The catastrophic sequence of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, with their accompanying floods, visited unimaginable devastation on New Orleans and the surrounding region, confronting us with the near-destruction of a great, celebrated, and unique American city. But the great human drama of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005 lies in their having set more than a million people in sudden movement. Rendering a human community’s home uninhabitable, or destroying its economic basis of survival, or both, disasters have historically given rise to migrations—the Old Testament abounds in plagues, fires, and floods that led to the prolonged wanderings of uprooted peoples. How have the humanities responded to this latest coupling of disaster and diaspora, and to others in the past?

Comparative study has been one humanities response. The Gulf Coast Hurricanes can be measured against other recorded hurricanes in their physical intensity at time of landfall (exceeded by Hurricane Camille of 1969 and the Florida Keys Hurricane of 1935) or by death toll (surpassed by the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, which killed somewhere close to 10,000 people, and possibly the Lake Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928, with over 1,800 deaths; the Katrina-Rita toll, well over 1,000, is still unknown).

Pulling the lens back from hurricanes to other disasters (natural or otherwise) and diasporas reveals a panoply of events. In 1837–1838, more than 15,000 Cherokee were put on a forced westward march in wintry conditions; over a quarter of them died. The Johnstown Flood of 1889 killed 2,200 Pennsylvanians in a population of 30,000, but detonated no vast out-migration. The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 killed close to 1,000 in a city of well over a quarter-million, but reconstruction and enormous in-migration lay in the near future. Thousands of slaves took to the roads and backwoods during the Civil War—"stale and wretched" to the white refugees of the Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans. Photo by Jon Lohman.
Disasters, Diasporas,
and the Humanities

Continued from cover

War, though propelled more by opportunities for freedom afforded by wartime chaos than by disaster, strictly speaking. The Mississippi River Flood of 1927 killed some 500 people and displaced more than 600,000. Upwards of five million African Americans departed the South in the century after Reconstruction, though they moved for many reasons and an epic exodus stretching over several generations can hardly be considered a single event.

What emerges as the closest U.S. historical parallel to the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005 is the “Dust Bowl” migration; the 1930s saw the departure of more than one million people from the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles and surrounding states in the south-central Plains. Erosion and drought created an ecological crisis that virtually destroyed agriculture—already pummeled by the Great Depression. At its worst, colossal dust storms darkened skies, choked lungs, and penetrated into homes through the tiniest cracks and seams. Historian James Gregory’s American Exodus traces this migration’s path to California, whose culture was shaken and ultimately reshaped by the influx of poverty-battered Plains migrants who came to be known collectively as “Okies.”

The diaspora triggered by Katrina and Rita, though, unfolded over not a decade, but literally a few days: the Federal Emergency Management Administration received more than 1.35 million applications for assistance within 25 days of Katrina’s landfall. Indeed, it seems safe to say that no disaster-diaspora in U.S. history matches the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005 in their combination of scale and suddenness: well over a million men, women, and children uprooted, essentially overnight.

Another humanities response, the critical analysis of disaster, takes extreme events as windows onto society—as if a room in an apartment building were suddenly exposed to view by a wrecking ball’s blow or a bomb’s explosion. The adjective natural has come into serious question, as scholarship reveals the effects of social, political, and economic geography in leaving some safe and others vulnerable to disasters’ effects. Patterns of highly uneven access to transportation (and thus the chance to evacuate to safety) in New Orleans, in a context of extreme class and race inequality, are just one of this disaster-diaspora’s structural components; another, the apparent inadequacy of the levees, led some to speak of an unprecedented “civil-engineering disaster.” In other words, human and not just natural causes make events disastrous.
Often arising from such concerns has been another response: a literature of denunciation. Dorothea Lange’s photography of Dust Bowl migrants stands in the critical vein, as do the writings of her husband, economist Paul Taylor, and others who pointed to the human-wrought aspects of ecological disaster. Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* stands as the most famous literary statement of the human cost. Following the 1935 Labor Day hurricane in the Florida Keys, Ernest Hemingway angrily loosed the arrows of satire on the federal policies that had sent GI’s there on construction projects, living in helplessly exposed shacks in the peak of hurricane season (over 400 deaths). The inequalities and failures exposed by Katrina, too, have generated widespread and passionate critique.

