The year 2020 brought us COVID-19 and a nationwide racial reckoning we haven’t seen the likes of since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. These events exposed divisions and inequities we long knew were there. But our resilience in the face of the coronavirus and the more deep-seated virus of racism have also revealed and underscored something that gives me a reason to hope: the importance of community.

As the pandemic forced us to cancel public programs in the interest of safety, it was our commitment to community and a desire to help us all feel less alone that led us to adapt our programs to virtual platforms. Our Virginia Festival of the Book launched Shelf Life, a series of virtual conversations with authors. Scholars in our Fellowship program engaged you in discussions and answered your questions about their research through online webinars. And our Virginia Folklife Program supported artists by connecting them with students, even when those students were many miles away. All the while, Encyclopedia Virginia continued to provide context and history to the debates around Confederate monuments and the pandemic. And despite the challenges of working remotely, our With Good Reason staff continued producing weekly radio shows addressing vital questions raised by antiracist demonstrations, the ways COVID-19 has affected schools, and how to combat burnout among doctors and nurses caring for victims of the virus.

With the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act by Congress, we received just over $600,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) that we were able to distribute as emergency operating grants to 112 museums, historical societies, and other cultural nonprofit organizations in Virginia to support the work they’re doing in your communities. The CARES Act funds, combined with our regular spring and fall grant awards, have played a vital role in restoring and preserving Virginia’s cultural economy and in supporting the health of communities across the commonwealth.

The impact of this moment on individuals and communities means there are more questions we must ask, issues we must examine, and stories we must amplify. These include the disproportionate harm the coronavirus has had on people of color, the gender inequality of caregiving labor and its impact on women, what it means to memorialize, and the importance of Indigenous voices as we reckon with the history of racism in the United States. Such explorations of the human experience are at the heart of our work, and the work we support.

To do this work more effectively, in 2021 we will be moving to a new office closer to downtown Charlottesville. For the first time in decades—once it is safe for us to be together—our staff will be in one building and on one floor. This new office space and public humanities center will allow us to be more collaborative, more accessible, and better able to engage our local and statewide partners.

This year has not been without its farewells. In July, BackStory produced its last podcast and we said goodbye to full-time staff members Melissa Gismondi, Diana Williams, and Charlie Shelton-Ormond. We also said farewell to Lilia Fuquen, who led the Food & Community project for the last two years. In August, we gathered in a virtual send-off to celebrate Jon Lohman, our state folklorist who served as the director of the Virginia Folklife Program for nineteen years. His work in building that program, supporting artists and artisans, and documenting and preserving folk traditions, is without comparison.

As ever, our vibrant and creative work depends on state and federal funding, corporate and foundation gifts, and you. In this issue of Views I hope you see that the humanities, especially in times of crisis, are not a luxury good, but are critical in connecting us, building healthy communities, and defining what matters.

With gratitude,

Matthew Gibson
Executive Director
PIVOT POINT:
VIRGINIA HUMANITIES RESPONDS TO COVID-19

From CARES Act funding to new virtual programming, Virginia Humanities helps us all stay connected and engaged during a time of crisis.

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Veronica Jackson explains how themes of race, family, and feminism inform her work.
What if history happens and no one is there to record it? That’s what the Virginia Museum of History and Culture (VMHC) was facing as the COVID-19 pandemic decimated its operating revenue just as the pandemic and the ongoing protests against police brutality and racial injustice unfolded on its doorstep in Richmond.

But a $10,000 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant, in combination with other funding, allowed the museum to retain its staff and continue its mission of telling “the evolving story of the commonwealth,” says VMHC president and CEO Jamie Bosket.

Museum archivists collected journals describing the experience of living through the historic pandemic, as well as artifacts “that represent the peaceful and passionate protests and also some of the devastation and heartache that comes with this sort of social unrest within a community,” says Bosket. “When the flow of life gets disrupted is a time when culture and community are more important than ever.”

In order to preserve cultural and historical repositories in the face of the economic disruption caused by the pandemic, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) earmarked $30 million in grant money from the CARES Act, which was passed by Congress in March 2020. The NEH then distributed the funds through the fifty-six state and territorial humanities councils, including Virginia Humanities, which received a little more than $600,000 between April and July.

Realizing the seriousness of the situation facing museums, libraries, historical societies, and other cultural nonprofit organizations across the state, which saw their revenue dry up as their doors closed under stay-at-home orders, Virginia Humanities created a needs survey to gauge the extent of the crisis in the humanities community and worked to distribute the funds as quickly as possible. More than 150 organizations replied to the survey, indicating that “the impact was going to be pretty severe on all organizations,” says Sue Perdue, Virginia Humanities’ chief information officer and a member of the grant distribution committee.
In mid-May, Virginia Humanities dispersed $599,500 in grants to 110 nonprofit cultural organizations throughout the state ($1,500 was used to administer the grants). An additional $8,000 was awarded to two organizations in July. Grant amounts ranged from $1,000 to $10,000 and were scaled to an organization’s operating budget. Unlike most NEH-funded grants, the recipients didn’t have to come up with a special project or deliverable, says Perdue; they just had to demonstrate that they needed the money to sustain operations.

Distributing the CARES Act funding to struggling cultural organizations in record time wasn’t the only pivot Virginia Humanities had to make at the start of the coronavirus pandemic. In mid-March, the Virginia Festival of the Book staff faced an agonizing decision. The infection rate in Virginia, as in much of the mid-Atlantic region, was climbing. There were whispers of potential closures, but in much of the state it was still business as usual. Would it be safe to hold the five-day festival, which routinely brings hundreds of authors and tens of thousands of attendees to Charlottesville? The answer came on March 10, when the Festival of the Book announced “with heavy hearts” the cancellation of the 2020 festival.

It was the first major event in the area to cancel because of COVID-19, and the decision reverberated across the commonwealth. Choosing to cancel the event felt “iffy” at first, says Sarah Lawson, the assistant director of the Virginia Center for the Book, “like we were going out on some crazy limb.” But the decision, made by Lawson and the center’s director, Jane Kulow, turned out to be the right one and a harbinger of what was to come: The very next day, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and by the end of the month, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam issued a statewide stay-at-home order.

After working out the cancellation details and “mourning what would have been, we started thinking about what could still be,” says Kulow. Toward the end of April, the Center for the Book launched Shelf Life, a series of virtual book talks streamed to Zoom and Facebook every Tuesday and Thursday at noon. Each session featured a new coupling of authors in conversation, many of whom were writers originally scheduled to appear at the festival.

Gabriel Bump was touring in support of his debut novel, Everywhere You Don’t Belong, when the pandemic shut things down. More than 300 people were in attendance at his Shelf Life session as he discussed his book, a comic coming-of-age story that deals heavily with race in America, on May 26, the day after George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis, spurring weeks of protests about racial injustices. Bump was heartened that he could continue to connect with readers and that books remain more relevant than ever. “Especially now, people need to escape, and they’ll do it by a book,” he says.

NoNieqa Ramos, a picture book author and young adult novelist who participated in Shelf Life, says that while nothing can replicate the experience of an in-person reading, virtual sessions can be accessed by more writers and readers alike. “People can attend events that might have been previously inaccessible because of cost, childcare, or health reasons,” says Ramos. Post-pandemic, she hopes that literary organizations will adopt a hybrid of in-person and virtual readings to make event access more equitable.

“Building empathy through shared stories is important to us,” says Kulow about the Center for the Book, and now they’re able to do it in a brand-new way, and for a broader audience: So far, Shelf Life has reached viewers in more than twenty U.S. states and eight countries. Another advantage of virtual events is that without the need for months of advance planning, they can easily be scheduled to address important topics as they arise.

