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who inspired the song *Until I Found You*, which has gone platinum and is a top-ten song worldwide, is very real, and living a full creative life right here in Richmond. Georgia Brown wasn't just the inspiration for the song that catapulted Stephen Sanchez's career; she sang harmony vocals on it. And don't ever call her a muse.

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COVER PHOTO BY *Ashton E. Bemis*

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Oliver White Hill, Sr.: Liberator of the Commonwealth

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN, 2003

Oliver White Hill, Sr's voice wavers as he begins to recount his life. He was born just 42 years after the Civil War ended, in the capital of the Confederacy, when blacks in the South were still little more than slaves, at best second or third class citizens. As a young man he became a freedom fighter and patriot of the same magnitude as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

A T AN EARLY AGE

Oliver Hill moved with his mother, Olivia, and stepfather to Roanoke where they lived in a house owned by a man named Bill Branford S. Pentecost, who worked as a cook on the Norfolk Western Railroad. Oliver's parents worked at The Homestead and for almost eight years the Pentecosts would become Oliver's surrogate parents. Bill Pentecost would bring daily papers from cities throughout the South and Midwest. "By the time I was seven years old," Mr. Hill remembers. "I was familiar with everything south-east of the Mississippi River. The St. Louis Post. The Cincinnati Inquirer, the Atlanta Constitution, the Chatanooga Times. We'd have a nice time reading the papers. He was a very fine man."

By the age of nine, the young Oliver learned to play cards and tennis, and he also learned how to make money and save it. Awake by 3 a.m. on Saturdays, he delivered newspapers, actually creating his own routes. He saved \$39 to buy his own bicycle and he started a savings account. "I had three or four hundred dollars in the savings account before it was all over," Mr. Hill tells me.

Always resourceful, the nine-year-old Oliver foraged for pint and quart whisky bottles that could be redeemed for a penny a piece at an old distillery. One Saturday morning as the young boy brought his treasures of redeemable glass into the distillery a man told him to go upstairs. As Oliver neared the top step, the man downstairs called out, "Catch that little n****er and cut out his balls."

Oliver ran. The stairs below him were blocked, so he charged onto the second floor and was immediately chased by three men.

"I didn't know what the hell balls or testicles or whatever he wanted to call them were," says Mr. Hill. "I didn't know what their function was, but I knew they were mine and I wanted to keep them. I ran from them and finally got loose and ran home. I was scared to death."

Mr. Pentecost was out of town when this happened, but when he got home late one night, his wife told him the story, and the next morning he walked with Oliver down to the distillery. The place was completely empty. "I remember he was mad as hell" Mr. Hill says. "And, of course, we didn't report it to the police; they were as much the enemy as anybody else."

Back in those days, it was a way of life for Blacks. "The general idea in the black community was there were two kinds of white folks, good white folks and bad white folks, and you could always tell the difference," says Mr. Hill, pausing just long enough to deliver the punch. "The good white folks were buried at least six feet deep."

At age 14, Oliver Hill began attending one of the finest high schools in the nation—Dunbar, in Washington D.C. "Dunbar had the highest paid salary of Negro teachers any-where," says Mr. Hill. "We had more PhDs than any other school in the country, white or black."

In his senior year, Oliver received a book from an uncle that would change his life: The Annotated Constitution of the United States. He memorized this text, rereading the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments.

After graduation, Oliver Hill entered Howard University. The university's president, Dr. Mordecai Johnson, had decided Howard would have a first-class law school. "He was a scholar, a Baptist preacher and a wonderful speaker," Mr. Hill says. "I prefer him to Martin Luther King."

After completing his undergraduate work, Oliver Hill went to law school at Howard, which was headed up by Charles Hamilton Huston, the first Black to study law at Harvard.

Charles Huston built an institution that would fine-tune the skills of an army of young men who would fight the good fight against segregation, in effect, launch the Second American Revolution. Among those young men were Oliver White Hill and his classmate, Thurgood Marshall.

Oliver Hill and Thurgood Marshall became quick friends. While Thurgood worked as an assistant librarian, Oliver waited tables in the dining room of an upscale apartment building. In the afternoons, the two would study together. They'd sometimes eat lunch at a place called Father Divine's Restaurant. "If you said, 'Peace, 'tis truly wonderful,' you'd get a good meal for twenty-five cents," says Mr. Hill. "Deluxe lunch was thirty-five cents."

Charles Huston noticed how the pair of aspiring attorneys hit it off. "We became his proteges," Mr. Hill says.