Yet another humanities response, also flowing from the analysis of disaster, is the critical analysis of discourse. Such inquiries examine the narratives that name, and frame, disasters—and the people they affected. No disaster-diaspora has been more richly interpreted on this score than the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005—reflecting the sophistication of contemporary media and linguistic studies’ toolkit. Often uncritical and sensationalistic TV coverage, using the racially charged frame of “looting” and “mob violence,” distorted the national citizenry’s perceptions and may have had serious implications for the national government’s response. Essayist and media critic Leon Wynter deployed a potent analysis of obese, helpless “Auntie” and her thuggish “Nephew” as historically laden African American stereotypes imbuing television imagery of New Orleans.

Inquiry into connection with place forms another humanities response. Understanding the ways people bond with one another and with their community’s shared space are potent tools for interpreting responses to disaster, the persistence of connection “back home,” and the prospects for return. Shannon Lee Dawdy’s archaeological work in New Orleans cemeteries, at one level, involves things that are not living: bones, gravestones. At another level, it is all about living interaction with the cemetery, the connection of people with their dead, a feature of all societies, has been particularly powerful in New Orleans. The study of trans-geographic ties to place contributes further to understanding disaster-diasporas, whether the community of Dust Bowl migrants resettling in Bakersfield, California, in the late 1930s, or the colony of New Orleans musicians emerging today in Austin, Texas.

Another response: study of disaster-diaspora’s effects on individuals and communities. Kai Erikson’s study of the 1972 Buffalo Creek, West Virginia flood and its sudden, violent reversal of an Appalachian community’s slow progress out of poverty was a landmark. On a national scale, historian Louis A. Perez’s *Winds of Change* evaluated the impact of a series of hurricanes in 1840s Cuba, finding they engendered a here-and-now fatalism—but also a premium on cooperative preparation and response.

Of all the humanities responses to disaster-diaspora, perhaps most compelling is the mission of documenting people’s experience. Typically, working with ethnographers, folklorists, and oral historians, survivors bear witness to disaster, diaspora, suffering, and struggle—and, across space and time, bring outsiders closer to that experience. The WPA narratives of the 1930s stand as a sterling past example of these efforts. Today, numerous projects are emerging to document the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005. An improvised but inspiring alliance of such initiatives uses the umbrella name “Research in the Wake” (see resources box, right).

Some of these initiatives aim not only to document this unparalleled disaster-diaspora, but to put survivors at the center of the effort—giving them a voice, a creative role, and new skills. As with a number of VFH projects, such efforts highlight the humanities’ growing role in helping communities rebuild and strengthen.
March is always an exciting month at the VFH as we host the annual Virginia Festival of the Book. The 12th festival, scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, through Sunday, March 26, will host more than 300 writers of many genres, with 150 programs for adults and dozens more in-school and Saturday programs for youth and families.

Wednesday night of the festival will feature a special history “double-header.” In the 6 p.m. Culbreth Theatre program, Fintan O’Toole, Irish author and arts critic, will speak about his book White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America. The book’s subject is the British Agent to the various Indian Nations in colonial America, the real model for the “Leatherstocking Tales” by James Fenimore Cooper. He’ll be joined by Melvin Patrick Ely, winner of the Bancroft Prize for history for his work Israel on the Appomattox, a discussion of a community of free blacks in Virginia before the Civil War. Also, Lindsay Robertson, a law professor specializing in Indian rights, will discuss his work, Conquest by Law, a social history of the court cases that set policy by which the U.S. government responded to Indian rights. These stories of the 18th and 19th centuries have shaped American history to the present.

Following this program at 8 p.m. is a reading and discussion by Rita Dove (former U.S. Poet Laureate, current Virginia Poet Laureate, and author of American Smooth) and preeminent American historian John Hope Franklin (author of Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin, his memoir of the 20th century struggle for civil rights).