Making the switch to virtual programming wasn’t the challenge for Virginia Folklife Program. For years, the program has maintained a robust YouTube channel, Flickr photo site, and SoundCloud page to increase both preservation of and access to folk artists and events. But Jon Lohman, former director of the Virginia Folklife Program, knew that many master artists and artisans who make their living from in-person events—whether it’s an old-time fiddle concert or a hip-hop dance lesson—were struggling financially in the wake of COVID-19 cancellations. His solution was the Teachers of Remote Arts Instruction Network (TRAIN), a web-based directory of dozens of Virginia artists and artisans available to teach virtual lessons, which was up and running on the Folklife website by early April. Anyone interested in learning a new skill from an area expert can search TRAIN by artist name or by trade, or scroll through the alphabetical listings.

Jared Pool, a Richmond-based progressive bluegrass musician who tours with Larry Keel, lost quite a bit of income due to cancelled gigs. Knowing he’d have more time on his hands, he signed up for TRAIN and acquired new guitar and mandolin students as a result. Teaching virtually was challenging at first, says Pool, but he’s come to enjoy it—students seem to take more responsibility for their own learning when there’s a screen between them. Pool is grateful for the way Virginia Folklife moved quickly to help him and other artists “keep the ball rolling on this stuff, instead of feeling like we’re just spinning our wheels.”

“This is a very challenging time, because humanities are about people coming together,” says Lohman. “But there are tools, as we’re finding in this digital space, where we can be connected.” The humanities are often trivialized, Lohman adds, considered luxuries instead of necessities, and are often the first programs to lose funding when money becomes scarce. But there’s a strong case for supporting them through trying times. It’s through these traditions—stories, music, community gatherings, and more—that people express things like “This is who I am,” “This is who we are.” “This is our community,” says Lohman. And that is something we cannot afford to lose.
When asked to describe how Arcadia Food’s mission has evolved in the context of COVID-19, Executive Director Pamela Hess paused; then, she explained how the work of the Alexandria-based sustainable food and farming center is more important than ever: “There are three things that the pandemic has shown us are absolutely necessary. Good health, good food, and warm connection. Arcadia provides all three.”

Located on four acres of land originally owned by George Washington, Arcadia’s central mission is to provide underserved populations in Northern Virginia and nearby Washington, D.C., with access to fresh, healthy food, all of which is grown on site by staff and volunteers. The crops are harvested and distributed at affordable prices out of mobile markets that make regular stops in food-insecure communities.

Central also to the Arcadia mission is early education focused on agriculture, sustainability, and nutrition. “We want to help local elementary school kids understand what goes into making their favorite foods,” Hess said, explaining how programs such as the “hyper-local cafeteria” bring students to the farm for “wonderfully integrated learning and eating experiences.” Field trips to Arcadia involve, as Hess put it, “tasting, touching, smelling, listening, and looking.” Or, at least, they did, before the coronavirus hit.

Arcadia is among 112 cultural organizations in Virginia that received a Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant from Virginia Humanities in 2020. With funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Virginia Humanities distributed a total of $607,500 in emergency operating funds to nonprofits across the state to help with the costly transition to virtual programming and to cover essential, ongoing expenses including staff salaries and rent.

For Arcadia, the funding has made all the difference. “The money from the CARES grant allows Arcadia to serve the community right now and to keep our programs intact by covering a significant portion of staff salaries,” Hess said. With spring field trips cancelled, and Arcadia’s beloved summer camp called off, the staff shifted its focus to growing more produce and on creating online content for students and teachers.

They’ve succeeded on both counts. Since spring 2020, Arcadia has donated 5,000 pounds of produce to families in and around Virginia. Meanwhile, Farm Camp was replaced with a new, at-home version: “Farm Camp Kits” equipped with lesson plans, activity kits, art supplies, and more, plus interactive videos for streaming and daily sessions on Zoom. “The Virginia Humanities grant was vital to keeping these portions of our nonprofit running,” Hess said, adding, “When the pandemic is over, we can bring people together again, through agriculture and education, back at the farm.”

You can learn more about Arcadia Foods’ educational programs and download a “Farm Camp Kit” at ArcadiaFood.org.

For details on our Grants Program, visit VirginiaHumanities.org/grants.
ECHOES OF PANDEMICS PAST

By Patricia Miller
In 2018, when *Encyclopedia Virginia* (EV) was approached by Addae Caelleigh, a lecturer at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, about adding an entry on the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic in Virginia, it wasn’t clear that the story of a long-ago epidemic would be germane to the EV readership. But it sounded interesting, so the entry was commissioned. As a result, readers today, living through their own pandemic, can turn to EV to learn how Virginians coped with a similar situation almost exactly 100 years ago. The story of what happened then resonates with our own challenging times. And like all history, it grants us newfound appreciation for the challenges of those who came before us.

Influenza first appeared in Virginia portentously, on Friday, the thirteenth of September 1918, at Camp Lee outside of Petersburg, having hopscotched down the East Coast from Camp Devens outside of Boston. There had been reports since August of disease outbreaks in the overcrowded training camps preparing recruits to fight in what was then known as the Great War. The disease resembled influenza, but attacked its victims with such sudden ferocity that some doctors thought it must be cholera or typhus. Patients displayed a startling range of symptoms: blood gushing from the nose and ears; headaches that seemed to cleave the skull in two; agonizing muscle pain; profuse vomiting. But most troubling of all was the mortality rate: The worst cases inevitably proceeded to a deadly pneumonia that could kill a healthy young man in a matter of days.

On September 22, sixty-five cases were reported at Camp A.A. Humphreys (now known today as Fort Belvoir) in Fairfax County. By late September, there were thirty cases of influenza at the College of William and Mary. Martha Barksdale, one of the first women to attend the college in its first year of coeducation, wrote in her diary about excitedly arriving at school “after many controversies and much worry this summer,” only to have classes suspended after one day and the students quarantined, although, she noted, the enforced separation did make the male students even more eager to meet her and her friends. “It was usually too weak to provide for themselves. “It was usually a healthy young man,” says Caelleigh. In Charlottesville, Nannie Cox Jackson, the domestic science teacher at the Jefferson Colored/Graded Elementary School (later Cox Jackson, the domestic science teacher at the Jefferson Colored/Graded Elementary School (later

By October 1, the disease had spread to Richmond, where eighty-five cases were reported in a five-hour period; however, public health officials declared drastic measures unnecessary. Two days later, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported that influenza was afoot in forty-three states and had reached epidemic status in Tidewater Virginia. On October 6, with an estimated 10,000 cases in the city, and health officials anticipating an approximate 1,500 deaths, Richmond closed all churches, schools, theaters, motion picture houses, poolrooms, and dance halls, and banned public indoor gatherings.

As in the grimmest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia’s overwhelmed doctors and hospitals struggled to keep up with the disease. John Marshall High School in Richmond was hastily fitted out as an emergency 500-bed hospital. Meanwhile, students from the Medical College of Virginia volunteered their services. By the middle of October, with cases still surging, it was clear that the state would have to go on a wartime footing to fight the epidemic. With so many men away fighting the war, and most professional nurses requisitioned by the military, it was women—mostly housewives—who were called on to mobilize on the home front, continuing their historic entry into the world outside of the home—a process already accelerated by the war.

Isabel Anderson, the wife of diplomat Larz Anderson, recalled that there were “few things to be done by women” during the Spanish-American War in 1898 but “so much more in the Great War.” Anderson and her society friends created a Red Cross canteen to feed the soldiers who poured through Washington, D.C., on trains destined for camps around the country, sometimes feeding ten to fifteen thousand men a day jam sandwiches, pie, and steaming cups of coffee brewed in wood-fired “trailer kitchens.”

When the influenza pandemic hit, those same women found themselves rushing to tend to sick war workers in the overcrowded capital. One volunteer recalled finding “seven girls in a room... three in bed, one with pneumonia, no attention.” Around Virginia, the Red Cross mobilized women to nurse the sick and to cook and deliver food to those too weak to provide for themselves. “It was usually soup,” says Caelleigh. In Charlottesville, Nannie Cox Jackson, the domestic science teacher at the Jefferson Colored/Graded Elementary School (later
For a time, as the epidemic peaked, communication was almost completely cut off in some places—newspapers stopped publishing and operator-dependent phone service was severely curtailed. Afraid to sap morale in the midst of a war, President Woodrow Wilson refused to publicly acknowledge the epidemic. There was a shortage of coal—a shortage more serious than toilet paper—as flu ravaged the coalfields of Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Railroad service was affected, hampering the delivery of goods. Rich and poor alike shivered in the unusually cold fall as coal became scarce and prices skyrocketed.

