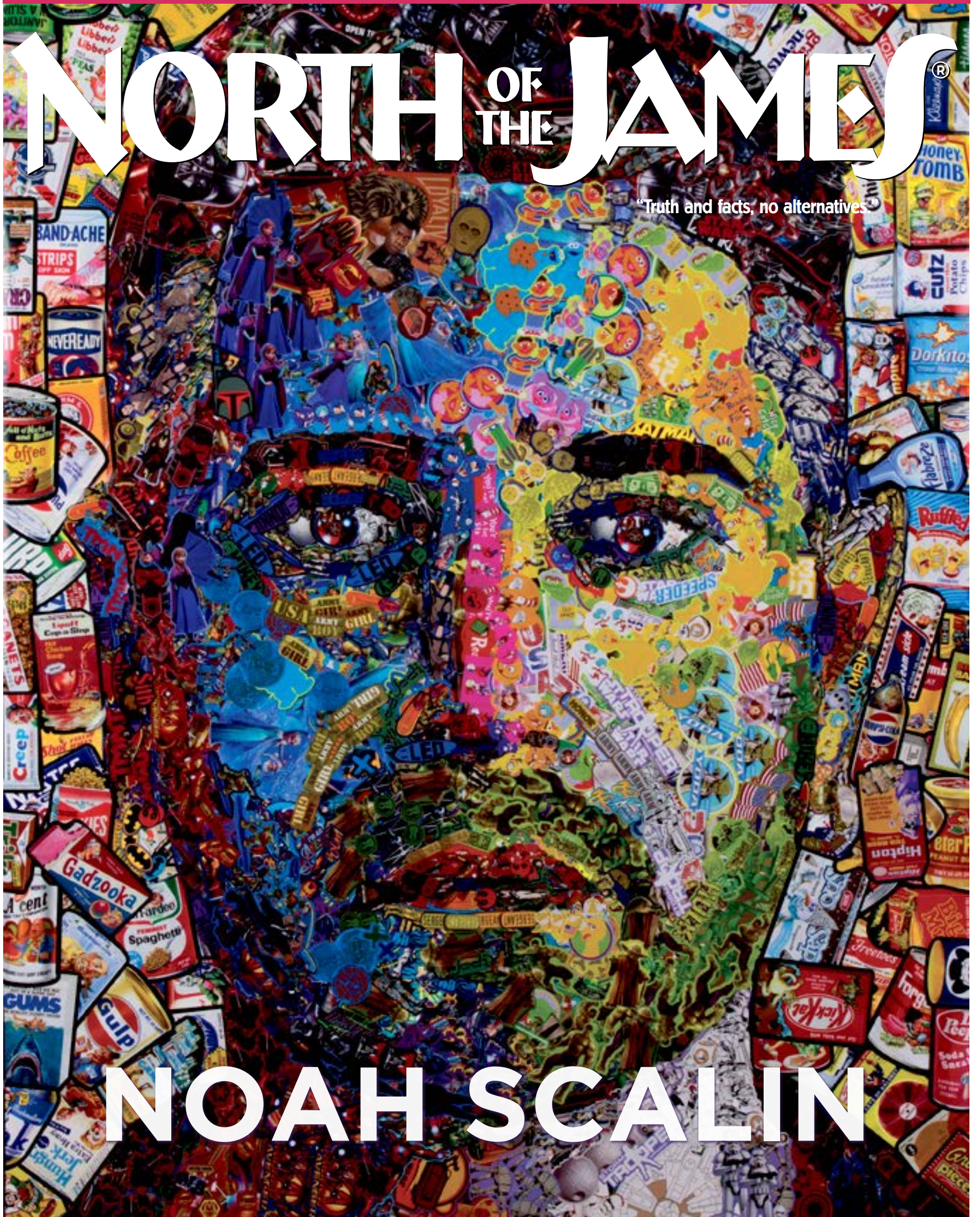


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COVER image art by Noah Scalin

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Historic Lies a la DeSantis

by JACK R. JOHNSON

FLORIDA GOVERNOR Ron DeSantis is facing criticism over his new education guidelines that require students learn that enslaved people benefited from skills they learned while enslaved. Reading this, I remembered an old Virginia history book we used while in the seventh grade. In the opening chapter, entitled, “How The Negro lived under Slavery,” there’s an illustration showing a well-dressed Black family cordially greeted by a white man—presumably their enslaver. The Black family, fresh from an auction, is formally dressed in dark coat and nice shoes, and the male is carrying a satchel, like a fellow businessperson, about to conduct a friendly transaction between peers. The white man places his left hand paternally on the shoulder of the black man, welcoming him to his new home. They shake hands. There are smiles all around. The text, of course, was promoting an old Lost Cause narrative, the myth of the contented slave, something the Florida Educational Board seems intent on doing, but in a less obvious fashion.

