbreaks can occur at any time, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC also reported that the MMR vaccine can be up to 95 percent effective against the current strains of mumps when administered twice, as opposed to as low as 49 percent when taken once. The remaining percentage of people who have up-to-date shots but may still catch the virus would likely have less severe symptoms and a faster recovery, according to a JMU statement. Neha Pondicherry, a pre-medicine track student who has conducted research on immunology, said making the choice to not be vaccinated against infections like mumps is dangerous. “These are known diseases that have proven cures,” Pondicherry said. “If you’re not going to get the vaccinations for a potentially dangerous disease then that’s not being smart in any way. That’s like knowing about the risks of STDs and choosing not to use the protective measures available to you.”

VCU students were first made aware of the confirmed case of mumps on March 13. Dr. Gail Hackett, provost and vice president for academic affairs, emailed a statement telling the community be on alert for signs and symptoms, contact Student Health Services if symptoms develop, and seek care and self-isolate if they suspect they have the virus. Symptoms of mumps include fever, muscle pain, headache and fatigue, followed by swollen salivary glands. Signs can appear two to three weeks after an initial exposure to an infected person’s respiratory droplets — through sneezing or coughing — or by kissing or sharing utensils. Most people get over mumps within two weeks after the onset of symptoms. Donnenberg said keeping to yourself if you are sick is the surest way to prevent outbreaks from occurring. “Mumps is a self-limited infection — people get it and then they get over it,” Donnenberg said. “It’s really important to minimize transmission to other people.”

# Local activists march for stricter gun laws



Richmond Public Schools organized a youth-led march that brought activists to the Capitol.

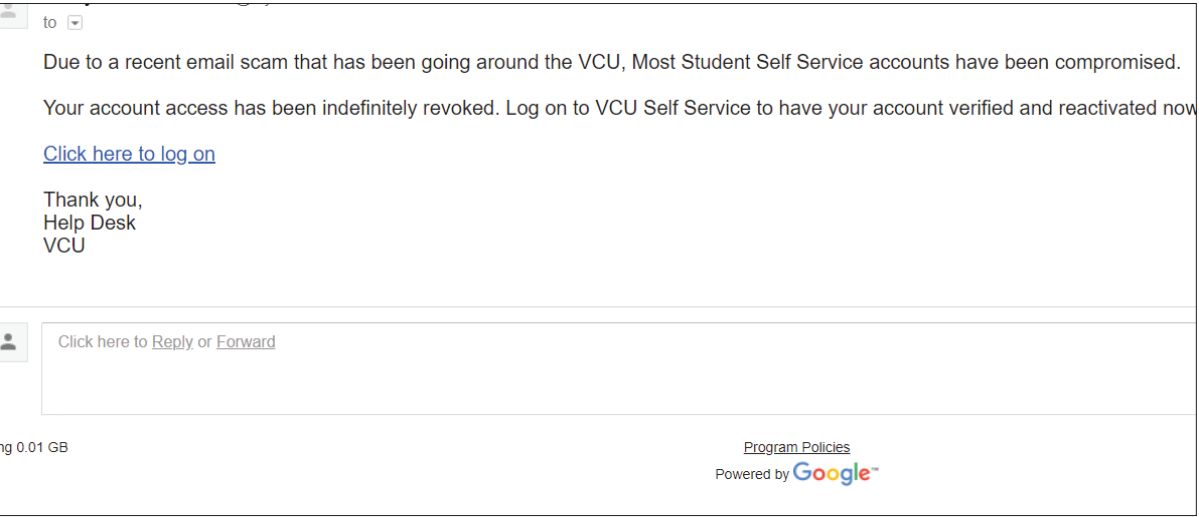
Continued from page 1

Gastañaga urged the crowd to show up in elections, emphasizing voting as the key to moving forward. Currently, one in five people between the ages of 18 and 29 vote, she said, and that needs to change. “We need to stop privileging some voters over others,” Gastañaga said. “We have to vote the change we want to see and it’s time for us to all share the right to vote.” Attendees chanted “Vote Them Out” as Gastañaga finished speaking.

“We have to vote the change we want to see and it’s time for us to all share the right to vote.”  
Claire Guthrie Gastañaga, Executive Director, ACLU Virginia

The RPS Non-Violence March closed with a student’s rendition of Charlie Puth’s “See You Again.” As the marchers thinned out, hundreds of signs were left by the Capitol and hung around the George Washington Statue. “Kids should feel safe when they go to school,” said VCU freshman Kyra Byers. “(They shouldn’t) feel like they’re going to die.”

# Don’t get tricked: Students are being targeted in a job scam email



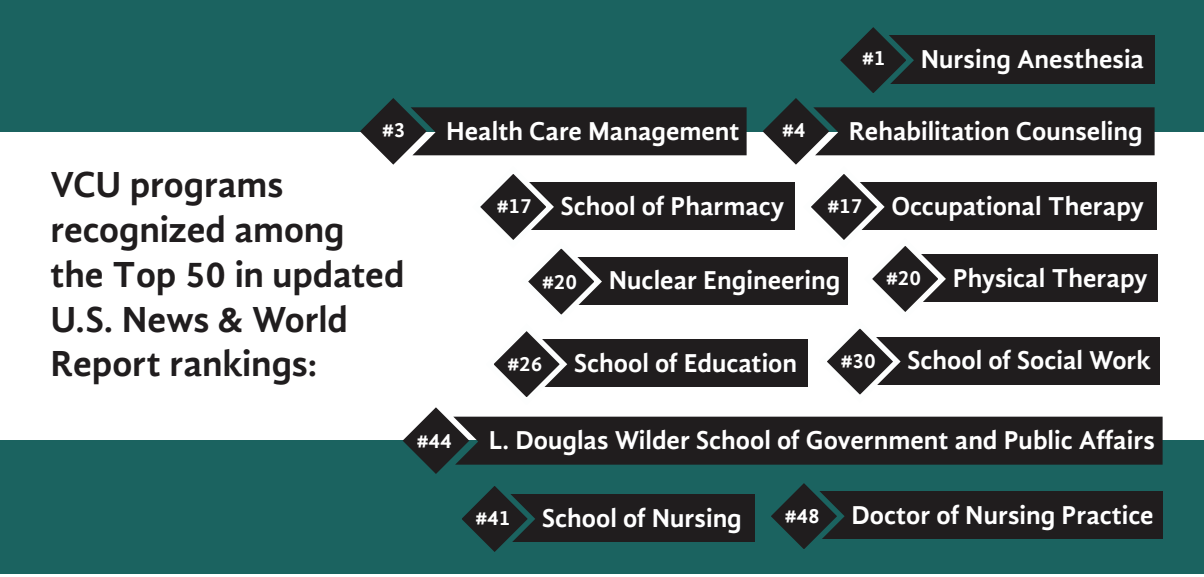
Some VCU students are victims of a scam offering a job in exchange for financial information.