It wasn’t just in cities that the flu upended life. On November 20, the Big Stone Gap Post reported severe “suffering and anguish” in the remote communities of Southwest Virginia, with “scores of sufferers in mountain cabins and sheds” as the flu spread through coal mines and lumber camps. There were reports of one family in which everyone was so sick that they “lived for several days on canned tomatoes alone,” as no one “had strength enough to go for food or assistance.”

By late November the worst seemed to have passed, only for the flu to flare up again in early December as life returned to normal. Familiar-sounding debates raged about whether to keep local economies and schools closed to prevent a recurrence—whether “precaution is better than cure”—as the Clinch Valley News put it. Proponents of reopening the economy claimed that many cases of flu were just “bad colds.”

Ultimately, the epidemic broke and trailed off in the spring of 1919. The deadly influenza seemed to disappear almost as quickly as it came, taking with it public memory of the whole affair, which largely disappeared from the historical record until the publication of Barry’s book in 2004. To Caelleigh, the reason for the collective forgetting is simple enough. “We were in the middle of the war. There were already hundreds of thousands of men overseas. Every day you picked up the newspaper and saw death and casualty counts,” she says. “People were frightened, and it was a crisis, but they already had another crisis.” And, she notes, people tended to be fatalistic in those days; loved ones died from disease all the time. In the end, she said, “It just wasn’t that important to those who lived through it.”

Learn more about the history of the 1918 influenza epidemic in Virginia in our Encyclopedia Virginia by visiting VirginiaHumanities.org/1918-flu.
“Jon Lohman is one of those people that you feel you’ve known your entire life,” reflects gospel musician Reverend Almeta Ingram-Miller. She met Lohman, who directed the Virginia Folklife Program for nineteen years before stepping down in August of 2020, while performing at one of the first Richmond Folk Festivals with her family gospel group, Maggie Ingram & The Ingramettes. The two formed a friendship as the group became beloved regulars on the Virginia Folklife stage at the Richmond Folk Festival. “Jon opened my world of music to include people that I never knew existed... and I came to know their life stories through their music,” says Ingram-Miller.

For Lohman, that’s exactly what folklife is all about. It’s not just about documenting traditions or memorializing vestiges of the past that have been passed down but about connecting people right now. “These are dynamic things. This is living and breathing stuff at the core of how folks see themselves in connection to others,” he explains.

“Folklife wasn’t just a job for Jon, he lived and breathed the work. His passion, relationships, and creativity are the foundations of what is the current Virginia Folklife Program,” says Pat Jarrett, acting director of the program. “I know that whatever comes next will be different, mainly because there is only one Jon Lohman.”

When Lohman, a native New Yorker with a doctorate in folklore from the University of Pennsylvania, first arrived at Virginia Humanities in 2001, “There was a huge learning curve in terms of geography, the culture, the genres of folklife,” he recalls.
The byways and backwaters were unfamiliar, rich traditions of music and craft still unknown, and thousands of stories and people yet to make his acquaintance. On top of that, the Virginia Folklife Program had been dormant for three years. On Lohman’s first day, Virginia Humanities founder Rob Vaughan asked him to wrap up a project about Galax; Lohman didn’t even know where Galax was, much less who or what made it special. So, he got in his car and started driving, getting to know Virginia’s artists, musicians, and other folklife practitioners in order to understand them and what they needed.

Lohman met people like Roddy Moore at the Blue Ridge Institute, local musician and presenter Fred Boyle of the Prism Coffeehouse, luminary folklorist Joe Wilson, Tidewater gospel quartet The Fred Boyce of the Prism Coffeehouse, luminary Ridge Institute, and other national organizations. In addition, he arranged tours to-access festivals and concerts; for bringing people of every conceivable background, race, ethnicity, and station in life together—literally—under one tent.”

Indeed, in addition to building the Folklife Apprenticeship Program and the related Apprenticeship Showcase, Lohman programmed the Virginia Folklife stage for all fifteen years of the Richmond Folk Festival, from its start as the visiting National Folk Festival to its current status as one of Virginia’s largest events. He showcased material as well as musical traditions and worked within a new theme each year to create one of the most popular stages at the annual festival. He also presented artists and their work at FloydFest, Bristol Rhythm & Roots, and elsewhere, sharing musical traditions and other folklife practices with audiences across the state.

Whenever he presented artists, Lohman sought to draw connections between people from different traditions. “Another gift of Jon’s is seeing unseen connections,” says Bearinger. “He created some legendary on-stage blendings—Sephardic Jewish tones and melodies with Black southern gospel; the N’goni (a traditional West African stringed instrument) with the Appalachian banjo. There are dozens of examples.”

To support and build on these efforts, Lohman developed unique partnerships with the National Council for the Traditional Arts, the Smithsonian Institute, and other national organizations. In partnership with the U.S. State Department, he produced international exchange trips with Virginia musicians who shared their traditions and collaborated with local artists in Cape Verde, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Cuba. He also arranged similar exchanges in Virginia, with “From Africa to Appalachia” concerts exploring African traditions and influences on American music, as well as residencies and performances with Iraqi master musician Rahim Alhaj, Cape Verdean musician Zerui Depina, and even a group of Tuvan throat singers who performed in Galax, where Lohman is now a familiar face.

“IT’s really gratifying that we’ll have standing-room-only for people to see someone because they trust us. We’ve built trust among people and among the artists,” Lohman says. He is also responsible for five Virginians being selected as NEA National Heritage Fellows, and he successfully nominated four out-of-state artists for the honor as well, including queen of rockabilly Wanda Jackson.

Lohman also recorded and produced more than fifteen albums with Virginia Folklife artists, including The Legendary Ingramettes’ Live in Richmond, which earned an Independent Music Award for Best Gospel Album, as well as their latest album, Take a Look in the Book, which received enthusiastic reviews from National Public Radio, No Depression, and other national media. Ingram-Miller recalls, “At one time, Maggie Ingram & The Ingramettes were the youngest recording group on Nashboro Records in Nashville, so we were not strangers to the process of singing on a record; what Jon did differently was to include us in the entire process. He wanted us to stretch beyond our comfort zone. In order to do that, Jon had to be in relationship with us, not just as a record producer, but as someone who cared about us, our beliefs, and our culture.”

Through his vision and unfailing energy, Lohman created a national model out of the Virginia Folklife Program. For Lohman, this work has never been separate from the people he worked with. “It’s about meeting communities where they are and supporting and celebrating and helping them share these beautiful traditions,” he says. It was impossible to draw a line between work and life for him, the people he worked with mattered too.
much. Many became treasured friends and family, like Ingram-Miller, as well as Lohman’s wife and partner in all things folklife, Tori Talbot.

In 2015, Ingram-Miller invited Lohman to speak at the Homegoing Celebration Service for her mother, Maggie Ingram. She recalls, “It was a spirited celebration, and each preacher that spoke took us higher and higher in the celebration. I could see that Jon was beginning to get a little nervous. I gently patted him on the back, and said, ‘Just speak from your heart.’ And that’s exactly what he did. He stood behind the preacher’s podium, greeted us, and acknowledged our sorrow at the passing of the legendary icon that was our mom. He reminisced about the first time he met our mom and the friendship that grew over the years. And how he watched as the years and Alzheimer’s took a toll on her physical body, but never took away her joyous spirit. He then lifted his head, looked at me and the Ingramettes, and quickly continued: ‘Today, you may only see the clouds of sorrow. But keep singing, keep climbing, keep honoring your mom’s legacy, and never forget that even when you can’t see it, the sun is always shining.’ It was the defining moment of the entire service.”

“I was so deeply honored to be asked to speak at Maggie’s funeral. I really consider my friendship with the Ingramettes among the greatest blessings of my life,” reflects Lohman. “People developing understanding and empathy and love for each other... The traditional arts have a power in that that is unique.”