To give some idea of where this is headed, the lead historian for the seventh-grade Virginia textbook we used was Francis Simkins, of Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia. In his 1947 book, “The South Old and New,” he makes clear his views on race relations and the South. Essentially, it’s a re-articulation of the Lost Cause narrative with a touch of good, old fashion, colonialist racism. According to Simkins, slavery was “an educational process which transformed the black man from a primitive to a civilized person endowed with conceits, customs, industrial skills, Christian beliefs, and ideals, of the Anglo-Saxon of North America.”

During the Civil War, he writes,

enslaved people “remained so loyal to their masters” they were nearly unanimous in their support of the Confederacy. No mention of the hundreds of thousands who fled to the Union lines to fight for the invaders. During Reconstruction, he writes—without irony—that “blacks were aroused to political consciousness not of their own accord but by outside forces.” Spotswood Hunnicutt, a co-author, believed that, as a result of post-bellum interpretations, students were “confused” that “slavery caused a war in 1861.”

If this sounds vaguely familiar, or even contemporary, it’s because many Republicans, foremost, Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, are essentially duplicating these efforts in a lower key. Virginia Governor Youngkin has suffered his own public embarrassment in this regard, attempting not one, not two, but three redrafts of history standards that mostly missed the mark by (ah hem) white-washing so much of Reconstruction and Civil War history.

Florida’s new standards have passed muster with a highly conservative legislative body, however. They require that students be taught that some slaves benefitted from slavery, helpfully being trained in fields like blacksmithing, shoe making, fishing, haberdashery, and ironically, teaching. The Tampa Bay Times pointed out that nearly half of the 16 historical figures used by the state as examples of slavery’s benefits were actually never enslaved. Apparently, all historical black people look alike. As Andrew Spar, president of the Florida Education Association teachers union told the Times, “They just threw out a bunch of names to make it seem like something good came of (slavery). The reality of it is, the facts don’t back up what they are saying.”

DeSantis is rightfully facing a firestorm of criticism for this overreach,



but I think we should let him have a chance at redemption. This kind of nonsense has been going on for at least three decades and it is clear DeSantis had a poor early education, probably reading something akin to what we were forced to read in the Virginia school system years ago. Luckily, that curriculum has been updated, and I found a suitable lesson plan that uses original source material that he can peruse. Entitled “Frederick Douglass: The Myth of the Happy Slave” it begins by challenging the student to read a short passage from Douglass’s *Slave Narrative*, which follows:


(trigger warning)

“He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped;

and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember anything. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.”

Questions for after class discussion, answer in two or three sentences:

1.) Which skill might Frederick Douglass have learned from this introduction into the institution of slavery?

2.) Would you like to trade places with Frederick Douglass to learn more about the possible benefits of slavery, firsthand? 

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WHAT'S NEW

Ellie's Hot Dogs and Ice Cream Savory and Sweet on the Northside

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

IT'S HOT, BUT THERE'S shade, and fully a dozen and half people, several families, kids and adults alike, congregate around the tables under a canopy that extends off the order window of one of Northside's newest eateries. They're hunkered down over treats, savory and sweet. Easy to understand why Ellie's Hot Dogs and Ice Cream has become so popular so quickly. They offer what people want—perfect dogs and ice cream, to boot.

On May 10, Brandon Lewis opened the hot dog/ice cream shop in the former home of Sweet 95, and almost immediately people began flocking in. For more than 20 years, Brandon had worked in the mortgage industry, originating residential mortgages, and assisting home buyers in obtaining financing. But the mortgage industry had changed.

"It was much more stressful than it had been in the past," says Brandon. "So I decided it was time for a change. I wanted to get out of there, and get a little less stress, and put some smiles on people's faces. I kind of fantasized about opening an ice cream shop." And it only seemed natural to pair ice cream with hot dogs.