On Thursday, the luncheon speaker will be Judith Viorst, famous for her comic poetry, her children’s books (such as Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No-Good Very Bad Day), and her carefully reasoned self-help books. This sold-out luncheon will be rebroadcast on WVPT Public television. Afterward, Kevin O’Keefe (The Average American) will team up with David Wolman (A Left-Hand Turn Around the World) to discuss notions of what is average and what is not. Sports chroniclers Derek Catsby (Bleeding Red) and Warren St. John (Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer) will discuss the extraordinary lengths to which sports fans will go to support their teams.

The festival will feature a number of political and cultural analysts on Friday and Saturday, including Amy Goodman (“Democracy Now” radio host, author of The Exception to the Rulers), Adrian Wooldridge (Washington Bureau Chief for The Economist, author of The Right Nation), Hendrik Hertzberg (Senior Editor for The New Yorker, author of Politics: Observations & Arguments), and Barbara Ehrenreich (Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream). Science writers Ron Bailey (Liberation Biology), Madeline Drexler (Secret Agents), and Ann Parsons (The Proteus Effect) will explore the issues and ethics of stem cell research, DNA modification, and other possibilities offered through new technology. Scientists Tim Flannery (The Weather Makers), William Ruddiman (Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum) and journalist Elizabeth Kolbert (Field Notes from a Catastrophe) will predict future weather and climate patterns based on their study of current environmental research.
One of the highlights of Saturday will be a program featuring the “father of graphic novels,” Art Spiegelman, creator of Maus and Maus II. Publishing Day on Saturday will feature seven programs on the changing nature of the reading public, careers in publishing, writing children’s books, agents, how to buzz your book, and more. Saturday is also Crime Wave, the annual offering of mystery and suspense novels, featuring writers Michael Connelly, Jeffery Deaver, Joseph Kanon, John Lescroart, Nancy Martin, Katherine Neville, Karin Slaughter, Andy Straka, Paula L. Woods, and many others.

Poetry at the festival will feature readings by Camille Dungy, Claudia Emerson, Jane Hirshfield, Sarah Kennedy, Gregory Orr, and Vivian Shipley. Also featured are collective poetry readings from Best New Poets 2005 anthology; the Tough Times Companion II; Kundiman, the Asian American Poets collective; Cave Canem, the African American poetry workshop; and an open mic hosted by Hilda Ward. New and rising voices include Dan Albergotti, Karen Garthe, Charlotte Matthews, Patrick Phillips, Mary Szybist, Natalsha Trethewey, and Eliot Khalil Wilson.

For those who love historical fiction, there are Jennifer Haigh, Roy Hoffman, Daniela Kuper, Star Lawrence, James Morrow, Peter Quinn, and Gwyn Rubio. Fantasy writers include Kevin Brockmeier, River Jordan, Brandon Massey, Paul Witcover, and the renowned Mary Doria Russell.

For more information, visit vabook.org.

A sample of VABook! programs

Wednesday, March 22
Contemporary Art and Complicity!
2 pm, UVA ART MUSEUM, PINE ROOM
Johanna Drucker, author of Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity, explores how artists draw inspiration and materials from popular culture.

Curl Up With a Companion: Tough Times Companion II
4 pm, GRAVITY LOUNGE, 103 S. FIRST STREET
Readings, performances, and discussion of this VFH publication for those facing hard times—by contributors Angela Daniel, Judy Longley, Christopher Morris, and Julie Portman.

Thursday, March 23
Beyond Banjos: Another Appalachia
NOON, UVA BOOKSTORE
Jeff Biggers (The United States of Appalachia) and Jeff Mann (Loving Mountains, Loving Men) explore widely unacknowledged cultural and personal histories of the region.

Can There Be Peace in the Middle East?
2 pm, JEFFERSON MADISON REGIONAL LIBRARY, 201 E. MARKET STREET
A conversation with Milti Viorst (Storm from the East) and UVA Professor William Quandt (Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict).

Friday, March 24
Race in America
10 am, JEFFERSON MADISON REGIONAL LIBRARY, 201 E. MARKET STREET
With Nick Kotz (Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Laws That Changed America) and Sherill Cashin (The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class Are Undermining the American Dream). Moderated by Faith Childs.