After passing the bar, Oliver returned to Roanoke and was sworn in as a lawyer. He shared office space with an established attorney and picked up a few cases in hustings court. "A penalty of ten years got

you ten dollars," Mr. Hill remembers. "For murder you got twenty-five dollars."

On his birthday, in 1939, Oliver Hill returned to Richmond. "That's when I became a counselor for the Joint Committee for the Virginia's Teachers Association and the NAACP," he says. It was turning point in his career. Now, he could sink his teeth into the law. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, black teachers were paid significantly less than their white counterparts. And this metamorphosed into something of even greater importance. "We began challenging not only the teacher's salaries, but we were challenging the unequal quality of the facilities, the course of study and all that sort of thing," says Mr. Hill.

Oliver Hill filed suit against one school system after another—Sussex, Norfolk, Newport News, Chesterfield, Gloucester.

In Gloucester, county officials argued that they didn't have enough money to equalize the schools, so the court ordered them to apply to the Board of Supervisors to hold a bond referendum. Before the general vote, members of the School Board scattered across the county telling citizens to vote against the bond issue, and they did.

"We learned about it and filed a motion for further relief," Mr. Hill says. "And they hauled the School Board members down to court and the judge was so mad he didn't know what to do. He fined each of them five hundred dollars and ordered that it be paid out of their private funds, not public funds." He considers the judge's actions and then says, "He was a fine judge. He just couldn't bring himself to order Negro children to school with white children. I don't know why they were so adamant about that. Desegregation would have been the sensible thing to have done, starting the kids off together in kindergarten."

At 36, Oliver Hill was drafted. Discrimination in the Army was rampant and it all left a bad taste in his mouth. "If you were unemployed, you got something like twenty-two dollars a week," he says. "I never drew anything. I never got the benefit of the housing deal. I didn't want anything to do with the government. In high school I learned how to avoid drill. I was always anti-military."

But he was always up for a fight. Stateside, Oliver Hill again joined the fight for independence. "The fight never stopped during the war," says Mr. Hill. "When I got home I just jumped back into the fray." His firm filed suit after suit in the pursuit of justice.

The real battleground for integration was within the public school system. In 1951, a brave young woman by the name of Barbara Jones led a strike of some 450 students at Moton High School in Farmville. Her goal was not just a better school for Blacks: It was desegregation, a word that stirred the passions of many Southern whites. Fearing retaliation from whites, the local NAACP was reluctant to join the cause. But Oliver Hill and Spottswood Robinson came to the aid of Moton High.

The spark had been ignited, and the fire was moving through the brush. Change was imminent. Things came to a head in 1954 with Brown versus the Board of Education. Oliver Hill remembers working the first case that led to that Supreme Court decision, which declared segregation in schools unconstitutional. "The first one was in Clarendon County, South Carolina," he says. "As a matter of fact when we filed the suit down there they burned the school down, they burned the home of the principal down. That was the first case that we challenged segregation per se."

There were numerous obstacles ahead, including the infernal Byrd machine that used massive resistance to block the Supreme Court's decision. "Harry Byrd was a rabid rac-ist," Mr. Hill remembers. "He always referred to me as 'that n****er lawyer.'"

Then there was Tenant Bryan, owner of the Richmond newspapers. "He was a segregationist," says Mr. Hill. "He was an enemy of the people."

Over the decades, Oliver Hill's life was threatened in one way or other—late night phone calls, burning crosses and so on, the handiwork of cowards. And then Oliver tells me this: "Years ago I finally got some sense. I realized that if I got angry the way they did, I'd be as bad off as they were. The other thing I learned a long time ago is every now and then you run into a decent white person, and there have always been decent white people. The writer O. Henry used to say to watch a man, how he treats his children, how he treats his wife, how he treats people in inferior positions, domestics and things, and so I followed O. Henry. It was just as stupid for me to hate white folks as it was for them to hate me. I judge a person on his actions, nothing more."

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Restoring Thirteen Acres For Richmond Public Schools

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

WE ARE DRESSED for the weather, bundled up, maybe twenty of us, waiting on the weathered porch for the key to turn.

All of us want to have a look inside this historic building the city of Richmond has allowed to fall into a state of decay for well over a decade. Bob Balster, president of the Hermitage Road Historic District, put together this interior tour of Thirteen Acres, a two-story building with a rich historical past that sits on the campus of Linwood Holton Elementary School in Bellevue. Bob turns the key and unlocks the door, and we all enter in single file. Bob passes out small LED flashlights because the interior is bathed in a permanent moonless midnight, thanks to the sheets of plywood shielding every one of the windows, an attempt to keep vandals out. Which seems to have worked well. Rabbits on the other hand had no problem getting in, though getting out was another story. Over the next half hour I will count a total six rabbit carcasses, all with gleaming coats, all mummified, and hollow as puffballs.