Choosing a name for this new endeavor was the easy part. "It's named for Ellie, our family dog, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, a year and a half old," Brandon says. "And she's full of love."

Then came the hard part. After selecting the very best ice cream product (Hershey's), and twenty flavors of it, Brandon and his wife began the taste-testing of the finest hot dogs on the market. "We reviewed about thirty different brands," says Brandon. "We did a bunch of taste tests and whatnot to find the perfect hot dog based on flavor, 100 percent beef, skin toughness."

But Brandon didn't stop there. He wanted his hot dogs to outshine any others in the Richmond area. "We do things a bit different than our local



Ellie's on Arthur Ashe Boulevard on the Northside.

competitors," he says. "For one thing we butter toast the buns which really sets them apart from the competition. And they're all cooked on a flat grill, we're not using rollers or anything like that."

And what would a hot dog be without the toppings? "We have a bunch of fresh toppings whether it's chili, diced onions, sauerkraut, Philly steak and cheese, jalapenos, bacon, all type of good things that we can dress the dogs with," Brandon says.

My very favorite has always been the Carolina dog with beanless chili, diced onions and coleslaw.

"Our number top seller is the chili dog," says Brandon. "That has shredded cheddar, nice meat chili, and then diced onions on top and also a little bit of mustard underneath. My personal favorite is the RVA dog, that's a good classic dog—ketchup, mustard, relish and diced onions. I love that myself."

We also offer plant-based dogs, which have been really popular."

They also feature the nacho dog with cheddar cheese and chili, topped with crushed up tortilla chips, and a number of other specialties. Or you can build your own. "Our second best seller is actually one called the steak n dog," Brandon says. "And that's a hot dog where we then cook essentially a Philly cheesesteak. We use thinly

sliced rib eye, sauteed onions, a little bit of melted cheese, and then we place it right on the dog which makes an amazing combo."

Along with hot dogs, Ellie's offers an array of sides, everything from chips to baked beans. And, of course, there is the ice cream, from cones and cups to sundaes and milkshakes. Recently, they added no-dairy and low-dairy options in the form of sherbet and a sorbet. In the not-too-distant future, Ellie's will launch a catering service, Brandon tells me.

"We have an amazing staff, a lot of VCU students, and some kids from the neighborhood," Brandon Lewis says, and then after a pause, adds, "The response from the community has been the best part. The folks that can walk in, push the strollers over, walk their dogs, just an amazing response. Couldn't ask for a better community to be in than the Northside. **NRJ**

Ellie's Hot Dogs and Ice Cream

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DIVERSIONS

A Modest Proposal To Upgrade East Coast Beach Towns

by FAYERUZ REGAN

HAVE YOU EVER noticed that East Coast beach towns offer the same formula? I'm not talking about the extremes like tropical Miami or quaint Nantucket, but the beach towns in between. Each summer, Richmonders flock to mid-Atlantic shores, such as the Outer Banks. No one can deny the beach town formula:

- Mini golf
- Pancake House
- Surf shop
- Seafood restaurant
- Ice cream parlour

Sometimes, a beach town will be ambitious and throw in a small movie theater run by awkward teenagers. They save the sassier teens for the ice cream shops. I enjoy these classic offerings, but someone needs to shake things up a bit.

Below is a modest proposal for a few beach town upgrades.

Get lazy

The ocean may be healing, but sometimes it's a bit much. Seagulls nosedive into our bags if we so much as look toward the sea. Riptides rip, jellyfish sting, and the sand will burn the skin off your feet. Build a lazy river super-highway, where you can float in a loop, hopping off for burritos or a restroom break (one would hope). No one gets hot, and all the floaties are flamingoes.

Save the salty shacks!

I love those 1970s beach houses with wood paneling. They're a cave-like retreat from the sun. They rattle when thunderstorms roll through, but it adds a romantic terror to the experience. Sure, there's a faint smell of mildew, but bizarre knickknacks and old family albums more than make up for it. Fact: the more you drink, the more you get sucked into the lives of the strangers in these photo albums. Whenever one of these time capsules gets razed, a bland McMansion takes its place. Built lot-line-to-lot-line, each

generation vies for a greedier view of the sea.