LOGAN REARDON  
Contributing Writer

Students have reported “scam emails” sent to their VCU email accounts offering appealing work for students in exchange for personal financial information. Dan Han, VCU’s chief information security officer, said scammers typically give a job offer to a student and then attempt to trick them into depositing fraudulent checks into their bank accounts. “While the students may see an initial increase in funding, once the money is wired or spent, the check will bounce, thus leaving the student with lost money and possible implications from financial

fraud,” Han said. The emails from scammers are feigned to look legitimate and are not associated with the purpose of the email’s proposal. Han said no legitimate employer would provide a job offer via email without undergoing a formal application and interview process. “If something sounds too good to be true, then it is likely a scam,” Han said. Han said students targeted by scammers are chosen at random, with no apparent pattern. They may be targeting enough students to trick a percentage of them, without drawing attention. After discovering the scam, VCU blocked the scammer’s email

addresses and service providers and sent alerts to warn students. “Thanks to a number of diligent students who recognized and reported the scam to the VCU IT Support Center and Information Security Office, we were able to catch this round of scams early, stop the scammer in their tracks, and warn students who may have responded to the scammer and/or received the scam,” Han said. VCU is urging students to report any potential cyber threats or scams to the IT Support Center by calling them at (804)-828-2227 or by sending an email to itsc@vcu.edu.



# If you think our building is interesting, wait until you see what’s inside.

Institute for Contemporary Art

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# sports

Stat of the Week  
Loyola-Chicago is the first 11 seed to make the Final Four since VCU in 2011.

## Diamond-a-dozen

### Baseball sweeps URI, streaks to 12th straight win



Junior infielder Zac Ching is hitting .280 this season with 15 RBI and 12 runs scored. Ching has also went deep once and swipped one bag this year.

ADAM CHEEK  
Contributing Writer

VCU baseball posted a 3-0 record over the weekend after their Wednesday night game against Virginia Military Institute was postponed, sweeping the Rhode Island Rams at The Diamond over the weekend.

VCU's offense was at full speed on Friday and Sunday, as they topped Rhode Island by scores of 5-2 and 4-2, respectively, but Saturday presented a different challenge. Both Ram teams played a scoreless duel for 15 innings, with VCU scoring the winning run on a wild pitch in the bottom of the final frame. The Rams improved to 16-8,

extending their winning streak to 12 games after a shaky start to the season.

#### SUNDAY

The Black and Gold used their offense to overpower the Rams from up north on Sunday. Both teams scored a run apiece in the second inning, with Rhode Island adding one more to take an early 2-1 lead in the opening half of the third.

VCU answered right back, however, plating two in the bottom of the fourth and the latter half of the seventh. Freshman infielder Liam Hibbits led VCU by going two for three at the plate and senior Daane

Berezo added a double and drove in a run of his own. Sophomore infielders Steven Carpenter and Hogan Brown each added an RBI as well. Junior starting pitcher Michael Dailey went three innings, while freshman Devin Dunn took the mound afterward to tally his first win of the season. Junior Mac McCarty secured the save to raise his season total to 11, tied for first in the nation.

#### SATURDAY

Saturday's game was a nearly five-hour affair, stretching 15 innings with 341 strong in attendance. Senior Sean Thompson led the Black and Gold from the

mound with seven shutout innings. McCarty and sophomore Hayden Moore each added three shutout innings of their own. Brown highlighted the lineup with three hits, while Berezo and sophomore Paul Witt racked up two hits apiece. Witt also extended his hitting streak to 14 games, but neither team recorded any extra-base hits and together they left a total of 25 men on base.

Myriad stranded runners defined both teams' performances on Saturday, including Rhode Island's eighth-inning effort, which put runners at the corners. VCU's pitching, however, came through in the clutch and slammed the door on any runs crossing the plate.

Berezo and Witt led off the 15th

inning with back-to-back singles, and senior Mitchel Lacey laid down a bunt, sacrificing both runners forward a base. Rhode Island elected to intentionally walk junior third baseman Zac Ching, and the third throw went wide, allowing Berezo to cross the plate with the winning run, closing out the day with a walk-off victory for VCU.

#### FRIDAY

The Black and Gold reached a milestone of 10 consecutive wins Friday, opening their series against Rhode Island with a 5-2 win. Both teams' first in-conference game ended in favor of VCU, as sophomore Connor Gillispie pitched six

scoreless innings, striking out nine.

McCarty tallied his 10th save of the season and sophomore Brett Willett drove in two runs. Berezo went two for four, and both Lacey and Brown added two hits each. VCU took the lead in the latter half of the fourth inning and padded that advantage with two runs in both the sixth and seventh frames. Rhode Island managed two last-ditch runs in the top of the ninth, but the Black and Gold shut down the "other" Rams to secure the win for VCU.

*The surging Black and Gold will look to continue their run of dominance against the Cavaliers of the University of Virginia Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Diamond.*



Sophomore midfielder Keriann McTavish has scored 11 goals and dished out seven assists this year.

## Lacrosse falls at No. 16 Virginia Tech

RODNEY ROBINSON  
Contributing Writer

After setting two program records for goals and margin of victory in their previous match against LIU-Brooklyn, The Rams fell to No. 16 Virginia Tech 22-7 on the road.

The Hokies got off to a quick start Wednesday, scoring the first two goals of the match. The Rams made a comeback attempt, but the Hokies built an 11-2 lead, and ended the half with a 13-4 advantage. Freshmen Anna Koniiencki opened the second half for VCU with a goal, bringing the deficit down to 8.

However, Virginia Tech reeled off three consecutive goals, giving the Hokies a 16-5 edge. Tech never looked back as they scored 6 consecutive goals to end the match. In the matchup, The Hokies created more opportunities to score and extend the lead. The Rams were

outshot 38-21 and the Hokies held a 29-16 advantage in shots-on-goal. The Rams only managed to win 9 draw controls, while the Hokies controlled 22.

The Rams were led offensively by junior attacker Molly Barcikowski and sophomore midfielder Keriann McTavish. Both Barcikowski and McTavish scored two goals for the Rams. McTavish scored two goals on just two shot attempts and Barcikowski added a game-high four assists for the Rams. The Black and Gold were led defensively by sophomore goalie Gillian Belfiore and junior midfielder Sofia Emond. Belfiore led the Rams with 5 saves and Emond tallied a team-high 3 draw controls.

*The Rams have dropped 6 of their first 8 games on the young season. VCU looks to bounce back as they begin A-10 play against cross town rival the University of Richmond Thursday, March 29*



# THE PATRIOT WAY

## PRESS BOX

Analyzing the precarious cultural tension in Foxborough

**ZACH JOACHIM**  
Sports Editor

Rigid decorum can only veil widespread tension so much in the age of modern media. In Foxborough, Massachusetts, the levy is ready to break on the Patriot Way.

