Virginia Democrats engulfed in scandals

BY LEAH WINSTON '22
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The Virginia Democratic party has stumbled through multiple scandals early this year, with controversies involving blackface and sexual assault facing the top three members of the party.

In February, a conservative website posted photos from a medical school yearbook allegedly showing Virginia governor, Ralph Northam in blackface. Meanwhile, two women have accused Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax of assault, and Attorney General Mark Herring of assault, two women have accused Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax of assault, and Attorney General Mark Herring of assault.

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According to a Washington Post-Schar poll, many voters said they feel betrayed by Northam because they voted for him based on his promise of equality and inclusion. However, the state is split, with 47% of Virginians wanting to see him stay and 47% wanting to see him go.

Unfortunately for Democrats, the line of succession is plagued by scandal. Next in line is Governor Fairfax followed by Attorney General Herring. If all three leaders stepped down, the Republican

Virginia

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A slippery slope: Students, Jones weigh in on snow policy

BY JEREMY GREEN '21
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Snow days present a challenge for any school in the Washington, DC area. There are parents to please, students to placate, and the unpredictable Washington weather rarely leaves all parties satisfied that a given school made the right call. “We make about 50 percent of people happy with us and about 50 percent of people angry,” said Karen Garza, the former head of Fairfax County Public Schools, per WAMU.

At Burke, the anger often appears on social media and in email chains, with pewed Snapchat and Instagram stories demanding a closure or berating the school for remaining open if others call a day off.

Every decision is informed by Burke’s current policy, which the school ties to two local public school systems, DCPS and MCPS (Montgomery County, Maryland), though it focuses on DC. Per the Family Handbook, Burke follows DCPS decisions, though it delays if MCPS closes and DCPS opens on time or with a delay — and the school “reserves the right to deviate from this procedure.”

Many students who do not live in Montgomery County or DC, such as Peter Attarian ‘21 of Arlington, Virginia or Julian Gibson ’19 of Prince George’s County, Maryland, said they felt the policy excludes them and puts them at a higher risk on days where they have to come to school through unsafe conditions in their area.

“Burke’s decision to follow DCPS’ snow policy frankly doesn’t take into account the large portion of the student body which doesn’t live within the city,” Attarian said.

“Being outside of Burke’s jurisdiction is an inconvenience because given the distance and method of travel is very easily prone to not working out,” Gibson said.

Gibson also cited transportation as an issue. “Roads are icy, driving is hard, the Metro system is usually obnoxiously late or doesn’t run at all,” he was in the picture.

“Northam issued a public apology for the pictures and the pain that it caused — but during a press conference the Saturday after the incident Northam retracted his previous statement confirming that he was in the picture.”

“I recognize that many people will find this difficult to believe,” Northam said in a press conference, per Vox. He claimed that after reflection and talking to former classmates that he was not the man in the picture. However, he did apologize for wearing blackface to portray Michael Jackson in the past for another party.

Many prominent politicians called for Northam’s resignation including some of his closest allies, per The Washington Post: former governor Terry McAuliffe, a number of Democratic presidential candidates, state Senate and House Democrats, Virginia’s legislative Black Caucus, and the first black governor of Virginia, Doug Wilder.

As of this writing, Northam shows no signs of stepping down.

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Reynolds makes mark in shop, on field

BY JENNIFER CHIANCONE '21
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Scott Reynolds arrived at Burke in 2016 to fill the position of girls varsity softball team coach. Now, three years—and three championships—later, his responsibilities at Burke extend far beyond softball. He is also the Director or Facilities, leader of tech for the musical, and always seems to be working on some odd job in the school.

Reynolds spent his childhood and much of his adulthood in a rural town in western New York. His family owned a small dairy cow farm, where Reynolds said he made many of his best memories.

“I always enjoyed being outside,” Reynolds said. “When I was about 12, my parents built a pond. We put fish in it so I fished a lot with my dad.”

During his time in high school, Reynolds focused his energy on athletics, running cross country and wrestling in addition to five or six other sports, he said.

“I probably was well-known throughout the school because of my [athletic] accomplishments. I don’t know that I was popular.”

After leaving high school and buying his family farm from his parents, Reynolds and his brother spent four years running the farm upon which he spent his childhood. Reynolds stayed in the dairy business for many years after leaving his farm. After a while he started to explore other career opportunities. He remembers enjoying jobs the most when he was self-employed.