The Map That Named America: Cartography
2 pm, UVA HARRISON INSTITUTE/SMALL SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY AUDITORIUM
Seymour I. Schwartz, Ph.D., discusses his book, America’s Baptism, recounting the history and intrigues relating to the map that named America.

Saturday, March 25
A Change in the Weather: Climate Issues
NOON, CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 605 E. MAIN STREET
With Tim Flannery (The Weather Makers), Elizabeth Kolbert (Field Notes from a Catastrophe) and William Ruddiman (Plows, Plagues and Petroleum).

19th Century Women: Biography Panel
NOON, NEW DOMINION, 404 E. MAIN STREET
Louise Knight (Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy) and Meg Marshall (The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism).
From Jamestown to the Buyout  
Film Explores Tobacco Culture in the Old Belt of Virginia  
BY DAVID BEARINGER

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of tobacco to the culture and economy of Virginia over the past 400 years. It would be even harder to overstate the centrality of Bright Leaf tobacco to life in the small towns and farming communities of the state’s Old Belt region.

The Old Belt stretches across the Virginia/North Carolina border, including Pittsylvania and Halifax as well as portions of neighboring counties, with Danville at its epicenter. For more than a century, millions of pounds of some of the highest-grade cigarette tobacco in the world has been grown by farmers in this region and sold through an auction system that supported not just the local economy, but also a distinctive fabric of local traditions and ways of life.

By the mid-1990s, demand for tobacco in the United States was in steep decline, world markets were changing, and tobacco farming was sustained to a large extent by a system of price supports and allotments that had been put in place during the 1930s.

This fabric of tobacco culture in the Old Belt was already beginning to unravel when Jim Crawford, a cultural geographer and novice filmmaker, proposed to document what was occurring, and to try to capture on film something of the old way of life that was about to disappear.

With a series of three grants beginning in November 1998, the VFH supported research, oral history interviews, script development, and early production of a film that came to be called Down in the Old Belt: Voices from the Tobacco South.

This film, completed and released on DVD in 2005, is without a doubt the best visual introduction to the history of tobacco in Virginia and to the recent economic and political changes that have profoundly and forever altered life in the Old Belt region.

The film begins at Jamestown, with John Rolfe, and concludes in the aftermath of the 10 billion dollar federal tobacco buyout, which ended both the quota system and traditional warehouse auctions, making small-scale tobacco farming in most cases difficult, if not impossible, to sustain.

It includes archival photographs as well as contemporary footage of planting, harvesting, curing, baling, and marketing the tobacco at auction. It also includes excerpts from a series of deeply moving conversations with local growers, many of whom believe they will be the last to farm their land, which is not well-suited to most other forms of agriculture.

But Down in the Old Belt is not an apology for tobacco. It is neither an indictment nor a defense. It is, instead, an objective but still remarkably compassionate look at the history of tobacco in Virginia and its impact on local culture. Home-town tobacco festivals and sharecropping, family ties to the land and migrant labor, curing barns and globalization are all part of the story.

The film also includes original music: one composition in particular blends the sound of marimbas with the auction chant of world-champion tobacco auctioneer Bob Cage from Halifax County.

This haunting musical hybrid closes the film. Just a few minutes earlier, the essence of what has happened in the Old Belt is captured in footage of a modern tobacco auction. There is no auctioneer, no chant; the room is quiet except for the sound of footsteps, as buyers walk the rows of bales placing their bids on handheld devices that look like Game Boys. “I’m a dinosaur now,” Bob Cage laments, “…bones.”

Down in the Old Belt is available from Swinging Gate Productions.

Online at www.swinginggateproductions.com

e-mail at swinginggate@cox.net

phone (540) 342-9605
A generation ago, African Americans were still mostly confined to the margins of Virginia’s written histories when they appeared there at all. Until recently, the “definitive” versions of Virginia history named few African Americans, and it was rare for them to place the achievements of black Virginians equally alongside those of whites.

It was even more unusual for the authors of these histories to acknowledge the centrality of black men and women, both free and enslaved, to the economic and cultural life and progress of the state as a whole.