The New England Patriots have been to eight, and won five, Super Bowls in the 21st century, reached the last seven AFC Championship games, and won the AFC East nine consecutive seasons. Their level of dominance the past decade is unprecedented, and entitlement is beginning to stretch the seams of unity.

Quarterback Tom Brady, coach Bill Belichick and owner Robert Kraft rule the modern NFL, despite their recent let down at the eleventh hour of SB LII. But their days upon the throne may be numbered, according to multiple reports alleging tension between the three cornerstone figures of the Patriots dynasty and amid the organization as a whole.

An ESPN report by Seth Wickersham in January detailed “serious disagreements” between Kraft, Belichick and Brady. Chief among these disputes were Brady’s close friend, trainer and health guru Alex Guerrero. The team’s long term designs at quarterback (Brady is 40, yet insists he plans on playing another 3-5 years) and decision to trade former backup and golden boy Jimmy Garoppolo (now the NFL’s second-highest paid player in San Francisco) for a second-round pick. In addition to Belichick’s authoritarian, militaristic coaching style.

Tension at 1 Patriot Place is not limited to the iconic trio at the helm. Pro Bowl tight end and high profile celebrity Rob Gronkowski is reportedly considering retirement or a move to the WWE due to growing displeasure with Belichick’s rigid system of decorum.

“Stay Lit, be FREE, be HAPPY,” Gronkowski tweeted at former teammate Danny Amendola after the slot receiver signed with the Miami Dolphins.

Gronk’s cryptic wisdom did not stop there.

“Foresee your own future, control your own temptations, and your destiny will be not just be reached, it will just be starting,” Gronk wrote.

I’m not going to begin trying to decipher that one, so let it suffice to say this elegant piece of prose indicates indecision on Gronk’s part. In addition to Amendola, last year’s leading rusher Dion Lewis, starting left tackle Nate Solder, and shut down corner and Super Bowl L hero Malcolm Butler have all departed New England this off-season.

The NFL’s Death Star looks more vulnerable than it has in a decade.

“Bill’s (Belichick) done a phenomenal job of holding the building together,” one Patriot staffer admitted in the ESPN report.

I’m not saying the end is near. To be frank, anybody who doesn’t expect New England to compete for a title next year hasn’t been watching the last 10 years of the NFL closely. Brady is the greatest to ever grace the gridiron and “Darth Hoodie” is the best coach

to ever saunter the sidelines.

But this is the beginning of the end. Tom will someday succumb to Time, albeit with six or seven rings to assuage any hit his pride will take in finally admitting mortality.

Belichick is another story. His authoritarian style of leadership may have an even more limited

lifespan.

Militarism in coaching runs against the cultural spirit. Players are assuming increased agency across the board in the sports world, and the revolt in New England is only a manifestation of this trend.

At least Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr is hip.

Steph Curry, Kevin Durant and the defending NBA Champions coached themselves in February.

“I told (our players) the other night after the last game that they were gonna do it. It’s their team,” Kerr said. “I think that’s one of the first things you have to consider as a coach: it’s not your team, it’s not (the owner’s) team.

It’s the players’ team. They have to take ownership of it, and as coaches, our job is to guide them. But we don’t control them. They determine their own fate.”

Careful, Bill. They are taking ownership, and they will determine your fate, if you don’t tread lightly.

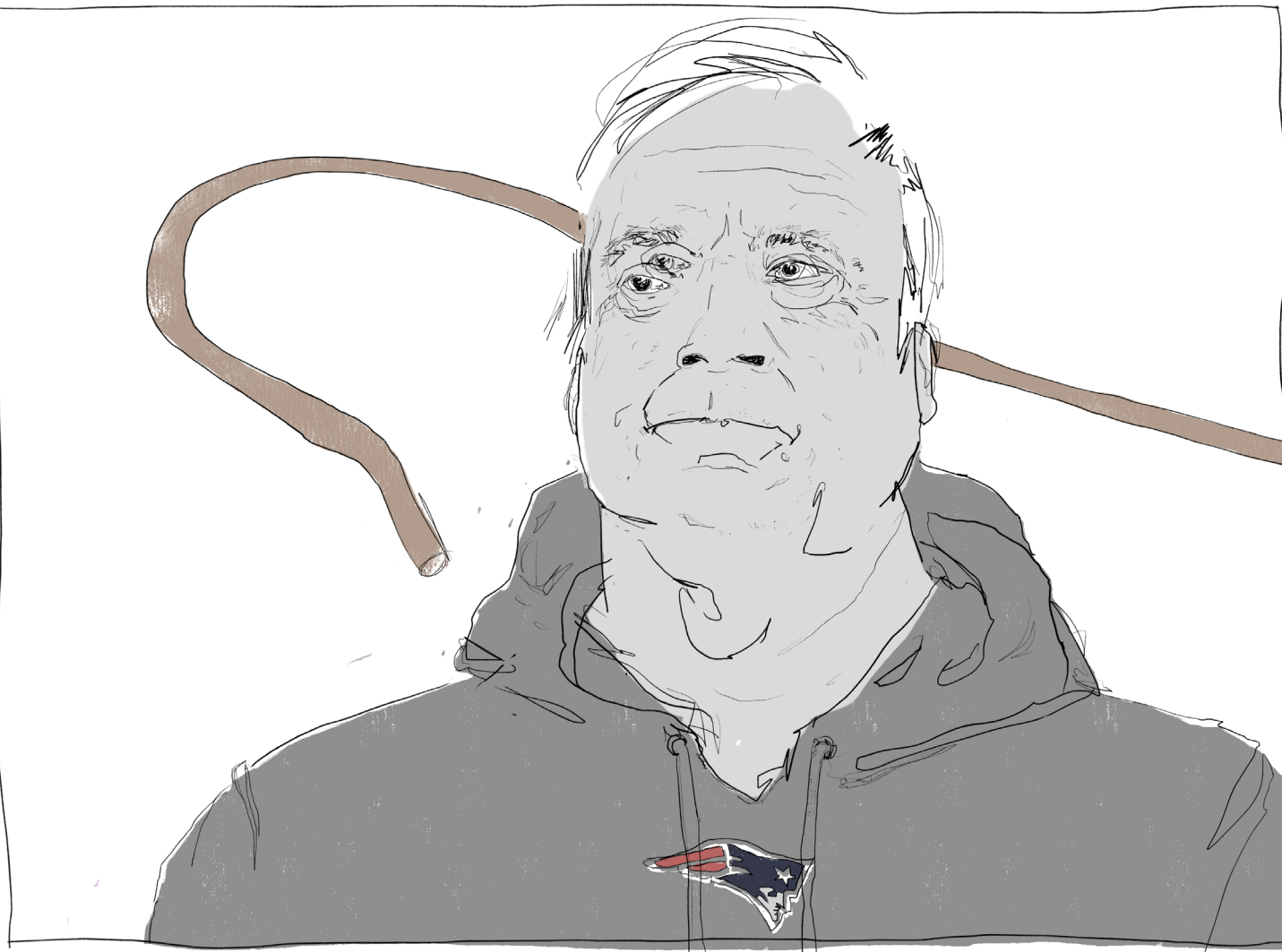


ILLUSTRATION BY IAN DUFFUS

DUFFUS

## For these students, rugby is more than a sport



PHOTO BY JACOB MEDLEY

Rugby’s first team placed fourth at a tournament hosted by Old Dominion this weekend.