Visit VirginiaFolklife.org to learn more about the Virginia Folklife Program.

Left: Jon Lohman addresses a crowd of music fans during a 2017 cultural exchange trip to Cabo Verde with Aimee Curl, Jared Pool, Zerui Depina, and Danny Knischy. Photo by Pat Jarrett, Virginia Humanities

Above: Jon Lohman and Almeta Ingram-Miller at the Catholic Church Virgin Mary of Fatima in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, during a cultural exchange trip in 2019. Photo by Pat Jarrett, Virginia Humanities
In the spring of 2020, with festivals cancelled and workshops shuttered, local and traditional artists numbered among those hit hardest by the state-mandated shutdowns intended to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s why Jon Lohman, then director of the Virginia Folklife Program, decided to get creative and debut a new way for traditional artists to find students. Launched in March 2020 and accessible through the Virginia Folklife website, the Teachers of Remote Arts Instruction Network, or TRAIN, is an online platform that connects Virginia artists with prospective students for virtual lessons. The artists on TRAIN make up a colorful collection of talents, including old-time fiddle, tapdancing, ceramics—and, in the case of Charlottesville chef Luz Lopez, traditional, Yucatan-region Mexican cuisine.

Lopez, who was born in Morecay, Mexico, is a longtime master artist in the Folklife program. In April 2020, she virtually instructed Lohman and former Virginia Humanities photographer Morgan Miller on how to make essential delicacies like homemade tortillas and salsa asada and then progressed to more complicated recipes, including tamales and barbacoa.

Lopez is known for her flexible approach to cooking. She tells her students not to worry too much about recreating every recipe perfectly. Instead, she advises, “Try to make it your own. If it tastes good, trust your gut.” After all, cooking, she says, “is all about trying new things.” This mantra has served Lopez well throughout the pandemic, when certain ingredients have been hard to come by. Especially in the beginning, Lopez says, she “tried to think of simple, basic recipes that didn’t need too many exotic ingredients.”

Of course, virtual lessons make taste-testing impossible, but Lopez still loves to see what her students create. They often send her photos of plated dishes and snapshots of family members enjoying their meals. After wrapping up the session with Lohman and Miller, Lopez took on a new student: a ten-year-old Charlottesville boy who was just learning to cook. Those classes were especially fun, Lopez says, adding that the individual lessons will continue on a regular basis.

Luz Lopez
and TRAIN

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Initially created as a response to the economic hardships resulting from the pandemic, the TRAIN initiative is an exciting new expansion of the Folklife program, one that, as Lopez puts it, “opened up another world of possibilities.”

Find an instructor and sign up for online lessons at VirginiaFolklife.org/TRAIN.
The Jefferson School African American Heritage Center equips educators with powerful community knowledge and the tools to teach it.

By Samantha Willis

The Negro in Virginia (1940), published by the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Writers’ Project, was described by its editor, Professor Roscoe E. Lewis of Hampton Institute, as an attempt to tell the “story of the Negro” from an African American point of view, depicting several places in Virginia where African Americans played a critical role in history and industry. Image courtesy of Special Collections, University of Virginia.
In the past, Virginia’s public schools taught a version of the state’s history that romanticized racist Confederate ideals and minimized the enormous contributions Black people made to the commonwealth and the nation. Even after this narrative was scrapped from schoolbooks, young people are still often taught history through an exclusionary lens that doesn’t adequately reflect the lives and experiences of Black Virginians. An innovative project by the Charlottesville-based Jefferson School African American Heritage Center (JSAAHC), supported with a Virginia Humanities grant, aims to remedy this—by teaching the teachers.

The project helps area teachers learn local Black history from both academic professionals and lifelong community members. Over the project’s five-month curriculum, teachers hear accounts of local Black history from the time of enslavement through the integration of public spaces. The goal is for the educators to share this knowledge with their students and use it to help students connect past to present—learning how the lives and work of Charlottesville and Albemarle County’s Black residents helped create the community they live in.

“We’d already been working with Charlottesville schools on developing a local Black history resource guide for teachers,” said Dr. Andrea Douglas, JSAAHC’s founding executive director. In 2018, Douglas led a pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama, where a group of Charlottesville leaders honored John Henry James at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. James, an ice cream seller, was killed, and mutilated him a few miles outside of Charlottesville’s city limits. Several teachers were part of the pilgrimage, and Douglas said that the experience helped her think bigger. “We came to realize that we needed to offer more than just a resource guide,” said Douglas. “If teachers didn’t have a basic grounding in the material, they wouldn’t know how to use it.”

Douglas said that many local educators hadn’t been taught about the history of free Black people in the region or about how some African American families built wealth through land and home ownership after the Civil War. Teachers weren’t always aware of Black Charlottesville’s valiant efforts against Massive Resistance in the Civil Rights Era. Douglas and her colleagues realized that they could help contextualize this history for area educators.

“We decided to take a step out and say, what would it look like to teach through a lens of local Black history? What is inherently necessary for teachers to teach Black students? Also, how can we help them create a sense of empathy for these students?”

The project was funded by a Virginia Humanities grant awarded as part of the multi-year Changing the Narrative initiative. The purpose of Changing the Narrative, created by a Kellogg Foundation grant of nearly $900,000, was to “broaden and reframe narratives of Virginia’s past by engaging local communities and youth in addressing the present-day challenges of racism and bias,” according to the project’s website.

Cauline Yates went on the 2018 pilgrimage and joined Virginia Humanities as a part-time receptionist in 2020. She is the seventh-generation great niece of Sally Hemings, the Black woman whom founding father Thomas Jefferson enslaved at his mountaintop plantation, Monticello, and who gave birth to at least six of Jefferson’s children. The trip to Montgomery inspired Yates to contribute her deep knowledge and experience as a member of Charlottesville’s Black community to the teachers’ institute. “I gave four lectures about growing up in segregated Charlottesville to Charlottesville and Albemarle high schoolers,” says Yates. “We’re trying to help them understand about history that happened in their own backyard.”

Sharing that kind of “backyard” history is a critical component of JSAAHC’s teacher education program, says Justin Reid, director of Virginia Humanities’ Community Initiatives, and is key to making sure historically marginalized voices are valued and amplified. After the JSAAHC-sponsored trip, “pilgrimage elders,” like Yates, were especially inspired to share their stories and expressed a desire to become more involved in the local schools and serve as living educational resources. The Heritage Center is helping ensure that happens,” said Reid.

Both Douglas and Reid say they hope the project can expand to other school districts. Douglas says that feedback from participating teachers has been excellent, with 100 percent reporting that they’d been greatly informed by the program.

“One of the main things descendants of the enslaved want,” explained Yates, “is the narrative changed. Virginia history books did not present slavery and other aspects of our Black history in a true light. We’re trying to correct that; we’re trying to make sure the truth gets told in Virginia.”

To learn more about the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center visit JeffSchoolHeritageCenter.org.
In early 2021 we’ll be moving our offices to Dairy Central, Charlottesville’s historic former Monticello Dairy building at Grady and Preston avenues. We’re designing the new Virginia Humanities center and headquarters as a welcoming space for public discussions, programs, exhibitions, and educational opportunities.

“We take pride in bringing people together—right now, virtually, and one day, hopefully soon, in person again—to talk about issues facing all Virginians, building resources that highlight inclusive histories, and documenting and sharing Virginia’s rich cultural heritage,” says Executive Director Matthew Gibson. “In this new location, we will be better able to engage all Virginians with this work.”

The new center will be fully ADA compliant, accessible by public transit, and centrally located closer to Charlottesville’s downtown. The public will be able to more easily attend grant-writing workshops, talks by authors and visiting speakers, and more, once those activities resume. The new location will also help us expand our paid internship program, especially for local students of color interested in careers in cultural grantmaking, documentation, and preservation.

Mary Coleman, executive director of City of Promise, a nonprofit working in the adjacent 10th & Page and Westhaven neighborhoods to increase access to community resources for local youth, is looking forward to having Virginia Humanities as a new neighbor. “We envision a partnership with Virginia Humanities that could certainly include use of the physical space,” she says. “But more importantly, we hope to work with them to promote learning and elevate community voices.”