The air inside is heavy with rot and mildew. Room after room bears witness to the former uses of this structure which began as a family farmhouse.

Built in 1885, Thirteen Acres is one



Photo courtesy of Helen Trripp whose grandparents lived in the old farmhouse, now called Thirteen Acres, for more than thirty years.

of oldest remaining homes in the Northside, and is the second oldest house on Hermitage Road. Back in 1967, the house and an accompanying thirteen acres was sold to the City of Richmond for \$475,000 by the Virginia Methodist Home for the Aged, which operated its facility there. Richmond Public Schools (RPS), at that time, planned to build an elementary school on the site, but there was fierce opposition from the adjoining neighborhoods. They argued that the location was too close to the dense traffic along Laburnum and Hermitage, and children might be hit by speeding cars.

For the next four years, the old house served as a school for children with

special needs. Then, from 1973 until 1978 the building became home to the RPS community relations department. In 1978, RPS proposed using the site as a residential school for adolescents. The surrounding communities—Rosedale, Bellevue, Ginter Park—were vehemently opposed to the proposal, but two years later Thirteen Acres opened a five-day residential program for emotionally disabled students, ranging in age from six to twelve. It continued as a residential school until 2007, eight years after Holton Elementary School first opened its doors.

Another note of interest: during the Second World War, Thirteen Acres was home to one of the largest victory gardens in Richmond. That victory garden continued producing vegetables for the full duration of the war.

Not long ago, a woman by the name of Helen Tripp reached out to me after reading a piece I had written about Thirteen Acres. “This was a wonderfully special home, a place my brother, sister and cousin spent MANY happy days,” Helen wrote about Thirteen Acres. “Our grandparents, the Moores, lived at Thirteen Acres for at least 30 years; our Mother and Aunt grew up there and both went to St. Catherine’s School. As kids, we spent Christmas there and had numerous birthday parties also. Granddaddy raised/sold boxwood and leaf mold on the land.” She was hoping the grand staircase had been preserved.

As our group moves out of what was

once the grand foyer we come to the staircase Helen mentioned in her correspondence. Although the newel post and the raised panel wainscoting are preserved, many of the balusters are missing or snapped in half.

Among those in our tour group are a City Council representative; the executive director of Historic Richmond; Richmond writer and architectural historian, Eddie Slipek; and two School Board members.

One of those School Board members, Kenya Gibson, who represents the Third District, is mounting the stairs when I catch up with her. She pauses and turns to face me.

“What would you like to see done with this building,” I ask her.

“I want to see the building preserved, and presuming that the building stays next to Holton I would love to see it used in an educational capacity,” says Kenya.

More than ten years ago former Holton Elementary School Principal David Hudson suggested a similar use for the property. “We put together a proposal to get it as a school for humanities during the regular school day,” David had told me. “And then to use it for the extended, after-school programs in the afternoons.”

But if that is not possible, Kenya, an ardent supporter of architectural preservation, wants to ensure that the old farmhouse is completely restored to its former glory. “I would be totally in



Tour of Thirteen Acres.



Kenya Gibson, Bob Balster, and Ann-Frances Lambert.

support of moving the building to front on Hermitage Road, where it could be sold as a private residence,” she says.

Bob Balster who spearheaded this tour, mentions to me that an assessment done about ten years ago concluded that moving the structure would present no problems. “It was considered very doable,” he says. “This is a very sound structure.”

It’s also an architecturally interesting structure. Among other things, this house features a wrap-around porch, broad eaves supported by decorative dentils, a two-story bay window, and a hipped, slate roof, which, incidentally, seems completely intact. While touring the second floor of the house I saw no evidence of leaks—the ceilings were spotless.

“Thirteen Acres is a remarkable property, one of the oldest in the Hermitage Road Historic District, and it is clear that the community would like to see it saved,” Cyane Crump will tell me later. Cyane is executive director of Historic Richmond, an organization

that is steadfast in its mission to preserve historically and architecturally important structures. “We are pleased to be working with the neighborhood and the city to develop preservation solutions,” Cyane adds. “Having toured the property and seen its potential, I am confident that there are options for its rehabilitation and reuse, and Historic Richmond looks forward to working with all of the stakeholders to see it saved and achieve a positive outcome for all the stakeholders.”

I inspect room after room. There are a number of large pocket doors, exquisite mantelpieces, and the floors appear to be made of quarter sawn heart pine. Graffiti adorns most of the walls, and various depictions of male genitalia seem to be the most popular themes.