**FADEL ALLASSAN**  
Managing Editor

The weather was far from ideal last Friday when a group of 30-odd student-athletes braced the bristling wind chills of an early-spring night at Cary Street Field. But members of VCU’s club rugby team are used to practicing in these conditions.

Some students were out hemorrhaging their livers at bars or parties last Friday night. Others used the time to decompress after a challenging week filled with textbooks and lectures. For the rugby boys, however, it was time to prepare for a trip to Norfolk, where Old Dominion University hosted a tournament the next day.

Twelve teams competed in the invitational last Saturday, including VCU’s first and second teams. The first team placed fourth in the tournament, falling 28-14 against North Carolina State, a team which had been to the national club tournament just a year earlier.

The club’s climb from a winless season in 2016 has been remarkably swift. The team finished the fall 2017 season with a 5-2-2 record, and made it to the semifinals of the Cardinals Collegiate Rugby Conference tournament, losing to eventual champions Virginia Military Institute.

“Last summer, we said we want to be a good team in the fall,” said club president and junior Scotty Orrock. “We lifted and ran all summer and we finished the best we have since I’ve been here.”

Like most Americans, an overwhelming majority of members of VCU’s club team knew little about Rugby before joining the team.

Despite its optical similarities to American Football, the sport doesn’t get the same fanfare in the United States as it does around the world — in countries like South Africa, England and Australia.

Like pretty much all sports, the aim is to score more points than your opponents. You can run with the ball, kick it, tackle an opponent with it, or throw it to a teammate — so long as you don’t pass forward. The game’s unpredictability has earned it the description of “controlled chaos” among members of VCU’s team.

It mixes the physicality of football with the conditioning of basketball and soccer, Orrock said.

“It is so much fun,” said Sean Boyce, a senior. “It is so much freaking fun.”

The game’s intensity is what drew Boyce to it. He joined the club after playing football in high school. Although he suffered a concussion last season, Boyce swears rugby is less likely to leave

a player injured than football because of a key difference between the sports.

“The biggest difference between football and rugby is the pads in football which give a false sense of security,” Boyce said. “With the right technique, the tackling in the sport can leave a player with a few bumps and bruises after a game — but not injured.”

For guys like Laith Sanjak, a junior who majors in mass communications, the game’s challenges — both physical and mental — provide an edge for when life presents its own.

“In rugby when something happens you have to adapt to it,” Sanjak said. “Sometimes you have to get out there and keep moving forward after you mess up and after you know you’re behind.”

Sanjak and others share a bevy of these off-the-field experiences with their teammates, with whom they are constantly spending their down-time with. It’s not unusual for the boys to be gathered together hanging out at a teammates house on a weeknight. It’s equally as ordinary for them to be studying together at Cabell Library.

“I love playing and hanging out with these boys,” Sanjak said. “It’s definitely a brotherhood for me.”

## Tennis hot at Texas Tamale Company Rice Invitational

**NILE MCNAIR**  
Contributing Writer

### MEN VS. WICHITA STATE

VCU wrapped up the Texas Tamale Company Rice Invitational in Houston Sunday by falling to Wichita State University 4-0. The Shockers took the doubles point by winning on the No. 2 and 3 courts despite sophomore Javier Amantequi and junior Victor Lima’s 6-2 win on the No. 1 doubles court.

Wichita State victories on the No. 1, 3 and 4 singles courts secured the match early on. Junior Arvid Noren and freshman Inigo Torre Martin each forced third sets in their singles matches, but their contests went unfinished.

### WOMEN VS. ETSU

After their game was postponed Tuesday the ladies’ tennis team hosted and fell to the East Tennessee State University Buccaneers 5-2. The Rams were riding high coming into these doubles and singles matches, as their record sat at 11-2 and they sported a nine game winning streak.

ETSU got off to a hot start, winning the first three matches of the day. They did so in dominating fashion as well — all three games went only to two sets. VCU responded well, reeling off back to back wins to pull the match score to 3-2.

Sophomore Noumea Witmus defeated her opponent Alejandra Morales in three sets, 7-5, 3-6, 7-5, in her victory. Kanako Yano fol-

lowed up Witmus’ win with one of her own, doing so with ease as her match only took two sets. Yano one both sets with scores of 6-4 and 6-0.

In the end the Rams were unable to dig out of their early deficit as they lost in singles matches by a score of 4-2. In doubles three games were played but only two finished. The matchup of freshman Paola Exposito Diaz Delgado and Witmus for VCU versus Yi Chi Ma and Melissa Esguerra did not finish because the team match had already been decided.

In the two doubles games that did finish, ETSU claimed victory in both, with scores of 6-4 in both matchups. The Rams win streak ended on Saturday at the hands of the Buccaneers.

Look for women’s tennis to bounce back next Saturday against George Washington University at noon.

### MEN VS. RICE

This weekend men’s tennis went all the way down to Texas for the Rice Invitational where their first game on Saturday was against the hosts, who the Rams defeated 4-2.

The tandem of Noren and Torre Martin was outstanding in their doubles appearance, handing out a 6-1 match victory against their opponents Ashton Duke and Eric Rutledge for Rice.

To cap off the doubles victory for the Rams the dynamic duo of Lima and Amantequi came through with a victory of their own, 6-3. Next, in the singles

VCU closed out strong to take victory in singles competition 3-2 despite falling behind 2-0 early. The Rams made the comeback with three consecutive victories to steal away the singles points.

The last match pit Ignacio Rivero Crespo of VCU against Jared Aiman of Rice with the previous four singles matches totaled at two apiece. Crespo completely dominated his opponent, winning both sets 6-0.

### MEN VS. TEXAS A&M CORPUS CHRISTI

Down in Texas the Rams played two games on Saturday. Their second game of the day was against Texas A&M University Corpus Christi.

The doubles matches were a struggle for the Black and Gold. VCU ended up losing two out of three games. VCU dominated A&M Corpus Christi 6-1 in the first doubles game.

