

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

News from the Grassroots

June 2020 Issue 93

Celebrations!

When the Supreme Court stopped the Trump administration from ending the DACA program on June 18, the Harrisonburg/Rockingham County Chapter held a celebration on the steps of city hall.



The Washington County Chapter participated in the first annual Juneteenth celebration in Bristol, organized by the Future Black Leaders Coalition. For video of the event, see their Facebook page.



Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer for the Commonwealth, invited Chairperson Del McWhorter to be present at the press conference where Governor Ralph Northam announced he would remove the Lee statue in Richmond.

TRACKING		
MIND (THOUGHTS)	LOWER NUMBER (1-5)	HIGHER NUMBER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worried Racing Thoughts Foggy Brain Cluttered Distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused Thinking Clear Able To Discern
BODY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pain Stiffness Fatigue Head/Tummy/Bodyache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxed Healthy Active/Alive Loose
HEART (EMOTIONS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numb Disconnected From Others Emotionally Closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connected/Open Loving Sad Or Hurt (And It's Ok!)

Online Learning Series Going Strong!

Since the pandemic forced us to stop holding most in-person gatherings, Virginia Organizing has provided more than 25 webinars on weeknights. The webinars are open to the public, and we have been proud to bring special guests such as Reclaiming our own Transcendence (RooT), whose webinar "Healing Cycles of Harm" on June 22 taught participants how our minds and bodies react to trauma and stress. (Image courtesy of RooT.)

RooT offered a number of practices for finding healing within ourselves for racial and sexual violence. We also offered our own webinar on self-care. For several years we have incorporated self-care and resiliency workshops in our gatherings. Leader Ronna Wertman from the SAW Chapter and staff have also published a healing and self-care newsletter that is available on our website.

Richard Cordray and Americans for Financial Reform updated us on the state of predatory lending regulation at the national level. Alliance for a Just Society held a Spanish webinar on Worker's Rights and also invited board member Ebony Guy to participate in a national webinar on voting rights.

In May we held a tele-townhall about the pandemic with Senator Tim Kaine and Health Care for America Now. More than 2000 Virginians participated in the call.

The developing Suffolk Chapter and leaders from other chapters have been participating in a three week intensive dismantling racism workshop on Thursday nights. We also offered a webinar on racist police violence and how we can work for change in our communities.

We have offered many skill-building workshops as well such as "How to write a letter to the editor," "Creative tactics and escalation," "Public Speaking," "How to choose an issue," and many others. In June we started a weekly Tuesday night training for people who want to learn how to register voters.

On Monday, June 29, Brandy Faulkner of the New River Valley Chapter will facilitate a discussion of the Environmental Justice movement.

Leader of the Month - Sendy Portillo of the Richmond Area!

Sendy Portillo moved to Richmond from El Salvador in 2008. She was looking for an organization to get involved in when Virginia Organizing started developing a chapter in the Richmond area in 2019. Before the pandemic started, she helped recruit members of her community for the Know your Rights Workshop we held in December, and she visited the General Assembly during the 2020 session many times to lobby for Driver's Licenses for All.



Sendy says, "I really love Virginia Organizing's work. I can see that all the laws we're supporting will be good for the community." Sendy felt pushed by the problems immigrants face to work for them to be able to drive legally in Virginia. "They know that they don't have documents, but they're trying to do things right. They just want to work and take care of their families." The partial victory on licenses inspired her to think "that we can win the things we want if we keep fighting."

Since the shut-down, Sendy has continued to lead in the growing chapter. She facilitated a monthly meeting this week for the first time, and she participated in the Power Analysis where leaders, board members, and staff met several times during the month of May to analyze how we can build more power in Virginia and what changes we need to see.

One of the issues Sendy discussed was the difficulty for immigrants of finding affordable health care. If they don't qualify for insurance on Marketplace.gov, they have to pay enormous prices. People can be charged as much as \$400/child per month, and for a single mother with a low-wage job, that is impossible. As a result, "those kids don't go to the doctor or the dentist." Immigrants she knows have died because they couldn't see a doctor when they were sick.

Sendy herself reports that she is asked how she's going to pay before she receives treatment any time she goes to the hospital. Five days after the birth of her second child, she became dangerously sick with an infection that caused a high fever, but she was sent home with antibiotics that didn't cure her several times before she was finally admitted because of kidney failure.

"I'm telling you this because I know how immigrants feel. We have to do something."

Thank you, Sendy, for helping to create a chapter in Richmond and for standing up for justice in our communities.



Take Action!

Learn how to register voters for the election in November at one of our weekly Tuesday night webinars on Zoom at 7 p.m. To sign up, email amandadameron@virginia-organizing.org



The Eastern Shore Chapter held a rally outside a nursing center to protest the firing of whistleblower Mary Morrow (above), who drew attention to the facility's failure to follow best practices during the crisis. Read more in the Eastern Shore Post.



Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro, Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Hampton/Newport News, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Washington County

On Campus: UMW, UVA, E&H, EMU, U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

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