Upstairs in a lightless room I encounter Third District Councilwoman Ann-Frances Lambert. I ask her her take on Thirteen Acres.

“We are interested in the land around it and getting access to it,” she says. “And I know where the soccer fields are now,

if we are able to get that strip to be able to put multiple single family homes on, that’s the option. Right now what is being proposed is just the house with nothing surrounding it, and we as a city don’t want that. We need to be able to discuss the other portions of the land to make it single family homes.”

Building new single family homes near the school would probably meet with stiff opposition from the neighborhood. That’s what 4th District Councilman Jonathan Young thinks, and he knows a fair amount about Thirteen Acres as well as other unused properties owned by Richmond Public Schools. He did, after all, chair the School Board’s vacant property committee.

“I don’t think there’s any support for building houses there,” he tells me. “What my friend and colleague Kenya wants to avoid, and I concur with her, relates to razing that property and putting up some new development that would not comport with neighborhood interest.”

Jonathan mentions another property Richmond Public Schools owns—Moore Street School. That building also has both historical and architectural features that need to be preserved. Moore Street School was built in 1887 as an educational facility built expressly for Black children.

Community leaders from Carver banded together to form a 501 C3 called The Moore Street School Foundation. The sole purpose of the foundation is to purchase Moore Street School and redevelop it in a manner that would benefit the community at large. “What I’ve heard is that it’s something that would be complementary of what we do at Carver Elementary,” Jonathan says. “We’ve given the city the green light to put the RFP (Request for Proposal) out on the Moore Street project. Presumably we could replicate the same thing pertinent to Thirteen Acres.”

There are those already interested in purchasing Thirteen Acres. “As recently as today I had a conversation with someone who said, ‘I think that that property and all of the acreage could accommodate a child care/school space absent additional development on it and still be financially feasible,’” says Jonathan. “The counsel I was provided with today, from someone who is very well known and highly regarded, was very encouraging. The only way that we’re going to be amenable is if the property’s preserved, and if it’s use is compatible with the elementary school.”

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Thirteen Acres.



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The Gellman Room features "Jubilee Ronnylee", works from 50 years of practice, a retrospective display of mixed media creations by Richmond artist Ron Lee.

In the Dooley Foyer, "Live the Questions"—large abstract work inspired by the words of poet Rainer Maria Rilke by Richmond artist Nellie Rose, who explores complicated themes of love and life through color and movement.

In Dooley Hall experience "Past & Future" by artist Andrew Bryant.

LESSONS OF THE HOUR:

FREDERICK DOUGLASS AT VMFA

Lessons of the Hour is an immersive meditation on this great 19th-century abolitionist. Produced by Sir Isaac Julien, this ten-screen film



Lessons of the Hour.

installation collapses time and space to bridge persistent historical and contemporary challenges.

Frederick Douglass, who escaped enslavement, was a masterful writer and orator, one of history's greatest activists for freedom and equality, and an advocate for women's suffrage. To combat the disparaging depictions of African Americans as a means to justify bondage, Douglass used the power of his image to shift cultural perspectives. In doing so, he became the most photographed individual of the 19th century. In this installation, Julien's narrative is informed by Douglass's powerful speeches and includes excerpts from "Lessons of the Hour," "What to the Slave Is the 4th of July?," and the prescient "Lecture on Pictures," which examines the influence of technology and images on human relations. Shakespearean actor Ray Fearon portrays Douglass within the film. Around his commanding visage, Julien weaves Douglass's writings and filmed reenactments of the abolitionist's travels in the United States, Scotland, and Ireland, along with contemporary protest footage.

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UNTIL I FOUND YOU

WE ARE LIVING IN AN AGE OF AGGRESSIVE

clout-chasing. People are tumbling to their deaths in the Grand Canyon mid-selfie. TikTok challenges induce medical emergencies—all in the pursuit of online popularity. Then there's Georgia Brown. She's sitting on something big, but chooses not to cash it in for her fifteen minutes.

The song *Until I Found You* hit the Top 10 Billboard charts, recently went platinum, and catapulted singer-songwriter Stephen Sanchez into worldwide fame. And the first word uttered from his aching doo-wop ballad is "Georgia." Georgia is not only the inspiration for this song, but sang harmony in the recording.

Until I Found You is a stand-out because it harkens back to a more innocent time, when lyrics were earnest and crooners were too talented to be auto-tuned. TikTok clips of this song were popular enough to blow up on Instagram, where the algorithm hit me hard. The song can tease out a sense of longing within seconds. On Instagram, Sanchez credited Georgia with harmony vocals, linking to her account. That's when I discovered that she's a VCU student right here in Richmond.