The men battling in the singles matches would have to carry VCU to an overall match victory, and they did just that. Out of six singles matches, VCU came away with four victories. Amantequi and Torre Martin won their individual singles within only two sets.

Through Saturday the Rice invitational was a major success for the Rams. Scoring two victories on the day, this one against A&M Corpus Christi by a score of 4-2.

Men’s tennis will return to action at home Friday, March 30 when they take on the Monarchs of Old Dominion University.



PHOTO BY MICHEL MAULDING


Women’s tennis fell to 11-3 last weekend after their nine-game win streak was snapped.



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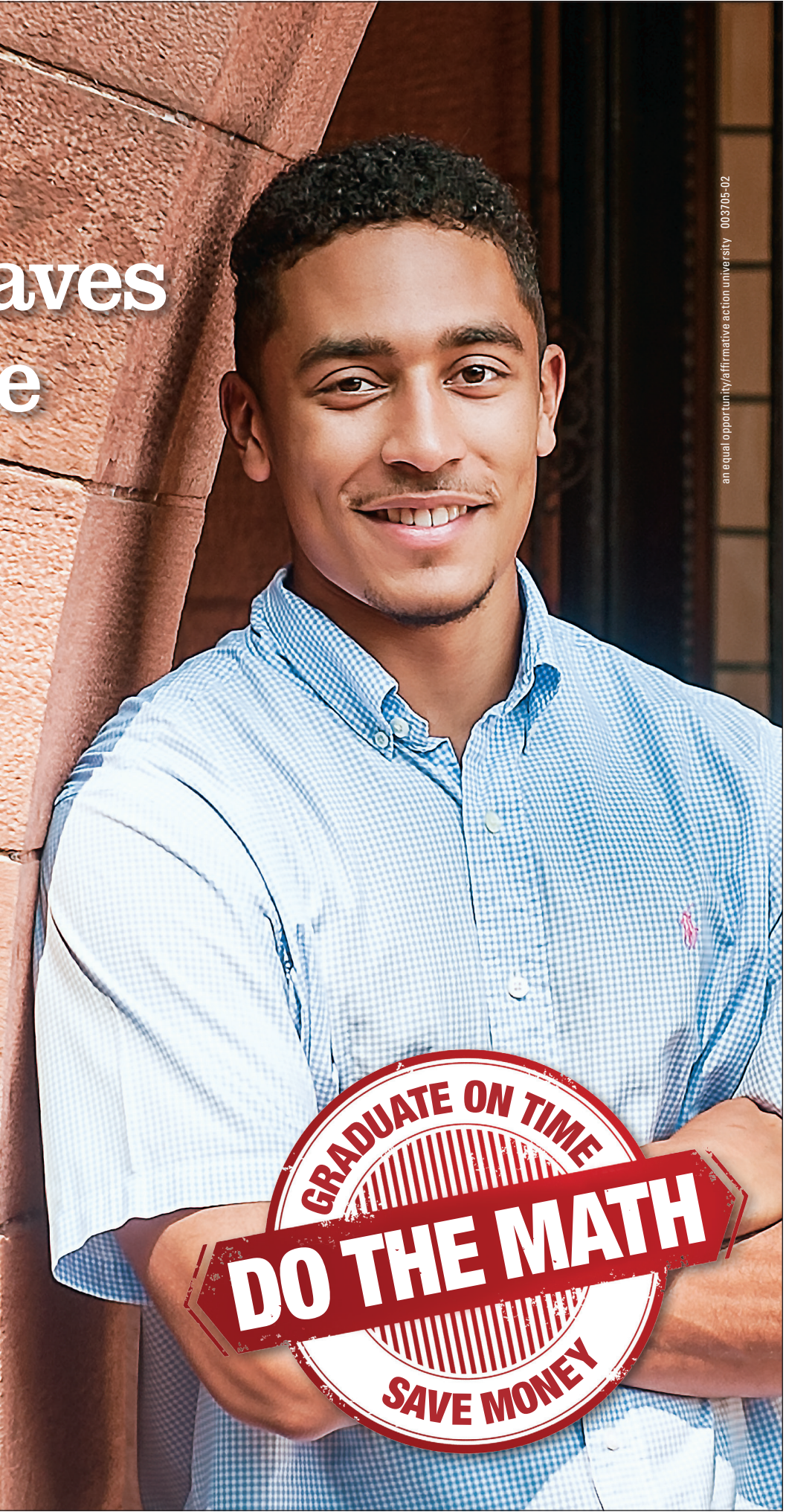
– Myles Sully

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On this day  
Dr. Jonas Salk announces the development of a polio vaccine on March 26, 1953.



“Du soleil dans mes yeux” is the first film directed by Nicolas Giraud, who also co-wrote and starred in the work.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY DR

# French Film Festival 2018

## Lineup features history, culture and relationships

GEORGIA GEEN  
Spectrum Editor

More than 40 directors, actors and other film specialists traveled from France to speak at the screenings of 26 films shown at the 2018 French Film Festival hosted at the Byrd Theatre.

The festival is sponsored by VCU and the University of Richmond, organized and founded by professors at both universities. Some of the films, screened in French with English subtitles, educate on French history and culture.

“Un Français nommé Gabin”

The documentary — shown entirely in black and white, save for a few clips later in his career — centered around the life of 20th century French actor Jean Gabin, in addition to the developments in French history and cinema of the time.

Director and co-screenwriter Yves Jeuland said he went through more than 50 films to select about

200 excerpts for the documentary. He said he wanted to tell Gabin’s story combined with that of France.

“You can imagine, that is a long editing process that has to take place. It takes time,” Jeuland said. “Your goal is to tell a story and there are hundreds of stories.”

Born in 1904, Gabin started performing in music halls at age 19, motivated by his father who was also a performer. Gabin was one of the most popular actors in France for the majority of his career, which spanned decades.

Co-screenwriter François Aymé said the documentary’s creators were lucky to get the rights to all of the clips they wanted to use. In addition, Gabin’s children offered photos from their personal archives for use in the documentary. Most of the documentary consists of photos and clips from feature films, but several interviews with Gabin and other actors provide a dditional insight.

“We truly had a blast working on this film,” Aymé said. “He’s always a strong character, an independent

character, dramatic in the way he interprets things.”

Gabin was involved as an actor, selecting which directors he wanted to work with. Toward the end of his career, he was known for using innovative, modern language.

“He would develop friendships with these unbelievable screenwriters,” Aymé said. “Friendships to such an extent that then turned into, when they were doing their work, they would actually be writing dialogues thinking about how Gabin expresses himself, the vocabulary he uses.”

“L’Outsider”

Based on the true story of Jérôme Kerviel — a French trader who lost about 5 billion euros because of illegal trades in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis — “L’Outsider” was extremely popular when it released in France in 2016.

