



News from the Grassroots

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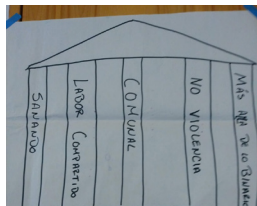
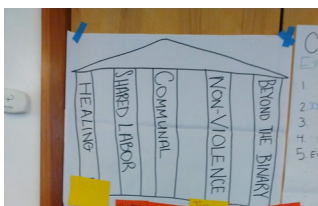


First Gender Justice Workshop

Over the weekend, 40 members of Virginia Organizing met in Harrisonburg for our first workshop on dismantling patriarchy and working toward gender justice.

Over the three days, participants developed their understanding of patriarchy, made commitments to gender justice in a Women's, Men's, and a Non-binary caucus, and envisioned what a world without patriarchy might be like.

We call it the "People's House," and its pillars are Beyond the Binary, Non-violence, Communal Support, Shared Labor, and Healing.



Members included several Spanish speakers. A big shout out to the Virginia Language Justice Collective for providing us with fantastic interpretation!

Richmond Housing Win!

Richmond City Council has agreed to create a rental inspection program after the Richmond Chapter spent months lifting the voices of Forestbrooke Apartment tenants who live in dangerous conditions.

Leaders Natesha Ferrer and Dawn McCormick spoke to Henry Graff of WWBT about the conditions they face and this decision in February.

"Just because we don't have the income level... as other people. It doesn't mean we're not people... I matter. My children matter and I just can't let this slide," Natesha said.

The chapter will continue to push for Amurcon Realty, the owner of Forestbrooke, to fulfill all of their requirements, such as fixing broken appliances and doors, removing mold, etc.



General Assembly Visits

Members traveled to the General Assembly from all of our chapter areas to meet with their legislators and share our priorities and concerns.

The Wythe County Chapter happened to run into Del. Jeff Bourne and said hello. He isn't their delegate, but he was born and raised in Wytheville.

Many chapters were introduced on the floor of the House or Senate, a tradition everyone enjoys.





Waynesboro Petition Delivery

The Waynesboro Chapter presented their petition to City Council last night. Council chambers were packed. The petition calls for the creation of a rental inspection program.

A rental inspection program has been in Waynesboro's comprehensive plan since 2018. The program would address housing conditions, provide accountability for landlords, and preserve existing housing stock in the city.

Implementation of the program is past due. Council has still not taken action.



Wise County Blackface Scandal

The developing chapter in Wise County jumped into action soon after their first meeting because a photo of a member of their school board in blackface became public.

They spoke at the February School Board meeting and demanded that the school board participate in a dismantling racism workshop so that they can better understand the impact something like this has on people of color in the community.

From the article in the TimesNews: "Tracie Grogan said any apology should not be based on 'if I offended you,' but acknowledging that one did wrong and will do better."

Adam Malle echoed Grogan's comments.

"Sorry if you were offended' isn't how you do it."



ARTivism Virginia | Featured Community Partner

A powerful movement needs artistic media that gives structure to the messages we carry and an outlet for the emotions we wish to convey. Media that inspires and motivates and teaches and gives clarity. The movement is here, and it includes poets, singers, painters, sculptors, actors, dancers, videographers, photographers, and puppeteers.

Here in Virginia, ARTivism Virginia, an organization that has a joint plan of work with Virginia Organizing, has organized approximately 150 artists from across the region who work in every imaginable medium to use their art to stop fracked gas pipelines. Their motto is "first the heart, then the head, then the feet." In other words, their creations aim to inspire, educate, and move people to action. You may have seen their visual stylings on posters for pipeline resistance events, or seen their giant puppets at a rally. Those little "This Is A Robbery" signs that sprouted at Department of Environmental Quality hearings were their idea, and perhaps you were in downtown Richmond once when the Sun Bus hosted a pop-up block party in front of the Pocahontas Building.

Some of those projects came to fruition before ARTivism Virginia was known by that name. The group has its origins in the artistic activism of Kay Ferguson, who began organizing artists in early 2017, a year that culminated in the Walking the Line: Into the Heart of Virginia walk along the 150-mile proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline route, and the Water Is Life Rally and Concert in Richmond.

Ferguson saw a need to distill the complex and arcane regulatory, scientific, and political minutiae tied up in pipeline construction into simple, accessible messages that people can respond to. While most people will not become experts on eminent domain, safety regulations, or soil science, art can teach us how the construction of a pipeline will impact our lives even if we don't live on the right-of-way. It can also inspire us and spur us to action.

Read more on our website!

Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg Area, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Newport News/Hampton, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond Area, Suffolk, Washington County, Waynesboro, Wise County, Wythe County

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