This is changing. Important new scholarship has begun to move the study of African American history in Virginia from the margins to the mainstream of university-based research. And every year, scores of new initiatives and community-based projects are undertaking the crucial work of documenting, preserving, and interpreting Virginia’s African American history at the local level.

These local efforts have begun to inspire and reinforce one another, and one result has been the creation of regional and even statewide webs of research and expertise. The necessity of collaboration between academic researchers and community-based historians has also become increasingly apparent.

Over the past two decades especially, new publications, exhibits, web sites, and classroom teaching resources have emerged in a steady stream. Like mosaic tiles or fragments in a stained glass window, they have begun to create a larger, and more deeply textured statewide picture of the African American experience.

Still, nearly 400 years after the first Africans arrived in Virginia, much of the history of African Americans in the state is now being researched, uncovered, written, and discussed openly for the first time. And it may take decades, or longer, before we can confidently say that the history of African Americans is no longer part of Virginia’s “hidden history.”

Recently, building on an effort that began 20 years ago, the VFH and Hampton University have added an important new stone to the foundation of a broader and more complete understanding of Virginia history through the publication of *Don’t Grieve After Me: The Black Experience in Virginia, 1619–2005*.

This book, which was edited by Christina Draper, the Director of the VFH African American Heritage Program, provides an overview of nearly 400 years of African American life in Virginia. It was designed, in part, to serve as a companion to the *Don’t Grieve After Me* exhibit, which was also produced by the VFH and Hampton University, first in 1986 and then, in an updated version, in 2001.

A companion catalogue produced in connection with the first *Don’t Grieve* exhibit has been out of print since the late 1980s. This new publication includes revised versions of the original catalogue essays—by Michael Hucles, Sarah S. Hughes, and Philip Morgan—as well as a new essay by Tommy Bogger and all the photographs from the exhibit.

Funding from the ExxonMobil Foundation, which was the principal underwriter of the 2001 exhibit, enabled us to digitize the original manuscript. The new publication was made possible by a generous grant from Jamestown 2007.

*Don’t Grieve After Me* is a landmark: there is no comparable overview of African American history in Virginia currently available. But, obviously, no single publication can do justice to the complexity and significance of the lives and the shared history this book represents. So we see it as a beginning.

As Virginia prepares to observe its 400th anniversary in 2007, the work of documenting the state’s untold stories, of filling in the gaps and correcting past omissions and misrepresentations is more important than ever. The VFH is grateful to Hampton University, especially to Mary Lou Hultgren and the staff of the Hampton University Museum, and to all those who have helped to make this publication possible.
VFH Fellows Program: 20 Years of Ground-Breaking Research and Writing

By Roberta A. Culpertson

Fortune and time make most of us ignorant of many things. They make complicated problems too difficult because we do not have the time to unravel their origins, share perspectives, and find solutions. The Commonwealth of Virginia understands this, and supports the VFH Fellowship Program as a way to allow a few committed scholars to explore issues for the rest of us, to penetrate the unknowns of our history, and the origins of our stories. Every project we support contributes to the giant puzzle of our knowledge of ourselves. Every project enriches us, informs us, and connects us to one another. The work of the Fellowship Program is among the essential tasks of a democracy because it is about knowing what we face so that we might responsibly decide what is to be done.

The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities was founded in 1974 to link scholarship with the public, to bring the humanities to the marketplace. As the National Endowment for the Humanities’ “public programs” component, it reached out to the public with offerings of knowledge from the “academy,” as it is grandly termed.

Not long after the VFH’s founding, staff began to wonder if the connection between the humanities and the people shouldn’t begin sooner: not with books and research after they were completed, but with what was studied in the first place. What might everyday people want studied, and could that drive at least some humanities research? Several scholars at the VFH began to debate this question in the early 1980s, imagining that the VFH might promote such research as part of its mission.

Citizens, Board members, legislators, and others reminded the planners that many facets of Virginia culture and history were grievously under-researched: African American history and culture, the experiences of Virginia Indians, the contributions and treatment of women. And what of globalization and other cultures—must Virginians know to navigate the new territory of an increasingly diverse Commonwealth? Could a center of research address these topics, helping Virginians to enrich their sense of heritage and present place?