Zsa Zsa the beach, darling

No journey is as treacherous as the walk back to your beach house. No luxury invention or lightweight metal is going to take the hurt out of carrying beach chairs, umbrellas, and coolers. For ten bucks, you can reserve a lounge chair all day long on the Greek islands. In return, oceanfront restaurants will wait on you, serving ice-blended cocktails and guarding your things as you frolic in the Aegean Sea. And when it's time to go, the most you'll take with you is a beach bag. Every public beach should have a full service option. Come on, America.

Culture vultures

Though the movie theater is my house of worship, beachgoers need more options on rainy days. They are starved for cultural offerings. Case in point: I've driven through Death Valley multiple times, but would always stop in Baker to gaze at the world's tallest thermometer. Perhaps I stopped because there was nothing else for miles around. People aren't picky. The cultural offerings can be kooky, like the world's largest seashell wind chime, or entertaining, like sand sculpture contests, lit up at night like fine art.

I'll end this with good news. I've listed a few nearby beaches that offer incredible cultural experiences.

The Virginia Aquarium in Virginia Beach is impressive and educational. You can touch the stingrays and walk through a long glass hallway, as fish and sharks swim past along an aquatic superhighway. www.virginiaaquarium.com

Cape Charles is a quaint town on the tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore, and boasts a collection of galleries, the Cape Charles Museum, and one of the highest concentrations of turn-of-the-century buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. <https://www.capecharles.org/>




Taking flight off the dunes near Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina.

On Hatteras Island, Frisco Native American Museum features thousands of artifacts, and has a nature center with hiking trails. www.nativeamericanmuseum.org

Cape May is hailed as America's oldest seaside resort, with whalers and fishermen arriving as early as the 1600s. Lined with antique stores and Victorian mansions, some of which you can tour (like the "haunted" Emlen Physick Estate), it's easy to see why the town was designated a National Historic landmark in 1976. <https://www.capemay.com/>

The Chesapeake Maritime museum in St. Michael's, Maryland offers over 80,000 artifacts, and sits right on the water. This posh enclave was the shooting location for the Wedding Crashers film, and the stately homes and quaint shops will not disappoint. <https://cbmm.org/>

Five hundred years ago, colonial Spanish mustangs were brought to our shores by explorers. Their wild descendants wander around Corolla in the Currituck Outer Banks. A guided tour will allow you within 50 feet of them – the legal limit. <https://www.visitcurrituck.com/things-to-do/wild-horses/> 