The move, originally planned for early fall 2020, was postponed due to COVID-19-related delays. The newly remodeled and expanded, multi-use development is managed by Stony Point Development Group and will also feature restaurants, retail, and residential apartment housing.

The move is made possible thanks to individual donors, the University of Virginia, and foundations including the Cabell Foundation, Perry Foundation, Claude Moore Charitable Foundation, and the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation.

After our move is complete in early 2021, you can find us at 946 Grady Avenue, Suite 100, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
At the Jenkins homeplace, master apple grafter and white-oak basket maker Clyde Jenkins is up on a hilltop, stoking the fires under the scalding cauldrons with his wife Debbie, brother James, and son Sam. His apprenticeship focuses on an array of mountain crafts, farming, and mountain farm culture. Weeks before, his apprentices—Isaac Lonas, Tanner Good, Damien Thompson, Logan Hendershot, and Sam Jenkins—built a platform and a work table especially for today. They used wood harvested from the same land that grew the trees used to build the home Clyde was born in and currently lives in. I visited him in February 2020 to document an important day on the farm. Clyde says his hogs lead an absolutely perfect life punctuated by “one very bad day.” Today is that day.

Back around the time this farm was built—before the United States was a country—a hog slaughtering was a community event where the complicated labor, and the fresh pork products, were divided among the group of workers and their families. The hogs were cleaned, gutted, then the pieces laid on the table for further processing into roasts, chops, sausage and cauldrons for cracklin and scrapple. Clyde’s group includes his apprentices and family members, but he says in the past the whole community would show up. Today they’re running a skeleton crew of just eight people, including me.

I wasn’t expecting I’d learn how to string up a hog carcass or torch the coarse hog hair off the skin before slaughtering, but when the crew was a man short and there was work to be done, I put down my cameras and listened to Clyde. After all, I’d worked on farms before, processing chickens. It wasn’t a far cry for me to help with these animals. With his direction, a lot of hard work, and the help of his knowledgeable apprentices, we were able to get most of it done before dark.

Weeks later I met up with Clyde to pick up some white oak baskets for the Virginia Folklife Program’s “Real Folk” exhibition at the Birthplace of Country Music Museum in Bristol. After talking over business, he handed me a grocery bag full of pork products—my payment for the day. I tried to refuse, but he wouldn’t let me leave without a bag of his famous scrapple and some sausage. This meat has sustained me throughout the coronavirus quarantine and I have a new appreciation for Clyde’s lifetime of labor.

Learn more about the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program by visiting VirginiaFolklife.org.

View more photos from Clyde Jenkins’s apprenticeship by visiting https://flic.kr/s/aHsmPqCH8W.
James Jenkins harvests meat from the head of the hog.

Clyde Jenkins, seen here with apprentice Isaac Lonas, remembers when pig slaughters were whole community events, with several families coming together to share the work and delicious fare resulting from it.

From left, Isaac Lonas, Logan Hendershot, Tanner Good, and James Jenkins work furiously to scrape all the hair off the carcass.

Photo by Pat Jarrett, Virginia Humanities
After twelve years, three hundred episodes, and millions of global downloads, BackStory, Virginia Humanities’ American history podcast, recorded its last episode in the summer of 2020.

The project began in 2008 as a monthly radio show created by executive producer Andrew Wyndham with hosts Peter Onuf, Ed Ayers, and Brian Balogh. It quickly expanded to weekly production and in 2017 transitioned to a digital-first podcast format. Also in 2017, Onuf retired and historians Joanne Freeman and Nathan Connolly joined Ayers and Balogh. Hundreds of guests joined the hosts over the years, expanding the conversation and bringing fresh perspectives on what history can teach us about the contemporary issues we’re grappling with today.

While no new episodes are being produced, we are committed to preserving the work of the BackStory hosts and staff so that fans and followers can continue listening to past shows and discover episodes they may have missed. You’ll find past episodes from BackStory’s radio years (2008-2016) in the American Archive of Public Broadcasting at AmericanArchive.org. All episodes from 2008-2020 are available at BackStoryRadio.org and will also be preserved by Ayers’ “New American History Project.”

“As the face of education changes all across the nation due to COVID-19, we are proud that our archives are there for students,” said Virginia Humanities’ executive director, Matthew Gibson. “No matter where they are, or how they are being educated, it is important that they understand the ways the past provides context to what is happening today.”

Classroom and homeschool teachers can continue to access lesson plans and other educational resources by visiting the episode archive at BackStoryRadio.org and selecting the “has resources” checkbox. Each of these episodes include a multitude of resources for teachers and parents to explore topics from the origins of citizenship to the Stonewall riots.

If you are looking for something to fill the BackStory-shaped hole in your podcast playlist, we encourage you to explore one of the “guest podcasts” featured in its final months of production. You can find them all in the episode archive.

Explore BackStory’s archive of episodes at BackStoryRadio.org.
When Muriel Branch got word that the historic Pine Grove Elementary School in rural Cumberland County might be sold because of unpaid taxes, she galvanized her extended family to save the school, which educated generations of Black children in the Jim Crow era. That fight, however, was only the beginning. Branch soon learned that local officials were planning to host a mega-landfill on an adjacent property that served as a burial ground for the Pine Grove School community’s enslaved ancestors. “That’s when I went full force,” says Branch.

Branch is now part of an expanding historic preservation movement calling for racial, environmental, and economic justice in Virginia that’s receiving assistance from the Virginia African American Cultural Resources Task Force, a new Virginia Humanities-led coalition helping to identify, promote and conserve Virginia’s Black cultural resources, especially places connected to Virginians born into slavery.

Virginia is home to the nation’s oldest Black communities and over 400 years of African diasporic history. Yet, according to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, only one percent of Virginia’s nearly 250,000 state-recorded historical sites focus on the experiences of Black Americans.

This deep inequity has many causes. Eurocentric policies narrowly define a site’s historic “significance” and “integrity,” while financial investments reflect and perpetuate the racial wealth gap. Discriminatory land-use practices leave Black and Brown communities especially vulnerable to environmental and economic threats. And structural barriers prevent the historic preservation profession from becoming truly inclusive and diverse.
The current U.S. historic preservation system largely began in the early nineteenth century as a privately financed, white women-led movement to memorialize the American Revolution and assert white cultural norms and traditions. Twentieth century segregationist policies in housing and economic development further erased Black communities and cultural resources. The most significant historic preservation legislation to date—the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act—failed to redress this past discrimination. Those Black historic sites that have survived, have done so despite unfair odds.

“We have an obligation, as Virginians, as legislators, historians, and educators, to bring relevancy to the lives of those who sacrificed blood, sweat, and tears building the landscape of Virginia,” says legislation sponsor and task force founding chair Delegate Delores McQuinn of Richmond.

The Virginia African American Cultural Resources Task Force publicly launched in August 2018 at the Fort Monroe National Monument, almost exactly 399 years to the day after the first captive Africans in English-occupied North America arrived at this Hampton, Virginia, site in 1619. Fort Monroe is also where thousands of Black Virginians escaped to during the U.S. Civil War and helped compel the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

In the past three years, the task force has successfully advanced state-level reform and helped shift public discourse by spotlighting the efforts of talented changemakers, such as Andrea Roberts, PhD, who is challenging Eurocentric norms in historic preservation through her work on “freedom colonies”—Black settlements that emerged throughout the U.S. South following emancipation. According to Roberts, most of these places have either been ignored or are unknown by professional preservationists because place names and locations are embedded in oral tradition and ritual, which are often not considered legitimate sources for historic preservation work.

“The task force’s mission is to champion inclusive learning, community development, and economic opportunities through Black cultural landscape preservation in Virginia. The group supports community-driven efforts to protect and sustain Virginia’s Black cultural heritage places through information and resource sharing, outreach, and education. The task force has also strengthened communication and relationships among key statewide nonprofits and state agencies, including Preservation Virginia, Virginia Africana Associates, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia’s historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU’S), and the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia.