Then they asked another question: what would happen if scholars working on issues of public interest and concern spoke about these to each other—across disciplines, historical periods, and topics? What if they worked as a scholarly community, dedicated to the public and to each other’s work?

Finally, planners saw that Virginia’s future scholarship depended on the young and innovative scholars of the day who often worked at colleges and universities that could not afford to give them research leave or funds. Young scholars were often passed over by traditional research centers, and those with public leanings had virtually no means of support for their work.

An image for the mission of the VFH Fellowship Program began to coalesce and clarify. The program was launched in the fall of 1986 by the Board of Directors, President Robert C. Vaughan, staff member David Wyatt, and a handful of planners and dreamers. It offered Virginia scholars short-term fellowships with stipends. Soon Fellows had their own offices, their own floor at the VFH, and their own dedicated staff.

Today, the Fellowship Program is a major activity of the VFH. More than 200 Fellows have been in residence over the program’s 20-year history. Books produced by Fellows are published by the most prestigious academic presses, and contribute to the fields of United States Constitutional law, women’s history, Civil Rights, religion and culture, philosophy, the Civil War, and the documentation of Virginia folklife traditions. They often represent seminal contributions to what were new fields of research when their authors came to us. Now many of those fields are established and valued academic specialties. E.J. Jordan’s research on Black Confederates, for example, was ground-breaking work on a particularly complex piece of African American history. Historian Patricia Sullivan is writing the first comprehensive history of the NAACP, and Victoria Sanford’s work on Guatemala helped to establish the truth of a hidden genocide.

But more important than the success of our Fellows, their contributions, and the prestige of the program is our continued commitment to those early goals: work in the public interest, cross-disciplinary work, opportunities for young scholars, and the creation of new and necessary fields of study. These set us apart from other humanities research programs around the country.

The VFH Fellowship Program’s more than 200 Fellows have earnestly and carefully taken the public trust to heart, and as I write this today I am surrounded by young scholars and two senior scholars of great renown who continue the tradition. They want you to know what they know. They want to know what you need to know. They are the future of our ideas, and our ideas shape what we will become.

See Institute on Violence and Survival, p. 10
VFH Resident Fellowship Program Promotes Congeniality and Productivity

By Bill Freehling, VFH Senior Fellow

Compared to the major United States “think tanks” in the humanities—a few that come to mind are Stanford, Princeton, the North Carolina Research Triangle, and Wilson Center in Washington, D.C.—the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities houses fewer fellows on smaller stipends. The program thrives, however, by turning what some might view as weaknesses into strengths: the smaller program encourages greater congeniality among scholars. Moreover, the location, in a state humanities council that serves many spare clusters of humanists of other sorts, encourages widening interactions. Our colleagues at the VFH include radio producers and filmmakers of humanities programs, folk life enthusiasts, book festival directors, literacy promoters—all devoted to spreading the humanities beyond the universities’ ivory towers. Writing not just for a handful of fellow specialists but for all fellow citizens is contagious.

The VFH offers Fellows cozy offices (with windows) in which to write, protected from telephones and outside clamor: no one knocking on the door, no students to advise, no programs to administer. All this peace and quiet maximizes the opportunity to seize the splendid access to the University of Virginia’s rich libraries (and through the provided computers, access to scholarly work and sources literally the world over). This unusual combination of distance from outside distractions and encouragement to write for the broadest outside audience has yielded some memorable books in the last 20 years. The atmosphere has also made my two-plus years at the VFH the most productive of my life.

Bill Freehling has written four books on the American Civil War, three of them prize winners. His Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina was awarded the Nevin and Bancroft Prizes. He has held professorships at Michigan State, SUNY, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Kentucky.