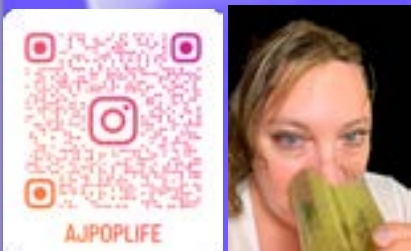
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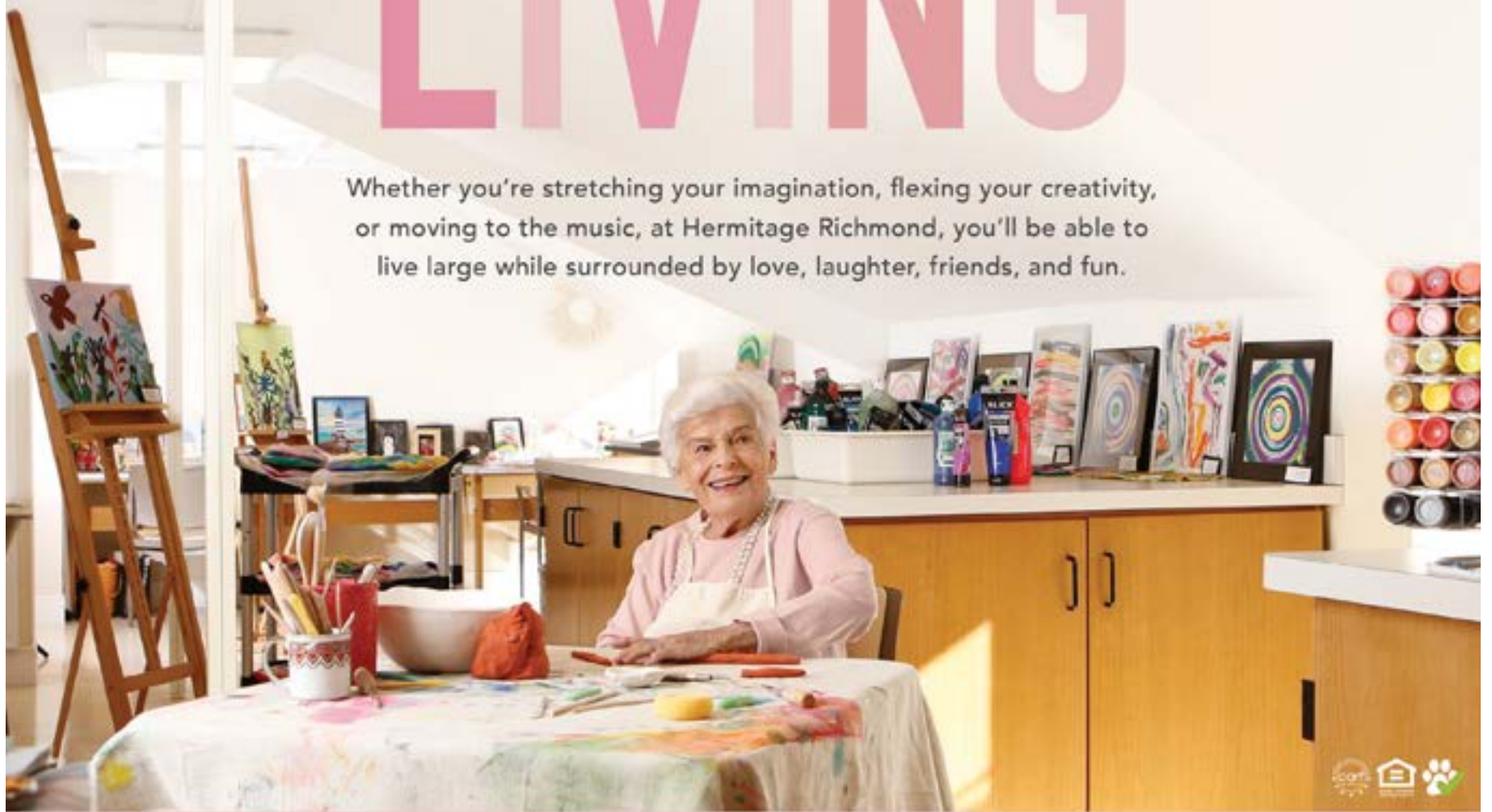
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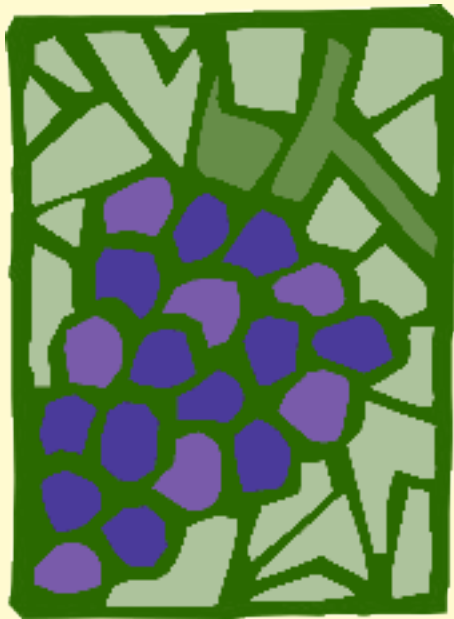
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ART

32nd Annual 43rd Street Festival of the Arts

THE 43RD STREET Festival is back on September 9 from 10 am till 4 pm. More than 70 selected regional artists and craftsmen will show and sell their work. There will also be local food and street art and activities for kids.

This RVA festival is intended to put a spotlight on the fine arts and crafts available in the area and to promote sales of local artisans. The show is a true community effort benefiting CARITAS, which works to transform lives and restore dignity to those in need. The show is free to the public. Over the years more than \$100,000 dollars has been raised and gone back to the community supporting CARITAS and those in need.

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WHERE ARE YOU?

AT TIGERS EYE

New Works by Noah Scalin will be on display through October 27 at Tigers Eye Hair Studio.

Inspired by Saturday morning cartoons, toy packaging, comic books, paperback sci-fi novels and the overwhelming commercial culture of his childhood, Noah Scalin has built a kaleidoscopic fantasy world of overlapping images competing for attention in his latest body of work. Along with traditional painting, Noah has also included children's stickers in many pieces, as part of an experimental collage technique that he has developed over the last decade, inspired by his daughter's early art-making.

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ACTS OF CREATION

NOAH SCALIN WAS BORN TO BE AN ARTIST.