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“Many marginalized communities have had to carry their stories solely in oral histories,” says historic preservationist Niya Bates. “Preservation and architectural programs must aggressively diversify and restructure their classrooms and curricula by centering the expertise of Black and Brown communities,” says Bates. She also believes programs should include training in cultural competency, antiracism, and ethical community engagement.

In 2019 the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, awarded the task force a grant to develop a summer institute. Postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19, the institute will provide capacity-building support to grassroots, Black historic preservation efforts across the state, while training the next generation of Black architects, preservationists, and public historians in innovative practice. Internationally acclaimed preservation architect and Saving Slave Houses founder Jobie Hill is the institute’s inaugural director.

Hill and her students hope to support community efforts like that at Pine Grove. In February 2020, the Pine Grove School was successfully listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Muriel Branch now has her sights set on a Rural Historic District listing. “The enthusiasm has been lit. The fire has been lit,” says Branch. “We won’t be dismissed.”

To learn more about the Virginia African American Cultural Resources Task Force visit AfroVirginia.org.
Veronica Jackson works on her piece, That's Pops's Money, at the Virginia Center for the Book's book arts studio. Photo by Kevin McFadden, Virginia Humanities.

Book Arts Member Artist Veronica Jackson had over three decades of experience as an architect and exhibit designer when she decided it was time for a change. She closed up her Washington, D.C.-based design firm and moved to San Francisco to study visual studies at California College of the Arts. Once there, she says, "I had the tools to look at my life, my being as a Black woman, and take those materials and turn them into something." Now based in Central Virginia, Jackson is a visual artist with a burgeoning printmaking practice and a reputation on the rise. She had her first solo show, "The Burden of Invisibility," in February 2019 at Riverviews Artspace in Lynchburg; the exhibit debuted for a second time in February 2020 at Chroma Projects Gallery in Charlottesville.

Making the Invisible

By Nora Pehrson
In July 2020, Jackson and I spoke on the phone about her letterpress work, from process to creation.

Nora Pehrson: First, let’s talk about your letterpress practice at the Virginia Center for the Book and the piece that came out of it, That’s Pops’s Money. You created 813 timecards, each one a quantification of your grandmother’s unappreciated domestic labor. How did you feel as you carried out the process of your own artistic labor?

Veronica Jackson: Well, you hit the nail on the head in the aspect that I physically labored through that project. By physically hand-cranking the timecards through the press, I was literally emulating the daunting, repetitive work that my grandmother did for sixty-seven years. I wanted to pay homage to her devalued labor. At first, I wanted to make the black paper, but black paper, it turns out, is very difficult to create. So, I said, “Fine. I will buy black paper.” It came in huge, 20 by 30 sheets, which I had to cut down to 8 by 10 sheets. That was its own labor. Just to back up for a moment, there’s also the labor of working out the project. As in, how do you physically set this up so that you can execute it? That’s where my architecture training and my exhibit design training came in. Process is very important to me; it sparks the ideas.

NP: How did you first become involved with the Virginia Center for the Book?

VJ: I was introduced to the Center through a papermaking class that I took at the University of Virginia in the summer of 2017. I had done printing before, but once I got to the Center, the whole discipline just blossomed in my life. And that’s where I met [Book Arts Program Director] Garrett Queen and Kevin [McFadden]. That’s where I got the spark to do That’s Pops’s Money—through making paper, trying to make black paper. The mental origin of the piece was a three-word phrase stated by my uncle. Representing that physically—that’s where the letterpress work at the Center for the Book comes in.

NP: How does your family history inform your work?

VJ: My mother and my aunts are strong women who grew up in a patriarchal family environment. They fought their battles wisely, and they set the examples that formed the framework of my feminism. In my professional career as a museum exhibit designer, I had my ideas dismissed and ignored, and then used later with success by supervisors who failed to credit me. I was constantly developing projects without the same level of support provided to my white colleagues. But I don’t negatively dwell on these slights; I use them as material for future work. It’s the catalyst that propels me forward.

NP: You describe art as primarily a form of communication. When you’re working on a piece like Homeless Tourist, for example, do you imagine yourself communicating with the people who have mislabeled you or treated you as invisible in the past?

VJ: I’m responding. I’m definitely responding to those people. But my art is not for them. It’s a way for me to exorcise these feelings that I have in my being. It’s dedicated to Black women, but it’s also for anyone who has felt oppressed or invisible. That’s part of that social consciousness work that I am trying to do.

NP: What draws you to text-based practices?

VJ: Text is important because it’s a form of explaining. “You didn’t see me, simply because you didn’t see me,” as I say in my Language of Invisibility piece, a series of black letterboards featuring quotes from myself and other Black women. Now, I could try to use a plain, wordless black board, but how well is that going to read? I don’t need to be obtuse or abstract. All of my art has an interpretive label or interpretative text because I want people to know what I’m thinking. I want them to know how I want this piece of art to live in the world.

Learn more about Veronica Jackson’s work by visiting JacksonDesignGroup.com.

Discover classes, online discussions, and unique works of art at VaBookCenter.org.
Veronica Jackson describes her art, including this piece called Homeless Tourist, as a form of communication.

Photo courtesy of Veronica Jackson

Veronica Jackson says her work, including this piece, The Language of Invisibility on Display, was influenced by her mother and aunts, strong women who grew up in a patriarchal family.

Photo courtesy of Veronica Jackson
Grants

Virginia Humanities supported these humanities projects between July 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020. To LEARN MORE about the Grants Program, visit VirginiaHumanities.org/Grants.

1. Forgotten Clarks, Inc. Virginia Notes: 1619
2. Virginia Department of Historic Resources In Search of Virginia’s Maritime Heritage
4. University of Richmond Growing-Up in Civil Rights Richmond: A Community Remembers—“Museum in a Box” Educational Resource
5. Preservation Piedmont The Ossory Blown Bridge Builders Project
7. Suffolk River Heritage, Inc. Suffolk River Heritage Website and Digitization
8. Secretary F‘All, Corp Secretary F‘All Archival Project
10. Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation Patrick Henry’s Red Hill: Unfolding Life in the Quarter Place
11. Nelson County Historical Society Digiting Mountain People Archives
12. Louisa County Historical Society Women’s History Lecture Series
14. Richmond Hill Unearthing Buried Stories
15. Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities 2020 Day-After-Election Guide
16. Thomas Day House/Union Tavern Casket-History Speaks
17. Suffolk River Heritage, Inc. Suffolk River Heritage Website and Digitization
18. Secretary F‘All, Corp Secretary F‘All Archival Project
21. Cullinans Coda The Jon-Cross-Virginia Project
23. Preservation VirginiaNeeds Assessment for Virginia Indian Cultural Resources
24. James Madison University Simms 2.0: Spreading the Story of the Lucy F. Simms School to Harrisonburg and Rockingham County Schools, Libraries, and Public Spaces
25. American Frontier Culture Museum Frontier Culture Museum Annual Lecture Series
27. Lynchburg Museum Foundation “Commemorating 100 Years of Women’s Suffrage in Lynchburg”
28. Center for Documentary Studies Rock Castle Home Film Project
29. Danville Museum of Fine Art and History One House, Many Histories: Recontexting the Danville Museum Diorama Video
30. Virginia Civics Education, Inc. 2020-21 We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Professional Development Series for Teachers
32. George Washington University Teacher Institute: Is There a “Muslim World”? Crafting global humanities to challenge singular narratives
33. Virginia Military Institute The Virginia Long Rifle
34. Virginia Wesleyan University Peter Hennessy’s Warrior Chorus: Greek Tragedy for Veterans
35. Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. Religion Integration in Virginia
36. Historical Society of West Virginia Botetourt 201: Speaker Series
37. 1882 Foundation Building Resources for the Teaching of American History and Culture, Grades 9-12
38. GULL Bland County History Archive Reorganization and Web 2020
39. Clark at the Circuit Court For All to See: Digitization of Loudoun’s First Black and Enslaved Papers 1775-1865
40. Coming To The Table- RVA LINKED: Stories Crossing the Color Line
41. Newport News Public Libraries Say It Loud: A Salute to Heroes of the Southeast Community
42. Floyd Creative Studies Handmade Music School: Music of our Mountains
43. Prie Bangla, Inc. Prie Bangla Humanities Publication
44. 1455 500 Summer Literary Festival
45. Congregation Beth Israel Charlottesville Jewish Oral History Project
46. Scambled School Preservation Foundation Stories Worth Telling: The Roanoke Schools in Rappahannock County
47. Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program
48. Museum of Natural History Virginia History Project
49. Virginia Symphony Orchestra Virginia Symphony Orchestra Historical Book and Exhibit
50. Literacy InterActions, Inc. Connecting Past, Present, and Future: Antifluidity and History-telling at an African American Home Place in Southside Virginia
51. Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia Oakes and Westholt Digital Collections
52. Corporation for Jefferson’s Poplar Forest (fiscally sponsored by Jefferson and the Enslaved Community at Poplar Forest
53. Maymont Foundation Online Learning and Engagement for the African American Voices Initiative
55. Richmond Hill African American History Project at Richmond Hill
56. Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia (fiscal agent for Elvatrice Belsches) The Virginia Randolph Project
57. The Friends of the Buchanan County Public Library, Inc. Buchanan County Public Library’s Speaker Series