Spring 2006 VFH Fellows, their projects, and affiliations are (left to right): Jennifer Geddes, The Rhetorics of Evil, University of Virginia (Research Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Co-Program Director Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture); William W. Freehling, Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant 1854-1861, VFH Senior Fellow; James Bryant, Reimagining the Spiritual Bonds of Communities in Bondage—the Tidewater Chesapeake, 1769-1831, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology); Cynthia Hoefner-Fatton, Millenialism on the Margin: Islam and Patterns of Religious Change in Colonial East Africa, University of Virginia (Associate Professor of Religious Studies); Roberta A. Culbertson, VFH Director of Research and Education; and Jerry Handler (not pictured), The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record, VFH Senior Fellow.

Fellowship—In the Best Sense of the Word

By VFH Spring 2006 Fellows Tatiana van Riemsdijk and Deborah Lee

Fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death; and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship’s sake that ye do them. —WILLIAM MORRIS

It was the final day of our spring fellowship, and we were returning from our customary walk around the Boar’s Head pond. With a broad smile, senior fellow Bill Freehling told us that we would soon be looking back at the best four months of our lives. We agreed then—and with time to reflect we affirm it more now—that our months of residency at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities were indeed among the best of our lives.

As an independent scholar and public historian from Loudoun County, I (Deborah Lee) was grateful for the time to begin my book Trouble the Water: Antislavery Virginians in the Potomac Hinterland, 1810-1870. In this work, I am braiding together the life stories of men and women of different races and religions who worked to end slavery. Because my research and writing are unconventional in topic and form, I appreciated the advice, information, and feedback from other scholars. These interactions strengthened and affirmed my methodology, interpretations, and the overall project. Tatiana and I are both somewhat isolated from scholars in our fields of interest (she’s in Ontario working on Virginia history and I’m in the public sector), so we have a vast appreciation for the collaboration we enjoyed at the VFH. During spring term, the group included Bill Freehling (one of the nation’s leading Civil War historians) and political theorist Lawrie Balfour (UVA assistant professor, politics), who specializes in African American thought on race and social justice. Another fellow, author and historian Henry Wienczek, shared his research on slavery at Monticello, and near the end of the term Susan McKinnon (UVA associate professor, anthropology) joined our group discussions during walks around the pond.

Tatiana and I stay in touch and will be ever grateful for possibly the most professionally productive and delightful months of our lives.
Tough Times Companion II

There are plenty of publications for the good times in life. You can read about hiking, diving, cooking, model trains, hunting, weddings, and yoga. But what can you read when things are as hard as they get for human beings? It’s difficult to find periodicals on grief, loneliness, illness, and depression. Self-help books may downplay the darkness of the moment, which often feels beyond help. Suffering calls out for company that understands and doesn’t demand; it is eased only by an intense beauty that matches and captures it.

Two years ago, the Institute on Violence and Survival launched its first edition of *Tough Times Companion*, a collection of essays, poetry, and photography for just such times. Produced by people who know the difficult places, the book was distributed free to clinics, hospitals, shelters, prisons, and similar venues. All copies were taken in a matter of months.

The second edition was released last fall and is going fast. Funded entirely by the VFH and private donations, *TTC* is a special gift to people for whom the humanities can become a matter of life and death.

Soon the VFH expects to establish an agreement with the UVA Bookstore so readers who want a copy of *TTC* may order online and pay only shipping and handling charges. Watch the VFH web site (virginiafoundation.org) for news on this new outlet for our publications. To order a copy or copies of *TTC*, e-mail aspencer@virginia.edu.

Institute on Violence and Survival

The first voices to be silenced in the case of mass violence are the voices of the victims. They are killed, demoralized, shamed, or lost. Violence speaks in its own languages—physical, emotional, and anguished. Its survivors are often impossibly painful to hear.

The effect is the loss of a critical source of information on the effects of violence: the intimate, concrete knowledge of those who have borne it.

The VFH Fellowship Program established the Institute on Violence and Survival in 1995 to allow the knowledge of survivors to become part of the discourse on violence, not as a sideline or a moral imperative, but as data. Only survivors know the interior experience of violence and its subtle forms of persistence. The Institute was founded for and by survivor scholars: those who both knew violence and wanted to study it as an academic subject.

In the 11 years of the program, the Institute has, with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, private donations, and support from the Commonwealth, supported more than 30 Fellows-in-residence. They have researched the social context of incest, the horrors of war and repression, and the literature of conflict. They have documented genocide and studied the art and rhetorics of violence.