Arthur Dupont played Kerviel, a role Dupont said was unlike any other he had taken previously.

“I started to realize that this is



Of all the films I’ve made, I never had an experience like this that just pushed me to such a limit

Arthur Dupont  
Role of Kerviel

a guy who just decided to go out on his own and do what he wants,” Dupont said. “For this role, I really put my body, my emotions and a total engagement of myself into it.”

Kerviel rose in the ranks of one of the largest banks in the world, Société Générale, without a educational background in trading. Dupont says this is part of where the film’s title comes from: Kerviel was an outsider in his field.

As Kerviel makes increasingly risky decisions, the stress begins to take a physical toll. In order to portray this kind of emotion, Dupont said he had to rest frequently and set aside time to unwind.

He said he took brief naps to unwind during filming, and members of the crew played guitar to relieve themselves from the stressful storyline.

“Of all the films I’ve made, I never had an experience like this that just pushed me to such a limit,” Dupont said. “It was a great experience that I never had before in my career and I hope I’ll have it again.”

“Du soleil dans mes yeux”

French actor Nicolas Giraud produced, co-wrote and starred in “Du soleil dans mes yeux,” a

film following a mother trying to reunite with her estranged young son. The film hasn’t yet been released and will be shown in France in April.

The work focuses on the importance of intimacy, something Giraud said wasn’t a popular topic when he first wrote the film.

“I was really adamant on holding true to what I wanted to do with this because it’s my first film,” Giraud said. “It’s moments like this when I’m in a room with you and to see how you respond to it that I realize I did the right thing by holding onto that resolution.”

Giraud used time to develop the relationships between the characters, which he compared to cheese or a “good wine.”

“There’s this space where there’s a development and this coming out and flourishing due to time as well,” Giraud said. “Whether it’s a friendship, whether it’s a love that needs time to flourish and produce.”

# Panelists discuss political implications of hair

GEORGIA GEEN  
Spectrum Editor

For women of color, the ramifications of having certain hair textures can be difficult to navigate, according to participants in a panel hosted by The Broad on March 20.

Chelsea Higgs Wise, a member of The Broad — Richmond’s new “workspace and clubhouse” for women — moderated the discussion. She encouraged audience members to be vocal with anecdotes or questions, both of which appeared regularly throughout the evening.

Higgs Wise reflected on her own relationship with her hair, or lack thereof, being that most of it is shaved-off. This style “also sends a certain message,” she says.

For Meryem Karad, one of the event’s panelists, religion has played a role in how she views her hair. As a Muslim woman who doesn’t cover her hair, she says she has to deal with assumptions about how she practices Islam.

“Just because I don’t cover my

head doesn’t mean I’m not more faithful,” Karad said. “That’s the struggle.”

Karad currently works for the governor’s office, but previously held a corporate position. During the discussion, she recalled an experience in which a coworker told her she looked “so much more professional” when she straightened her naturally curly hair. Karad said she hasn’t straightened her hair in five years because of this interaction.

Panelist Brandi Summers, an African-American Studies professor at VCU, also addressed her experiences with hair and identity in relation to her career.

“There was a point in which I worked in corporate America which was really conservative,” Summers said. “So I had to adapt and negotiate my identity and how I wanted to express myself.”

Panelists and audience members also discussed how women of color, particularly Black women, are pressured to straighten their hair with relaxers, altering their natural

textures. As explained by panelist and owner of Parlor Salon, Mahri Jones, relaxers contain chemicals that break down the coiled bonds in textured hair. Many women, she said, feel obligated to do this to make their hair seem more “White.”

Higgs Wise turned to the audience to explain why it was “interesting” that Jones, the only White woman on the panel, discussed the science behind relaxers. She asked every woman who had used a relaxer to raise her hand, later asking those who didn’t identify as women of color to put their hands down. Nearly, if not every, hand stayed up.

“It is really important that we notice that the term relaxer and understanding your coils really is a piece for women of color,” Higgs Wise said.

Summers said hair length and texture was a “big deal” to her female relatives, who ended up with hair damage and other issues as a result of their styling.

“They were so interested in their hair and representing themselves in a particular way,” Summers said. “I

tried to shy away from that, but of course when you’re raised in that kind of community and culture, it’s hard to resist it.”

Panelist and author of children’s book, “My Hair is Fuzzy, My Hair is Cute,” Toni Winston discussed the idea that there is a difference in experience surrounding hair even amongst women of color. Looser, softer curls are considered less “offensive.”

“There is a safe zone when it comes to hair, what’s presentable, what’s not acceptable [in society],” Winston said.

Winston said she stopped going to the salon frequently because she didn’t want to spend so much time there. She said she also wanted to teach her daughter to love her natural hair instead of admire other hair textures.

“Then I began to understand the versatility [in terms of style] of hair being not relaxed,” Winston said. “I can’t get caught up in what somebody else likes. I’m not defined by my hair. I am who I am.”







Dancers Fancisco Mesa and Ana Ines King performed alongside the Latin Ballet of Virginia on March 23.

# Renowned dancers and musicians perform at flamenco festival

*continued from page 1*

Composed of intricate cante (song), baile (dance) and toque (guitar), flamenco dates back to 18th century Spain. Originating in the Andalusia region of Southern Spain, flamenco is centered around passion and intensity.

Flamenco dancers wear flowy, bright-colored clothing — typically red, sometimes with big floral prints — and block heels to make taps in a rhythmic pattern while dancing.

The singing and guitar-playing are characterized by power and emotion — the cantaores (singers) completely immerse themselves in the lyrics of the song.

Sunday afternoon, the Flamen-

co Festival VII hosted Torcuato Zamora, a renowned Spanish guitarist who began learning the art of classical and flamenco guitar at age 5. Zamora has played for the king and queen of Spain.

Zamora performed with dancers Estela Vélez de Paredez and Daniel Paradez to a full auditorium at the W.E. Singleton Center for Performing Arts, showcasing classical Spanish flamenco. His concert-style show wrapped up VCU's Flamenco Festival VII.

"I love that people get to see (flamenco) here in Richmond," Kruszewski said. "Usually you have to travel to see something like that."

# Vintage market raises money for cancer research

ALEXANDRA ZERNIK  
Contributing Writer

Vendors, collectors, makers and artists came together on March 25 at the Hippodrome Theater in Jackson Ward to sell products and network with the ultimate goal of raising money for the VCU Massey Cancer Center.

The Vintage for Lovers Market attracted those looking to shop, sell products, establish an in-person presence and make connections.

Inspired by a similar event held in the same place several years ago, Nicole Kappatos — owner of Blue House RVA, an online clothing boutique — coordinated the event with the help of her husband, family and friends.

"It is bringing people together in a historic place that's important to Richmond's history to sell their goods and support their small businesses and for a good cause," Kappatos said. "You walk through the door and you've done something good, even if you don't buy anything and it's exposure for anyone who makes, sells and curates these amazing things."