While Georgia doesn't hide the fact that she's the Georgia, she doesn't promote it either. The song is everywhere you go – in bars, on the radio, most definitely online; but you have to do a little digging to find her. And here is why: Georgia Brown is more than a muse. Others might have clambered to make this hit song their "thing," but that's the very situation she wants to avoid.

Too often, women are known only for what the powerful men in their lives have accomplished. This is the reason that Lily-Rose Depp refused to publicly speak on her father's trial. Artist Frida Kahlo was overshadowed by her husband Diego Rivera. Kim Kardashian is still hounded in interviews to answer for someone

she's no longer married to. These are but a few examples.

Georgia is an artist in her own right, and contributes to the cultural fabric in Richmond. We delved into some of her projects. But first, the breakup.

Because *Until I Found You* is climbing the charts, one would assume that the romance is still fresh. In reality, Stephen and Georgia ended their relationship over a year ago. In interviews, he speaks fondly of her, citing her as a friend and an important part of his life. But when a song makes you swoon like theirs does, fans become hungry for answers. The comments section of his posts are flooded with questions about their relationship, and proclamations of undying love from young girls.

I knew Georgia's direct messages (DMs) would be flooded with queries from strangers, but I reached out anyway. She wasn't sure that she wanted to be interviewed and asked for some time to consider. We recently met up for brunch at Les Crepes in Carytown.

The first thing you notice about Georgia is a beaming smile, free of affectation. She wears a black leather jacket and long black velvet skirt, with blonde hair cascading down one shoulder. She orders a vanilla latte and strawberry crepe, and we get into it.

It was the summer before her senior year of high school, and Georgia was spending a lot of time on TikTok because of the pandemic. She was living with her parents in a small mountain town outside of Roanoke. On TikTok, she came across Stephen Sanchez, who was also at home with his family. He spent hours in his bedroom writing and playing music. Georgia admired his talent and sent a message asking if he were planning on releasing any music.

Thus began a long-distance friendship with Sanchez, who lived in Sacramento, California. At first, they only wrote about music. But soon after, Stephen wanted to talk on the phone and get to know her. Eventually, Georgia told her parents she had a friend from out of town that she wanted to have visit. You can still find videos of them singing together from the early days of their courtship. The TikTok clips feature them sitting on the floor in what is clearly Georgia's childhood bedroom.

Then, Stephen hit a rough patch in his life and called off the long-distance relationship. He references this in *Until I Found You*. Georgia was hurt, and they didn't speak for a little while. Then, as Stephen's star continued to rise, he moved to Nashville to be closer to record labels. Around November or December of her senior year, he

reached out to let her know he'd made a mistake, was moving to Nashville, and wanted to take her out on a proper date.

And a proper date it was. In a grand gesture, he came to Roanoke for the weekend. He spoke with Georgia's father, opened car doors, and took her to a fancy dinner. After that, they were all in. "I started to feel like I was living a double life," Georgia explains. "I had my high school life here in Virginia. But I'd often drive six hours to see him in Nashville. I made a different group of friends out there." Georgia has family in Nashville and stayed with them during her high school visits. The friends she made during this time are still close to her today.

In May of 2021, Stephen wrote *Until I Found You* in ten minutes, sending a clip to Georgia in a voice memo. She loved it, and they recorded the song together in Nashville. She came up with the harmony on her own, and they spent hours in the studio together – even recording a more intimate, acoustic guitar version. It was released on September 1, 2021 and became a global phenomenon. However, their relationship ended a couple of months after the song's release.

"He was my first real love," says Georgia. "But college was a big turning point for me. It's where we start to discover who we

BY FAYERUZ REGAN

PHOTOS BY ASHTON E. BEMIS



Georgia in Downtown Nashville.

are as people.” She admits that college was rough for the first few months, and it was difficult to juggle school with her long-distance relationship. “I moved to Richmond to go to VCU, and the drive to Nashville went from six hours to eight hours,” she says. “I don’t think Stephen fully understood the time commitment I had with my new life. He never really had a normal life, and didn’t get how busy I was.”

When things became strained, he drove to Richmond to see her, presumably to end the relationship. When he saw Georgia face-to-face, he became hesitant. But she reassured him that if he had come all that way to break up, perhaps it was for the best. “Honestly, I always felt like I was too young to have gone through some of the emotions I have. Stephen and I are both very emotional people, and it can be overwhelming,” she tells me.

After the breakup, things started to fall into place at VCU. She fell in love with interior design and spends hours “in the zone” – working on drafts and losing track of time. It’s even brought her closer to her father, a fellow interior designer. I have never heard a college student be so zealous about their studies.