From infancy onward he was immersed in the arts. Both his parents, Chuck and Mim, were artists, as was his sister and only sibling, Mica. But when it came time for him to go to college, Noah decided not to major in one of the visual arts. A pragmatist by nature, he instead went into another field that would, at the very least, guarantee him employment after graduation. Art, though, would not release her grip on his soul, and she followed Noah relentlessly along every path his career has taken, and today he is firmly in the embrace of his beloved.

Behind his home in Battery Park, off a patio that consumes most of the backyard, there's a small converted garage that houses Noah's studio. It's an intimate space with a lot of strong natural light, and it's cluttered with the trappings of a lifetime—toys and plastic models and masks and skulls and books and paintings and an easel, and more stuff than a god could catalog over an eternity.

"There's so much stuff in here," Noah says. "You know I like to just have stuff to look at. And when I started making things during the pandemic, and I was so isolated, I'd look at what was around me and then I'd use that stuff to make art."

Noah begins talking about his early education in Richmond—a short stint at Cary and then at Fox Elementary School, which was fine. Then came the horrors of middle school at Albert Hill. "I hated middle school," he says (who doesn't?). "I had a couple of great teachers, and they were the people who kept me sane. They treated us like human beings, and they talked to us about interesting topics. The rest of the day was just torture. It was terrible, just terrible."

Fortunately the sentence at Hill was brief—just three years—and then it was off to high school. "I went to Open and it was a lifesaver. I loved every bit of it. We got left to our own devices."

It was at Open that something began to dawn on the budding artist. "Even though both my parents were artists they were also both teachers, and so



Dothory Counts

my understanding was there was no job called artist," says Noah. "I was always thinking practically, like how am I going to make a living. And I couldn't figure out how art would do that."

In high school, Noah volunteered backstage at Theatre IV. "I helped build sets and props, and I loved it," he says. As graduation approached, Noah had a eureka moment. He considered the work he had done at Theatre IV, which seemed, in many ways, like an "art" job. And he thought, "Why don't I go to school for theatre design?"

And so he enrolled in the tech track of NYU's theatre department. There he would learn set and costume and sound design, along with stage man-

agement. Noah would learn virtually everything necessary to put on a stage production, from construction and electrical work to painting and drafting. "I learned it all," he says.

This was in the era just before everything went digital. "When we did audio it was tape splicing," says Noah. "I learned photography in college and it was all darkroom photography. We didn't have Photoshop. When I did drafting, it was all with pencils on paper."

Noah not only learned how to build sets, and set up lighting and sound systems, he also became proficient at organizing. "I was figuring out budget and schedule and timing," he says. "How to work with people, how to collaborate, how to get things

done with no money." He could actually put on a full stage production for under 25 dollars. He would hunt down discarded pieces on the streets, use old sheets of cardboard that he painted for backdrops. These were all skills Noah would use as he became what he always really was—an artist.

Just after graduation, way back in 1994, Noah returned to Richmond, and was hired by Mimi Regelson who owned Exile, that one-of-a-kind shop on West Grace Street in the lower Fan. "That store was the coolest place on earth," he says. "I'll never forget one of the first things Mimi said to me: 'This is the deal, the customer is not always right. You are. If you don't like somebody, kick

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN

ART FROM NOAH SCALIN

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them out.”

He worked for Mimi for about six months, and was then offered a job up in New York as assistant to the marketing director at Troma Entertainment, a film company that specializes in low-budget horror films. In his senior year at NYU he had worked at Troma as an intern.

Noah scooped up the job at Troma and moved back to New York. Two weeks after he started this job, his boss quit, thrusting Noah into the position of marketing director for a film company. “I helped them get their first computer, their first email address, their first website,” he says. While at Troma he worked side by side with James Gunn who would go on to become a prolific writer and director, well-known for his Guardian of the Galaxies franchise.

“And then I changed my job from marketing director to art director and I did all the graphics,” says Noah. “I redesigned their logo that they’re still using today. I learned a ton there, but they worked you to death.”

Burnout came within a year and half and then Noah went to work as assistant to the art director at a clothing company called Avirex. “They were making reproduction bomber jackets, and this was in the mid-nineties hip hop scene.” Two years later he was promoted to art director. “I had no idea what I was doing,” he says. “The bosses there were nuts. They would yell at employees and have crazy meetings, and I would hide in my office.” In all Noah spent about four years with Avirex.