The event was promoted through Facebook and Instagram but grew a substantial and unexpected crowd, according to many vendors involved.

"This blew up on its own," Kappatos said. "I made a Facebook group and it just grew exponentially."

Kappatos reached out to some of the participating vendors and others reached out to her. Many of the vendors only have an online presence.

Kappatos said. "I made a Facebook group and it just grew exponentially."

Kappatos reached out to some of the participating vendors and others reached out to her. Many of the vendors only have an online presence.

**You walk through the door and you've done something good, even if you don't buy anything and it's exposure for anyone who makes, sells and curates these amazing things.**

Nicole Kappatos  
Market organizer

The Hippodrome Theater's history makes it the perfect venue to sell vintage products. The owner of the theater, Ronald Stallings, has a daughter who participated in the event as a vendor of Floral and Funk Vintage.

"It's a big part of Richmond's African-American history," Kappatos said. "This is where jazz happened. Billie Holiday performed on this stage."

The venue was filled with décor, accessories, vintage clothing, embroidery, trinkets and other goods. A photo booth and bar were also available to visitors.

"I think it's a collaboration of different talents, different creativities, different times in our world. I love to see what others are bringing to the table," said Nicki Metcalf, an artist and vendor at the event. "Richmond needs more of this."

Kappatos said she will host a similar event in the late summer or early fall with more people involved and another cause to donate to.



The market was an opportunity for online stores to have in-person interactions.

## Sam's Take

# "Pacific Rim: Uprising" needs better pilots to win the war

SAMUEL GOODRICH  
Staff Writer

"Pacific Rim" was released in 2013 with lot of hype, leading to a cult following in the U.S., despite a less-than-stellar box office return. Despite North American audiences not taking to the mech vs. monster blockbuster, Chinese audiences came in droves to see the monster movie love letter from Guillermo Del Toro.

Thanks to the increasingly important Chinese market, "Pacific Rim: Uprising" was put into production, though Del Toro stepped down as director. With first time film director Steven S. DeKnight taking the helm, the question became not how similar this sequel would be, but how it could still achieve success without its original captain.

Set nearly 10 years after the original film, the sequel follows the son of Stacker Pentecost, Jake, as he and fellow Jaeger pilot Nate Lambert must train a new generation of pilots to fight the Kaiju menace that is expected to return to Earth. With a tech company making new drone Jaegers, a dark plot reveals itself, sending the pilots back into action.

The movie's biggest strength was its impressive fight scenes and interesting setting realized with loving detail. Despite its larger budget, the film still had the sense of sincerity and childlike wonder found in other Del Toro films. His love of

robots fighting giant monsters was apparent in every frame.

With Del Toro reducing his role to producer, that sincerity is absent in "Pacific Rim: Uprising," resulting in the amplification of the original's biggest problems.

Similar to the original film, "Uprising" spends too much time with its cast of bland characters and yet not enough time developing them into characters viewers care about. There's talk of family and interpersonal bonds saving the day, but it's difficult to feel those connections when there are so many different plot lines. It's difficult to figure out character relationships until the the movie simply tells you how to feel at each story beat.

The actors are doing their best with what they have, managing to play the dramatic and comedic moments with an equal amount of mediocrity. John Boyega is as fun and charismatic as Jake, while Tian Jing proves once again how powerful of a force she is on screen as the leader of the drone production company.

The poor script and multiple storylines muddle the overall plot, which attempts to criticize drone warfare and celebrate interpersonal bonds. Sadly, the breakneck pace and odd editing leave little time to focus on even one of these ideas, leading to an uneven execution.

Luckily, "Uprising" finds its redemption in the same place its predecessor did: focusing on the giant, spectacle fights and developing the interesting near-future world.


The fight scenes between the Jaegers and the Kaiju feel massive and terrifyingly destructive. One sequence in Sydney, Australia pays special attention to how these massive machines can tear apart an urban city, putting the lives of thousands in severe danger.

This attention to detail is also seen in how the Jaegers operate, with the camera zooming in on different mechanical parts and slowing down to show the impact of every punch or blast. It's thrilling to watch, with every fight finding some way to wow the audience or show off a new way these giant machines work.

Yet, these fights also lack the sense of weight and impact felt in the original, where every movement seemed to take a massive amount of mental and physical effort. Here, the Jaegers are just as nimble and acrobatic as ninjas. While they make for cool "looking" moments, they lose the awe-inspiring, almost realistic feel of Del Toro's original.


"Pacific Rim: Uprising" is by no means a bad movie, in fact it's more fun and exciting than I was originally expecting. Yet, without Del Toro's touch and the studio's increased involvement homogenising the cast and plot for a perceived simple international audience, this film loses a lot of what made the original special in the first place.

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# opinions

## Quote of the week

“Though frequently criticized, no-platforming serves as an effective method for stemming the spread of white nationalist ideology.” — Jimmy O’Keefe

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## The rise of populism

Politics get more confusing every day with the distinction between the political left and right becoming less transparent. Some politicians have run away from the typical identification of being a Democrat or Republican and resorted to other tactics to employ their jurisdiction. The rise of leaders such as Viktor Orban in Hungary and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey is paired with a new form of politics that has been a phenom as of late: populism. Is it the political paradigm of the future?

Populism is a style of politics rather than a set ideology and denotes that a certain sect of people are going against an elite that they see as illegitimate. Populist leaders claim that they are fighting for the rights of the people and have a heavy notion of nationalism to accompany it. French politician Marine Le Pen urged in her campaign that immigration was the catalyst for such a high unemployment rate in France, with 10 percent of the French population affected. Her approach from thereon was to create a scapegoat from the number of immigrants flowing into France and claim that banning them would secure employment opportunities for French citizens. The annexation of immigrants and her rhetoric towards what she thinks is their effect on the economy speaks volumes to her nationalistic attitude.

A more recent reel of populism that has been seen all over the world is the political reign of Donald Trump in the United States. One would think that unbearable comments about wom-



**Populism is a style of politics rather than a set ideology and denotes that a certain sect of people are going against an elite that they see as illegitimate.**

Lawrence Jones III

en’s genitalia and immigrants would kill a candidate’s chances, so what is it that he did to convince enough individuals to vote for him? The key to his success is giving the people what they want, whether it is saying something specifically or employing action. A vast number of Americans have been worried about illegal immigrants in recent news, keying in on several different groups like undocumented Mexican individuals crossing the border and starting a life in a country where more opportunity awaits them. Targeting this demographic is Trump’s way of listening to the concerns of the people and appealing to their demands, and that is the essence of what a populist leader does.