“It surprised Stephen, I think, to see how well I was doing after the breakup,” Georgia recalls. Which brings me to my point: What could have been seen as a tragic end to her “claim to fame” sounds more like a rebirth. Rather than clinging to a song that gives her cultural cache, she’s forging her own path.

She and her friend Maggie are singer-songwriters, and can be found at open mic nights around town. With guitar cases in hand, they test material they wrote themselves. She is an accomplished ceramist, and features her creations on



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Georgia in Nashville, Tennessee.

Instagram via Georgia Brown Ceramics. In fact, this page is a catchall for all of her creative endeavors. She samples clips from songs she's written; folksy, whisper-soft tunes that she strums along to. She shares blueprints from her interior design projects, charcoal drawings, and of course, her ceramics. She was trained professionally in ceramics even before she became a college student, and has a penchant for bowls and mugs with twee features. Some have a nose, others are heart-shaped, and many have playful dot patterns.

Georgia has fallen in love with Richmond. "I'm from the country but I always knew I was a city girl. I love the diversity," she says. She can often be found thrift shopping or attending concerts at The National. She also works as a nanny a couple times a week. "I was actually a preschool teacher for a year. I love children," she says. She lives in a house in the Fan District with a handful of

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other girls, and they are the best of friends. “I’ve found new best friends – people who will be in my wedding,” she says. It’s almost as if she knows how hard this becomes later in life.

Some of her musical influences are The Lumineers, whose songs she likes to perform. She admires Taylor Swift, and that “girl boss” strength that’s gotten her through rough times. And with an even softer tone, she praises Phoebe Bridgers. “She’s the reason I started writing music,” she admits. Georgia laments that men in the music industry often take credit for things that women have created, and is writing a term paper on the subject.

Georgia is wary of releasing any music until she has enough money to buy herself a decent amount of control. “I’m not seeking fame. I’ve seen what it’s like. It’s hard to make meaningful connections when you’re in the spotlight. I want to really be able to show myself and be able to

touch people – even if it’s just one person. Stephen’s life is a roller coaster. I want a family and kids, and I like the idea of a practical career path, and my music being an independent project.”

But if you think that she chose interior design for practicality, think again. She loves hospitality design, such as hotels and restaurants. “I’m a people person, and I have a strong eye for spaces that can bring people together. Maybe I’ll even design music venues,” says Georgia.

Recently, VCU’s art department had a clean-up day for the end of the semester. There was a playlist going, and *Until I Found You* was in rotation. Georgia had a couple of friends in her class that knew the full story, and promptly changed the station. For such a young girl to be pulled into the whirlwind of that song, it must be triggering. I say as much to Georgia, and she agrees. “It’s everywhere. And I mean everywhere. How it affects me



Georgie attending a formal at the University of Virginia in 2022.

depends on what mood I'm in. Sometimes I'll be out in public and distracted, and I don't really feel anything. Other times, I will hear it and it takes me right back. When I'm in my own space, I change the song."

Georgia doesn't have the luxury of dealing with a normal break-up. Her song follows her everywhere. Strangers reach out to her online, automatically siding with her and up in arms about Stephen. They assume he broke her heart because he was the famous one. On Instagram, the exes haven't erased their history together, but it's clear they don't follow one another.

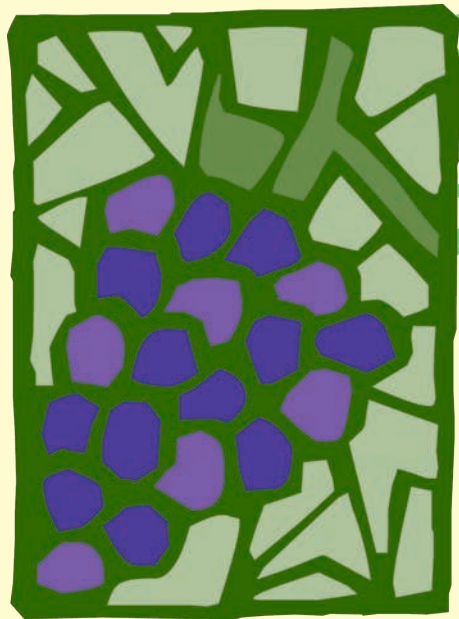
"I still check in on him every couple of months to see what he's up to," she says. When I ask if she were going to see Stephen during his upcoming tour, she demurs. She doesn't want to be known just for "being that girl from that song," and is hesitant to bring on unwanted attention.