In the course of the program’s history, violence and its survival has become a recognized field of academic inquiry. We like to think the VFH and our Fellows had some small role in that important development.

Governor Tim Kaine joins the bluegrass band No Speed Limit, of Galax, on stage during the Governor’s Inaugural Concert at William and Mary Hall in Williamsburg on January 13. *No Speed Limit’s* debut CD, *Bluegrass Lullaby*, was produced by the Virginia Folklife Program, as part of its “Crooked Road Music Series.” Please visit www.virginiakolik.org to order yours!

(Photograph by Joe Mahoney)
Twenty-seven representatives from the VFH and the Virginia Association of Museums gathered at the Valentine Richmond History Center on January 12th for Humanities Advocacy Day. Advocates included a number of VFH staff and board members, as well as former fellows, project directors, and representatives from Virginia’s diverse museum community. Our advocates met with nearly 40 legislators that day! To volunteer, or for more information, call 434-924-3296 or e-mail sheryl@virginia.edu.

John and Lydia Peale
BY ALTHEA BROOKS

John and Lydia Peale are long-time supporters of the humanities and the efforts of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Lydia has served on the VFH board since 2000. In addition to their generous support of the Virginia Festival of the Book, the Peales are also VFH Humanities Associates, contributing unrestricted dollars that are applied to areas of the organization’s greatest needs.

When asked why they support the VFH, Lydia explains, “As the world grows more and more technologically focused, we need to hold on to what humanizes us, our shared journey through that which makes us think as well as feel. I am most impressed by the genuine efforts of the VFH to take the humanities to all the people of Virginia.”

John and Lydia are involved with serving their community through volunteer work with many worthy organizations. Lydia is a former school teacher and a current member of the Fluvanna League of Women Voters. Along with her involvement with three book groups, Lydia volunteers with her church in a variety of programs, sings in the choir, and volunteers as a Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) Ombudsman at a local nursing home.

John, an avid reader, fills his time with a range of academic pursuits, including his field of study, religion. Recently, he has been studying Christianity in China, Chinese history, culture, and language. John is a world traveler who has visited 51 countries.

Marianne for 45 years, John and Lydia have three children and four grandchildren.

New VFH Staff Are Enthusiastic and Experienced

In the spring of 2005, Lydia Wilson began serving as the program associate for Media Programs. Prior to working at the VFH, she assisted the executive director of FOCUS, a nonprofit organization in the Charlottesville area that supports Christian education for school-aged youths. She also worked as a paralegal on finance transactions with Hunton and Williams in New York City. Lydia grew up in the mountains of Hendersonville, North Carolina, and graduated from Davidson College in 2001 with a bachelor’s degree in French. When asked what she enjoys most about her job at VFH, she replies that she loves hands-on radio production.

After serving as an intern for the Virginia Festival of the Book in 2005, Diane Oaks joined the staff as a development officer. Diane relocated to Charlottesville from Philadelphia after completing a master’s degree in English at Arcadia University. Prior to arriving at VFH, Diane worked in corporate marketing for Anheuser-Busch Theme Parks in San Diego and Philadelphia. She was also employed as a television news producer for C-SPAN. At the VFH, Diane assists with fundraising, government relations, and public relations, and provides administrative support for the Online Virginia Encyclopedia.

Matthew Gibson serves as the editor of the Online Virginia Encyclopedia. He began work at the VFH in October 2005 after receiving his PhD in English from the University of Virginia. Before coming to the VFH, Matthew worked at the UVA Library Electronic Text Center where he was assistant director and then associate director. In these capacities he gained a wealth of experience with electronic scholarly projects and digital text creation. However, the experience that Matthew treasures most is being a father of two children.

Trey Mitchell also joined the VFH staff in October 2005. He serves as the VFH web master. Prior to coming to the VFH, Trey worked in the UVA Web Communications Office where he was senior web developer. He holds a bachelor’s degree in electronic media management from Northern Arizona University. In his spare time Trey enjoys making and playing bass guitars and being a father of three.
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