1882 FOUNDATION

[Fairfax and Statewide]
Asian Americans have been part of the fabric of life in the United States—and in Virginia—for centuries. Their experiences are as varied as their countries of origin: China, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, and others. The stories of Asian Americans touch on themes that run throughout American and Virginia history: immigration, westward expansion, civil rights, the labor movement, international relations, and the rights of women, to name just a few. As important as the stories of Asian Americans and their contributions are to Virginia and the United States, they are not widely known or understood beyond the communities who have lived them. A project by the 1882 Foundation is designed to help change that. With support from Virginia Humanities, the 1882 Foundation is developing an educational toolkit for teaching Asian American history in Virginia’s classrooms. Working with scholars from the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, the Virginia Department of Education, and other organizations, the foundation is developing an innovative, nontraditional online resource that supports project-based learning within the framework of the current Standards of Learning.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
[Charlottesville]
The story of Jewish life in Charlottesville is in part a story of immigration and migration. It is also a story of adaptation and of individuals who were pioneers in business, law, medicine, education, and many other fields. In 1993-1994, Virginia Humanities awarded funds to support an oral history project and related exhibit documenting Jewish life in Charlottesville. Events in the summer of 2017 (the “Unite the Right” rally and its stark expressions of anti-Semitism) gave renewed urgency to this work, and a new phase of oral history interviews was begun. Many of the newer interviews touch on the apprehension caused by the events of August 2017 and how individuals, families, and the local Jewish community have responded. This grant supports transcription of more than forty-five existing interviews, plus another thirty to be conducted during the current period. Our funds are also supporting development of a web interface that will make this resource accessible worldwide. Congregation Beth Israel and project staff are working closely with the University of Virginia’s Special Collections Department and the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities to create a permanent archive that is fully searchable and accessible to a wide range of users locally and state-wide and nationwide.
CARES Act Grants

We would like to thank the members of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities for making more than $600,000 in emergency operating funds available to museums, libraries, historical societies, and other cultural nonprofit organizations in Virginia through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) passed by Congress in March 2020. We distributed these funds to the following 112 organizations in May and June 2020.

African American Historical Society of Portsmouth
Albermarle Charlottemilla Historical Society Charlesville
American Center of Oriental Research Alexandria
American Civil War Museum Richmond
American Press, Inc. Charlottesville
American Frontier Culture Foundation Staunton
Amherst County Museum & Historical Society Amherst
Amherst Arts Repton Inc. Clifton
Arcadia Feed, Inc. Alexandria
Augusta County Historical Society Staunton
Belia Green, Inc. Middlesex
Beth Abiah Museum and Archives Richmond
Birthplace of Country Music Bristol
Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia Richmond
Blackbog Museum & Cultural Foundation Blacksburg
Blue Ridge PBS Roanoke
Book Arts Press, Inc. Charlottesville
Cape Charles Historical Society Cape Charles
Christiansburg Institute, Inc. Christiansburg
Clarke County Historical Association Berryville
Columbia Fila Documentary Project Arlington
Corporation for Jefferson’s Poplar Forest Forest
Council of United Filmmakers Organization of Filmakers, Inc. Virginia Beach
Culpeper Caverns Museum, Inc. Culpeper
Dandridge Museum of Fine Art and History Danville
Eastern Shore of Virginia Barrier Islands Center, Inc. Machipongo
Eastern Shore Virginia Historical Society Onancock
Elgin Folklore Society Richmond
Fairfield Foundation Staunton
Fall for the Book, Inc. Fairfax
Former Historical Society Harrison
Fayetteville Area Historical Initiative Martinsville
Foundation for Historic Christ Church Virginia
Frederickburg Area Museum and Cultural Center Fredericksburg
Friends of Hendley Regional Library Williamsburg
Greater Roanoke Association Roanoke
Gatton Hall Mason Neck
Hamner Tavern Foundation Manassas
Harrodsburg-Rockingham Historical Society Dayton
History: Crab Orchard Museum Tazewell
Historic Gardeninae, Inc. Gordonsville
Historic Petersburg Foundation Petersburg
Historic St. Luke’s Restoration Staunton
Historical Society of Western Virginia Roanoke
James River Rediscovery Foundation Jerusalem
James River High Point Foundation, Inc. Williamsburg
Jefferson School African American Heritage Center Charlottesville
Jewish Museum & Cultural Center (Friends of Chevra T’Holim, Inc.) Portsmouth
Journey Through Harriet’s Ground Waterford
Legacy Museum of African American History Lynchburg
Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center of Virginia, Inc. Charlottesville
Light House Studio Charlottesville
Logan County Historical Society Logan
Loudoun Museum Leesburg
Levisa County Historical Society Levisa
Lydus County Foundation Archdale
Lydia Caze Gaumont Archives Charlottesville
Lynchburg Museum Foundation Lynchburg
Mary Ball Washington Museum & Library, Inc. Fredericksburg
Maymont Foundation West End
Mechanics Foundation Waynesboro
Military Aviation Museum Virginia Beach
Montgomery Museum of Art & History Christiansburg
National D-Day Memorial Bedford
National Sporting Library, Inc. Middleburg
National Trust for Historic Preservation Washington
Oyster Museum, Inc. Chincoteague Island
Patrick County Historical Society Warrenton
Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation Luray
Perseus Classical Music Co. Vienna
Preservation Virginia Richmond
Prin Bega, Inc. Arlington
Radford Heritage Foundation (Blacksburg Museum) Radford
Red Dot Productions Charlotteville
Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, Inc. Stratford
Rockbridge Historical Society Lexington
Rockingham Library Association Harrisonburg
Smithfield Poultry Foundation Blackburn
South Boston-Hotels County Museum of Fine Arts and History South Boston
St. John’s Church Foundation Richmond
Steamboat Era Museum Irvington
The Cold War Museum and IIICC Virginia Beach
The Germania Foundation Luray
The Hermitage Museum and Gardens Norfolk
The John Marshall Foundation Richmond
The Mariners’ Museum Newport News
The Monticello Foundation Orange
The Museums’ Museum Newport News
The Monticello Foundation Orange
The Muse Writers Center Norfolk
The Museum of the Confederacy Richmond
The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in The Commonwealth of Virginia Richmond
The Navigate House Museum & Cultural Center Newport News
The Pocahontas Foundation Richmond
The Presidential Proclit Charlottesville
The Valentine Richmond
The Virginia D-Day Museum Harrisonburg
Tidewater Point Suffragist Memorial Association Farmville
Vinton Historical Society Vinton
Virginia Beach Maritime Museum, Inc. Virginia Beach
Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities Richmond
Virginia Civil Education, Inc. Orange
Virginia Colonial Museum Richmond
Virginia Museum of History & Culture Richmond
Virginia Museum of Transportation Roanoke
Washington Heritage Museums Fredericksburg
Waterford Foundation, Inc. Waterford
Wilderness Road Regional Museum Monroe
William King Museum of Art Abingdon
Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation Arington
Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library Staunton
Virginia Humanities thanks the individuals, foundations, and corporations whose generous contributions and involvement sustain our work throughout the commonwealth.