"I've made mistakes and Stephen's made mistakes. All is forgiven, and we only want what's best for one another." She is a picture of grace, wise beyond her years. As a mother myself, I almost want to interview Georgia's parents to learn how to raise a resilient child. It's a trait that younger generations are often mocked for lacking. She credits her mother for teaching her to be independent.

But as the song seems to play on a loop, she admits that her parents have worried about her. Just as the strangers who message her online do. Just as I have. But after meeting her, I know Georgia's going to be just fine.

As we finish our crepes, Georgia Brown tells me she is looking forward to her "brunette era." Her cousin was going to complete the transformation, followed by a photo shoot. Always looking forward, Georgia seems excited for what may be her next rebirth.

BY



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Bacon's Rebellion

Slavery and Freedom

by JACK R. JOHNSON

IN 1676, A CENTURY BEFORE

American Revolution, a well-connected British landowner named Nathaniel Bacon led thousands of Governor William Berkeley for his refusal to war with Native Americans. The failed rebellion, named 'Bacon's Rebellion,' helped shape two contradictory threads in America's history: Westward expansion and its promise of economic freedom, and the institution of slavery.

By 1670, poor farmers had been hit hard by falling tobacco prices, and many living on the borders of the colony's frontier wanted to expand westward. There, they faced threats from Native Americans intent on protecting their ancestral lands. When the colonists called on their governor for military support, he refused. Governor Berkeley had a more nuanced view of the matter. He feared a widespread Indian war, and wanted to continue trade with Native Americans, which was lucrative for himself and select cronies. To resolve the issue, Berkeley called a "Long Assembly" in March 1676, which established rules for trade with the Native Americans and made it illegal to sell them weapons. Coincidentally, or not, most of the favored traders were friends of Berkeley. Regular traders, some of whom had been trading independently with the local Indians for generations, were no longer allowed to trade.

Bacon accused Berkeley publicly of playing favorites. Distant kinsman to Sir Francis Bacon, and related by marriage to Governor Berkeley, himself, Bacon was a man with considerable resources. When Susquehannock Indians attacked one of his plantations and killed one of his overseers, Bacon raised the militia of Henrico and Charles City Counties. He demanded that Governor Berkeley give him a commission to war against the

Indians. The governor described Bacon as a "young, inexperienced, rash, and inconsiderate person" and refused. Bacon played on popular fears, charging that the governor was corrupt and secretly aiding the Indians. Ignoring Berkeley's authority, Bacon, with three hundred men, pursued the Susquehannock as far as the Roanoke River. There, he persuaded the Occaneechi nation (long-time trading partners and English allies) to attack the Susquehannock. When the Occaneechi returned with Susquehannock captives, Bacon turned on them, and killed them all—Occaneechi and Susquehannock—men, women, and children. It was a brutal and unnecessary act.

Furious, Governor Berkeley had Bacon declared a rebel. He called for a new General Assembly election. Unfortunately for Berkeley, Bacon's actions had struck a chord with many poorer Virginians, and his movement grew. Ironically, he was elected, despite being declared a rebel. Arriving at Jamestown in June, Bacon was captured and forced to capitulate before taking his seat in the assembly. As the assembly convened, Bacon got on his knees and apologized to the governor. His supporters erupted with cries for the governor to let him lead a new campaign against the Indians. Frustrated, the governor refused and eventually kicked Bacon out of the assembly with no commission.

Undeterred, Bacon gathered his troops. A few weeks later, he marched toward Jamestown with 500 supporters and demanded to lead the colony into war against the Native Americans. As Bacon's men stood off against Berkeley's men, the governor opened his shirt and showed Bacon his bare chest. "Here, shoot me!" yelled Berkeley, daring Bacon to shoot. Surrounded by the Governor's loyalists, Bacon demurred. Instead, he retreated and marched throughout Virginia,

recruiting other disgruntled rebels. Berkeley accused Bacon of rebellion and treason again, and Bacon responded with heated proclamations of his own, accusing the governor of having sold "his [friends], country and the liberties of his loyal subjects to the barbarous heathen."

In September, matters came to a head. Governor Berkeley had been traveling throughout Virginia to recruit supporters of his own, and returned to Jamestown to issue a final proclamation condemning Bacon. In response, Bacon and his men rushed into Jamestown, burning and pillaging as they went. On the night of September 19, they torched the entire town, burning it to the ground.

Bacon died of dysentery shortly thereafter. Without their leader, the rebels floundered. Berkeley, assisted by an English naval squadron, soon defeated the remainder of the rebels, and Berkeley returned to Jamestown.