ILLUSTRATION BY JACQUE CHANDLER

Other examples lie in countries like Germany, Italy and the Netherlands as recent elections show that populism is on the rise in both hemispheres and creating a new political climate all at the same time. Over fifty five percent of voters in Europe, roughly one third of the population, voted for an either left or right-wing populist candidate in their country’s election. The changing attitude that has corralled so many Europeans might create a drastic change to the current layout of the EU, with the possibility of other members following the footsteps of Britain in an anti-immigrant policy tirade mixed with high notions of nationalism to support their decision of leaving the organization. Although some populist leaders failed in their campaigns, like Dutchman Geert Wilders and Le Pen, their actions are only precursors for what future populist candidates have in store.

Contemporary news has informed us that the often subjective terms “left” and “right” are getting more blurry every day. Societies worldwide have strayed away from traditional governing and welcomed new forms of rule holding the conjecture that they would be treated better. Populism fits into the narrative of new political ideologies that are executed in hope for different results. It is quite possible that in future elections that we will see more populist leaders and other political deviations trying to obtain control over their nation.

— Lawrence Jones III

# It’s OK to deny fascists platforms

JIMMY O’KEEFE  
Contributing Writer

White supremacist Richard Spencer has given up. After months of touring colleges touting his white nationalist beliefs in search of recruits for the alt-right, Spencer announced in a YouTube video the show was over.

“When [the events] become violent clashes and pitched battles, they aren’t fun,” Spencer said.

The clashes he’s referring to are the result of counter-protesters who adhere to a principle called “no-platforming.” This means when someone is publicly speaking about any sort of racist ideologies, it is imperative protesters do whatever they can to ensure the speaker doesn’t get a platform to espouse their beliefs. This can be done by shouting over the speaker, blocking entrances to the event and sometimes physically confronting the speaker.

These criticisms of no-platforming can seem valid to the outside observer who sees nothing but the chaos that can arise from such tactics. However, in taking a closer look, it becomes more apparent no-platforming is an effective protest tactic that ultimately works in favor of the greater good.

No-platforming is a tactic frequently ridiculed by the media. Critics, such as centrist Democrats and just about everyone right of center, say no-platforming not only promotes violence, but also strips people of their right to free speech. Some worry no-platforming invokes a “slippery slope” where protesters will start by no-platforming white nationalists, but then move on to silencing more moderate groups, such as those who speak out against abortion.

Perhaps the most common criticism of no-platforming is that it sometimes invokes violence. While sometimes protesters will always prefer peace to violence, sometimes small scuffles are ultimately less damaging to society than the possibil-

ity of white nationalists gaining significant power to commit mass violence against people of color. The logic is that it’s better to do whatever it takes to nip racist and hateful ideologies in the bud before you have to fight against them for survival.

People throughout the political spectrum criticize no-platforming as an affront to free speech. This is especially prescient on college campuses, where there always seems to be a new story about speech issues. But a group of protesters shouting over a speaker is not censorship. Free speech is not violated unless it is government enforced. It can be argued that protesters shouting over a speaker can also be protected as free speech. It’s also important to remember that while the First Amendment protects against censorship, it does not guarantee anyone a platform or a speaking tour.

The idea that no-platforming invokes a “slippery-slope” can be easily dismissed after looking at history. Time and time again, those who seek to no-platform white supremacists disappear after the threat is defeated. There’s a reason you only hear about these issues when there is a resurgence of nationalistic politics.

No-platforming is commonly viewed as a form of self-defense. Mark Bray, a historian at Dartmouth College, has written that no-platforming began as a way for marginalized people to protect their communities from threats. This is contrary to the idea that people are no-platforming simply because they disagree with a point of view. Bray calls no-platforming “the product of generations of transnational struggle.”

Though frequently criticized, no-platforming serves as an effective method for stemming the spread of white nationalist ideology. And beyond that, it should be impossible for white nationalists like Richard Spencer to have fun organizing.

ILLUSTRATION BY YEWEI WANG





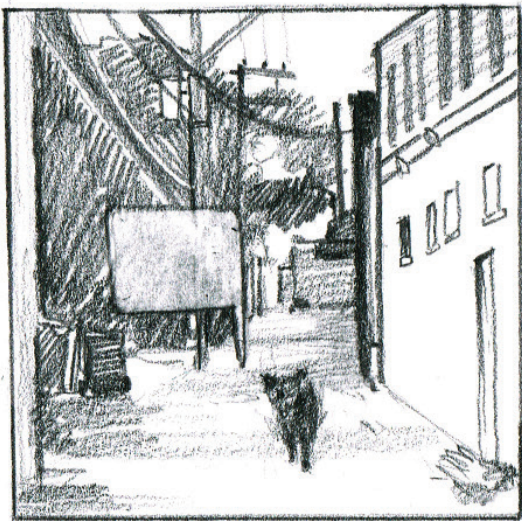
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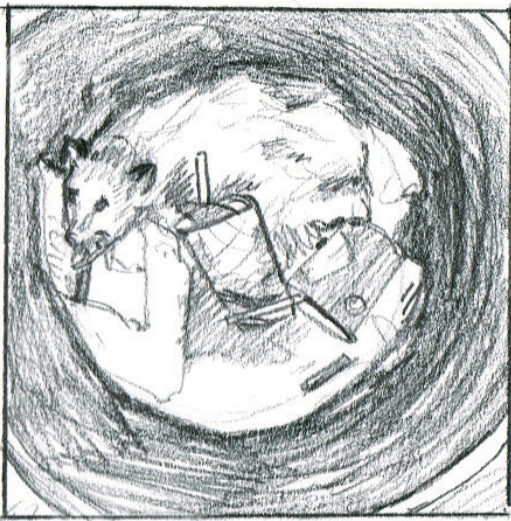
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ABOUT THE CT

The Commonwealth Times is the award-winning independent student newspaper at VCU, since 1969. The CT staff maintains all editorial and operations discretion. There is absolutely no prior review by the public, university or VCU Student Media Center administration or staff. The Executive Editor writes and manages the Operations Budget. The CT's Operations Budget is a reflection of independent advertising revenue accumulated throughout the previous academic year(s). Operations expenses include salaries, phone and internet, postage, professional memberships, award submissions and banquets, FOIA requests, programming costs and travel. Each spring, the CT staff elects the next year's Executive and Managing Editors, who then hire the remaining staff.

ADD YOUR VOICE

The opinion pages of The CT are a forum open to the public. Contributions are welcome by email to Katie Bashista, by mail or in-person at 817 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. 23220. Opinions expressed are those of individual columnists and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Commonwealth Times. Unsigned editorials represent the collective opinion of The CT staff. The Commonwealth Times strives for accuracy in gathering news. If you think we have made an error, please email the appropriate section editor. Corrections will appear on the opinion pages and/or online. One CT per person. Additional copies can be purchased at the Student Media Center for \$1 each.

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