All during that time in New York, Noah had been doing freelance work for his theatre connections, so he was pretty much working constantly from sunup till well after sundown, seven days a week. And it was crushing him.

“But I saved up enough money so that I could just do free-lance work,” Noah tells me. So, he up and moved back to Richmond and started his own design firm called ALR (Another Limited Rebellion) Design.

“I was doing logos and some branding work,” he says. “I did a lot of graphic design and illustration work for theatre clients and small businesses. I had freedom to make anything I wanted that represented the show.”

During this time, Noah also began

teaching basic software design classes at VCU. “I was teaching students how to use Photo Shop, how to use Illustrator, how to use Quark Express,” he says.

And his design company had really taken off. It was somewhat different than other design houses. “The thing that made my company stand out was that I wasn’t just a design firm,” says Noah. “It was what I called a socially conscious design firm. So my idea was that I wanted to put my ethics into the business.” That’s something that was instilled in Noah by his parents. His mother was an ardent activist, and often took her son to marches and protests.

“I always believed passionately in doing good,” Noah says. “I would go to marches and do what I could to be an activist. I wanted to combine activism with design work, and I wanted to figure out how to make a living doing good in the world.”

Which led him to teaching another class at VCU. This one was about ethics and how it applied to graphic design. “At VCU they were teaching students how to do the technical stuff and the history of design, but not the ethics,” says Noah. “Using art to communicate visually is very powerful. It draws people in and it convinces them of ideas. That’s how propaganda works. It’s powerful stuff.”

The class, which Noah would teach for almost a decade, was called Design Rebels, and each semester it filled to capacity.

In 2007, Noah created something that would cast a limelight on him. His business was doing well, but he was tired of the rote. “I needed to do something else,” he recalls. “So I randomly came up with this idea that I would make skull art every day for a year.” That was in June, and halfway through the year the project had received so much attention online that Noah was fast developing a national following.

“I appeared on the Martha Stewart Show, I got a book deal, art shows, opportunities to travel and talk,” he says. “It was wild. I used different techniques, different materials, different styles every day of the year. So that just turned into this opportunity to show people that I was an artist. All this time I knew I was an artist, but I had fallen into theatre and then

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Ruby Bridges.

graphic design and I was making a living, but I wasn't really expressing myself. Suddenly my design work became less interesting."

So he told all of his clients this: "Look, I'm an artist, so if you want to hire me to make art I will, but if you want to hire me to do design, hire someone else. If I do something for you, I want to make what I want to make." One by one his clients dropped him, but that was fine with Noah.

While hanging an art show at Quirk Gallery he ran into Andy Ste-

fanovich, a speaker and consultant, who urged Noah to talk with business leaders about art and process in a business context. This led to the company he and his sister created, a sort of consulting agency where Noah teaches corporate executives about creativity.

As he pulled away from graphic design, Noah began concentrating more on portraiture. And then he was invited by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to create an installation that would only be on display for a

few hours. Noah had this idea, a far fetched one, that would ultimately lead him in an entirely new direction in his art.

He reached out to Diversity Thrift and they agreed to deliver a truckload of old clothes to the VMFA's marble hall. "I worked on it all day long," he says. His objective was a portrait of an unidentified Richmond Black man from the 1800s, who was photographed by one of the first prominent Black photographers in America who had run a studio here in town. It was to be an anamorphic image, a long and distorted visage, made entirely out of used clothing. "I just manipulated the fabric and used the color," says Noah. "It was super fun." He worked on the piece all day long, and it only lasted for several minutes in the early evening, but it was captured on video and received a lot of attention on TV and online. It led to other similar installations he would create in Brazil and in New York City.

And perhaps most importantly, this process of producing skewed portraits with different material, paved the way for a revolutionary means of

making art. It all started eight years ago when Noah's daughter was just two years old. He marveled at the way his daughter piled stickers randomly on top of one another.

At about that time Noah began a thirty-day project based on song lyrics. Just a week into this project, the song "The Rainbow Connection" from The Muppet Movie began playing in a continuous loop in his skull. He stared for a long while at the refrigerator door where his daughter's layered sticker art was. And he thought, 'Now wouldn't it be cool if I could make a picture of Kermit the Frog entirely out of stickers.'