Bacon's army crossed all classes and races (from indentured servants to newly arrived Africans). The ad hoc alliance between the servants and Africans (a mix of indentured, enslaved, and Free Negroes) deeply disturbed the colonial upper class. In order for the Virginia elite to maintain the loyalty of the common planters and to avert future rebellions, historian Allan Taylor writes, they "needed to lead, rather than oppose, wars meant to dispossess and destroy frontier Indians." According to Taylor, this bonded the elite to the common planter in wars against Indians, their common enemy, and enabled the elites to appease free whites with land. "To give servants greater hope for the future, in 1705 the assembly revived the headright system by promising each freedman fifty acres of land, a promise that obliged the government to continue taking land from the Indians."

Since both black and white indentured servants had joined the frontier rebellion, seeing them united in a cause alarmed the ruling class. Historians believe the rebellion hastened the hardening of racial lines associated with slavery, as a way for planters and the colony to control some of the poor. The Virginia Slave Codes of 1705 provided the legal basis for the treatment of all enslaved people as property—which meant that they could be tortured and even killed with relative impunity. It also transformed black indentured servants into slaves regardless of how many years they had already worked, even if they were only days away from being freed of their indentured status.

In a recent PBS interview Ira Berlin noted that after Bacon's Rebellion, "They enact laws which say that people of African descent are hereditary slaves. And they increasingly give some power to white independent white farmers and land holders. ... Now what is interesting about this is that we normally say that slavery and freedom are opposite things -that they are diametrically opposed. But what we see here in Virginia in the late 17th century, around Bacon's Rebellion, is that freedom and slavery are created at the same moment."

After Bacon's rebellion, expansion of the colonies continued unabated, allowing indentured servants to acquire acreage, and a certain degree of economic freedom, while pushing Native Americans further and further West. The number of enslaved persons increased from three hundred in 1650 to thirteen thousand in 1700. By 1862, the beginning of America's Civil War, that number was nearly 4 million, or over 12 percent of the US population.

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BOOK REVIEW

Tweedledum And Tweedledumber

by **FRAN WITHROW**

ANDY HOROWITZ is an American author and comedian whose new book reveals how our country's politicians have become dumb and dumber in the last fifty years. "Profiles in Ignorance" made me laugh—but also feel alarmed—as it traces the slippery slope leading from our more intelligent leaders to the "nightmare" of Donald Trump.

Borowitz sees a steady decline in "what our most prominent politicians didn't know" over the past fifty years. He divides the waning intellectual prowess of legislators and aspirants into three stages: ridicule, acceptance, and celebration.

The first stage, ridicule, covers the era of Ronald Reagan and Dan Quayle. How many of you remember Quayle telling an elementary school child how to spell "potato?" (For you youngsters, Quayle wanted the student to spell it "potatoe," which spellcheck is having a hard time letting me type.) I remember people chuckling and observing the then vice president with scorn. Imagine having a vice president who couldn't spell! If we had only known then what we know now.

George Bush and Ronald Reagan don't come off much better. Borowitz sees them as intellectual lightweights whose talents overshadowed their lack of knowledge and who bungled their jobs, setting us up for the next stage, acceptance.

George W. Bush was elected governor of Texas despite his limited cognitive skills. He confessed publicly that "I don't like long meetings" (or long books). Yet he observed that "if you teach a child to read...he or she will be able to pass a literacy test." Amazing. Instead of hiding his ignorance as people in the first stage tried to do, Bush brushed his lack of

intellect off. Pat Buchanan said that not "only does he not know a great deal, he's defiant about it."

At the same time, people like Al Gore were seen as eggheads or nerds. These more intelligent politicians were viewed as not "cool" enough to serve in the government. So politicians began to act dumber than they were in order to get elected.

Politicians might purposely appear dumber, or be truly clueless. Sarah Palin falls in the latter category, as her "toxic brew of ignorance and grievance" opened the door for the entrance of Donald Trump. His extremely weak grasp of history, geography, and the English language itself would never have passed muster fifty years ago.

Yet here we are, with Trump as the epitome of the third stage, celebration. As President, Trump repeatedly demonstrated his lack of knowledge about the workings of Congress, foreign policy, science, and a host of other things critically important to the running of the country. Trump really did seem to revel in his lack of knowledge.

You might end up laughing at all the buffoonery in Borowitz' book while at the same time wondering what is next for our poor bruised country. Borowitz concludes his book by acknowledging, "we can always go lower," but that this path is not a given. He advises getting involved in local politics to halt the country's descent into ignorance. Vote, support our local legislators, and listen to one another with respect. We can still change direction.

Let's do it.

"Profiles in Ignorance: How America's Politicians Got Dumb and Dumber"

By Andy Borowitz

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