With your support, we are able to amplify the narratives, traditions, and ideas that bring meaning and connection to our lives. Your investment ensures that we can continue to create high quality, dynamic programming with wide reaching engagement.

This year, we started a “Humanities At Home” initiative by redesigning public events and programs in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. We implemented new online programs including Shelf Life and TRAIN (Teachers of Remote Arts Instruction Network) to connect you with authors, musicians, and artists while at home. And we distributed more than $600,000 in CARES Act funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to 112 cultural organizations in Virginia, providing critical operational support to museums, libraries, and historic sites in need of financial assistance.

Virginia Humanities extends a special thank you to those who have given unrestricted gifts to the Virginia Humanities Fund. Unrestricted support is a crucial source of funding, and allows us to put your gift to work where it’s needed most.

To learn more about including Virginia Humanities in your will, or to explore other opportunities to invest in our work, please call 434-924-3296, email support@VirginiaHumanities.org, or visit us online at VirginiaHumanities.org/support.
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VIRGINIA HUMANITIES
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT JUNE 30, 2020 FOR
VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR THE HUMANITIES AND PUBLIC POLICY

CURRENT ASSETS
Cash and cash equivalents

$6,207,949
Investments

$6,567,849
Grants Receivable

$32,648
Pledges Receivable

$31,580
Other Receivable

$652,933
Prepaid Expenses

$23,239
Total Current Assets

$9,506,258

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS
Accounts Payable

$131,198
Accrued Expenses

$141,077
Grants Payable

$186,797
Compensated absences, current portion

$14,301
Total Current Liabilities

$470,763

Long Term Liabilities
Compensated Absences, net of Current Portion

$599,473
Total Liabilities

$6,977,301
Net Assets

$9,566,842
Total Net Assets

$10,166,315

2019 - 2020 EXPENSES
$5.6 MILLION

2019 - 2020 REVENUE SOURCES
$8.1 MILLION*
*The balance of income over expenses is reserved for multi-year projects.

CURRENT EXPENSE
Program Services

12%
Management

12%
Digital Initiatives

13%
Advancement

12%
Grants & Fellowships

12%
Books & Literature

3%
Cultures & Community

12%
State Appropriation

22%
Federal Income

20%

correlation

Restricted & Unrestricted Contributions

23%
Earned Income

11%
Corporations/Foundations

4%
Unrestricted of Virginia

4%
Individually

9%
Other Income

6%
Jeep Meyung and Berry Miller 15
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If you have already included us in your estate plan but do not see your name listed below, please let us know as we may thank you appropriately.

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In Memoriam

The Board and Staff of Virginia Humanities remember with gratitude the following donors who passed away during the year. Their heartfelt contributions helped to shape our organization, develop new programs, and provide enthusiastic support for our work.

Mrs. Nancy B. Booker
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Randolph W. Church Jr.
Ms. Emma C. Edmunds
Mrs. Jean C. Fording
Mr. John H. Hager
Dr. Oliver Hill Jr.
Mrs. Joan S. Jones
Mr. James L. Kelly
Mr. George A. Latimer Sr.

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Each year Virginia Humanities recognizes in-kind contributions from those who have hosted events, contributed artwork to the Raucous Auction, provided goods and services for programs, and promoted our programming. Their contributions help us reduce expenses, secure additional funding, increase programmatic quality and exposure, and focus on our important work throughout the commonwealth.

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Albemarle Magazine
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Cauline Yates
Formerly the Lee County Colored School in Pennington Gap, Virginia, this one-room schoolhouse in Virginia's westernmost county is now home to the Appalachian African-American Cultural Center.

Photo by Justin Reid, Virginia Humanities
Special Funds

In addition to donations to the Virginia Humanities Fund and our programs, Virginia Humanities receives contributions to giving circles, named funds, and endowments that have been established for special purposes and to sustain our programs over time.

The Author’s Fund was established in 2016 to support the Virginia Festival of the Book’s continued excellence in recruiting high-caliber and diverse authors to speak at programs for broad public audiences.

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Katherine McNamara
Nina Riccio
The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation

Carol Troxell Fund was established in 2017 in memory of former New Dominion Bookshop owner Carol Troxell; it celebrates voracious reading and supports a solo featured author during the Virginia Festival of the Book.

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Laura Troy and Robert Troy

George A. and Frances Bibbins Latimer Fund was established by George Latimer in 2018 to honor his late wife, Eastern Shore native and prominent community historian Frances Bibbins Latimer; it supports grant projects that document, preserve and celebrate African American life in Virginia.

Rosel Schewel Fund was established by an anonymous donation in 2019 to honor the vision, leadership and achievements of Virginia Humanities’ longest-serving board member and Lynchburg-based educator, philanthropist and activist, Rosel Schewel; it aims to amplify the voices of, support the work of, and honor the achievements of women in Virginia.

Edna & Norman Freehling Fellowship was established by historian and Virginia Humanities Senior Fellow William W. Freehling in memory of his parents; it supports research and writing on the South Atlantic region, including the Caribbean South.

Emilia Galli Struppa Fellowship was created by Chapman University Chancellor and former Virginia Humanities board member Daniele Struppa in memory of his mother; it supports research and writing in history and literary studies.

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Virginia Center for the Book Endowment supports the Center’s book-related activities; it was established by donor Michael Jay Green.

Virginia Humanities Endowment was established to support the ongoing financial needs of Virginia Humanities.
Amid the 2020 whirlwind of non-stop breaking news, two Virginia Humanities staff members quietly—and remotely—began their tenures as members of Governor Ralph Northam’s administration. The governor appointed Karice Luck-Brimmer (right), Virginia Humanities’ coordinator for the Danville-based History United program, to the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. And Virginia Humanities’ director of Community Initiatives, Justin Reid (left), was added to the board of the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC).

Of the more than 95,000 entries on the National Register of Historic Places—the federal list of sites deemed worthy of preservation—only two percent focus on the experiences of Black Americans. The Virginia Board of Historic Resources, in collaboration with the State Review Board and Department of Historic Resources, approves and revises state historical markers, and helps decide which Virginia sites are nominated to the National Register. The board was recently tasked with determining how Confederate monuments are contextualized statewide to explain “the truth regarding the ‘Lost Cause’.”

The Virginia Tourism Corporation has also been committed to sharing Virginia’s cultural heritage. Best known for its ubiquitous “Virginia Is For Lovers”® campaign, VTC supports a tourism and film economy that has generated more than $25 billion in annual statewide revenue. Even as the agency helps this crucial industry weather COVID-19, it continues to grow new and future audiences through initiatives like the award-winning Following Harriet podcast, and early outreach and planning for the 250th anniversary commemoration of the American Revolution.

Luck-Brimmer and Reid are gifted public historians known for their passion and creativity. Together, they represent a new generation of cultural sector leaders in Virginia. With their new roles, they have a unique opportunity to further support the re-examination of Virginia’s past and the building of a more inclusive future.
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VIRGINIA HUMANITIES GRANTS DEADLINES

FALL GRANTS
Deadline: October 15
Decisions in early December

SPRING GRANTS
Deadline: April 15
Decisions in early June

ROLLING GRANTS
Applications for Rolling Grants may be submitted at any time throughout the year.

For full application guidelines, please visit VirginiaHumanities.org/grants.

BOARD NOMINATIONS

The Virginia Humanities Nominating Committee welcomes suggested names for nomination, specifically individuals who, when brought together as a board, broadly represent the geographic regions and demographic makeup of today’s Virginia. The committee strives to sustain a balance among scholars in the humanities, civic and business leaders, and the general public. Nominations are coordinated by the Office of the Director. Please send suggestions to rm3xa@virginia.edu.