It was painstakingly slow work (after all, he was working in an entirely new medium), but when it was finished and he posted it online the response was unbelievable. "People went crazy for it," Noah says. "A gallery in Miami said they wanted my sticker art." And then the commissions began pouring in. "And I started pushing myself to see what I could do with it. I've done images from Birds of America. I've reproduced album covers. I started doing book covers."

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He also began doing incredible pieces that brimmed with artistic innovation and social consciousness. But these were more than simple statements of protest. These pieces, made up entirely of kiddie stickers, captured some of the most riveting events in history.

One, of course, was of the brave civil rights activist Ruby Bridges, who, as a little girl, integrated William Frantz Elementary School in Louisiana. The reaction of the locals was a disgusting display of white supremacist bul-

lying aimed at a little girl who was just six years old at the time. Their behavior was repulsive.


And then he found out about another young Black civil rights activist. Two years before Ruby's actions, Dorothy Counts, a fifteen-year old high school student in Charlotte, North Carolina was one of the first black students to attend the all-white Harry Harding High School.

"She wore a long ribbon on a dress that her grandmother made," Noah says. "And a massive crowd of white


people gathered around her and they were throwing rocks at her and spitting at her and she got into the school and the torment never stopped."

Based on one of many photos that documented this deplorable event, Noah went to work on the largest child's sticker piece he has ever made. At six-feet long and about three feet wide, the work is panoramic in its scope, and it has an immersive quality that causes the viewer to actually witness what this horrific moment in time was like. "Here's this girl stand-

ing so poised, on her way to school," he says. "And she is surrounded by a town full of people that just hate her and are being abusive to her."

When I first encountered these pieces by Noah, I immediately thought of the post-impressionist Georges Seurat, father of chromoluminarism and pointillism. Like Seurat, and other great artists, Noah Scalin has given birth to another form of expression, and by so doing has changed the world for the better. 

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BOOK REVIEW

A Boy's Harrowing Journey To the United States

by **FRAN WITHROW**

IN 1999, WHEN JAVIER Zamora was nine years old, his grandfather gave him into the care of a “coyote,” Don Dago, who would help Zamora and other immigrants travel from El Salvador to the United States so Zamora could be reunited with his parents. The trip was supposed to take a couple of weeks.

For the next seven weeks neither Zamora's parents in California nor his grandparents in El Salvador knew where he was. The route, which Zamora's grandfather had carefully explained to his young grandson, did not go according to plan. Unexpected road blocks continually peppered Zamora's path toward his parents.

In “Solito,” Zamora, now in his thirties, recounts this traumatic trip in detail. What you will read is one child's horrific struggle to rejoin his father, who immigrated when Zamora was one, and his mother, who followed her husband when Zamora was five. Zamora says both parents fled because of the US-funded Salvadoran war.

Zamora, who could not revisit his journey before delving into therapy, is a truly gifted writer. His style is almost poetic, which is not surprising, as he is also the author of a book of poems about his journey: “Unaccompanied.” As I read about him riding on buses, walking through the desert, trying to avoid “la migra,” and depending on the strangers who were traveling with him, I truly felt the heartache, the fear, the confusion, and the hope young Zamora experienced. Waiting in dirty apartments, three to a bed or on the floor, often hungry and thirsty, Zamora and his fellow travelers continually clung desperately to hope that in the United States they could be re-

nited with loved ones and experience a safer, better life than the one they left behind.

Though no one was required to look out for this nine-year old child, Patricia, her daughter Carla, and Chino took Zamora under their wings. These four became a pseudo-family, and truly cared for each other. Chino would throw Zamora and Carla over fences they were too small to climb over or under. And when the border police were after them, Chino sacrificed his chance to escape to help young Zamora.

Life in border detention is also graphically described, and it is heartrending to read about those who are caught after spending so many weeks and so much money trying to get to the United States. How crushing it must be to be sent back after so much effort. Often, those who are apprehended are sent back with nothing, as many of them may have dropped their backpacks and supplies as they tried to run.

Whether you agree with the United States' policies about illegal immigration or not, it would be worth your while to read “Solito,” to get an understanding of the incredible physical and emotional toll immigrants experience as they travel north. Life has to be truly horrendous for anyone to be willing to endure the hardships necessary to get to the United States.

A beautifully written look at immigration through the eyes of a young child, “Solito” deserves all the accolades it will undoubtedly bring.

“Solito”

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