“Over the next years, I owned businesses. Contracting, home improvements, and, in the 90s, I installed satellite dishes at the time small satellite dishes were just coming out.”

After having five children, he took a job coaching his daughters’ softball team in New York.

“That’s how I got into softball. I
Northwest. historically black communities, especially in 
allied victory in World War I—resegregated 
of the country. He had extreme enough views 
DC was a city that was liberal regarding racial 
of his times,” Wattenburg said. “Washington, 
High School and Ward 3 and is president of the 
school.
appropriate namesake for the racially diverse 
in Tenleytown, have voiced concerns about 
school’s name.
members have recently pushed to change the 
term.
governor did not serve their full 

“Blackface is a painful part of 
and making fun of African-
minstrel shows and the mockery 
history that is directly related to 

to reproduce white supremacy 
and it was very prevalent in public culture 
around this country.”
White actors used unflattering 
and racist stereotypes to mock 
and dehumanize black Americans 
which helped justify the violence 
against them, said Philip S. S. 
Howard, Assistant Professor of 
Education at McGill University, 
in a previous article for The 
Conversation.
These scandals are especially 
troubling for Virginia Democrats 
because of Virginia’s history with 
racism. Virginia was the birthplace 
of slavery in the U.S., and Virginia 
is also the state with the largest 
number of Confederate statues 
and symbols in the country, per 
NBC News.
Racism reared its head again 
during the 2017 Unite the Right 
rally in Charlottesville, when white 
nationalists murdered Heather 
Heyer in the melee following 
protests over the removal of a 
Robert E. Lee statue.
According to Minard, the 
political process needs diversity 
in the pool of candidates for 
public offices in order to reduce 
the number of problematic 
histories running our 
governments.
“[Blackface] is extremely 
painful,” Minard said. “The 
people in Virginia should be held 
accountable just like any other 
racist act. We shouldn’t act like 
this is a thing that happened 
a long time ago, far away, because 
it’s very much extremely prevalent. 
We’re all responsible for looking 
out for ways that people might 
be using that kind of behavior to 
imitate and hurt people.”
Scott Reynolds continued from front

coached at the high school that I went to, because my kids went there too, for seven years," Reynolds said. "I've always loved baseball and a lot of people would say baseball and softball are the same game, but they really are not," he said.

Reynolds later landed in DC in an attempt to escape New York's cold, where he looked for a coaching job, eventually finding Burke's softball team.

"After the coaching season was over I inquired if there was a softball team. I've always loved baseball and a lot too, for seven years," Reynolds said.

"I went to Burke because my kids went there and coached at the high school that I graduated from," Reynolds said.

"So we all make sure air conditioners are working, floors are swept," he said. "I'm also in charge of safety and making sure all our safety protocols are being followed."

Reynolds' passion for building and managing also led him to take the role as leader of tech for this and last year's musicals. He realized the importance of teaching students to work with their hands and allowing them to pursue interests outside of the classroom. He uses his knowledge to run the shop and check on kids as they work on props and costumes.

"I want young people to not be afraid to take on a project," Reynolds has also invested considerable time into preparing for the spring softball season, though his strategy—keeping it fun while giving each player a chance to grow—remains the same. "Just like with tech, I want them to learn something new and I want them to understand the game."

Some of the most important relationships he forms at Burke, he says, are those he forms with his players and other faculty members and students at the school, allowing him to get a different perspective on life.

"I like meeting people that have grown up different than you did—it's always interesting to meet with people who grew up in the city."

One year after Parkland shooting, gun control eludes activists

BY ISABEL GOTTLEIB-NEMO '21
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After a gunman killed seventeen students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on Valentine's Day 2018, many students around the nation came together in activism against gun violence. A group of Parkland survivors created the March for Our Lives organization to advocate for effective gun control and school safety. A number of local chapters have sprung up around the country, including at Burke and in the D.C. area. Approximately 200,000 people came to March for Our Lives in downtown DC last March, which featured speeches from gun violence survivors, artists, and student activists.

Students also led walkouts and protests around the country both before and after the March for Our Lives, and over the same period more than 25 companies cut ties with the National Rifle Association (NRA). Eleven states have also passed legislation with provisions such as lengthening waiting periods for buying firearms, and allowing domestic abusers from purchasing firearms, and creating stronger background checks.

In Florida, former Republican Governor (and current Republican Senator) Rick Scott signed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, which banned bump stocks, brought back the legal age to purchase a gun to 21, and allowed officers to confiscate weapons from people who are deemed dangerous by judges.

He highlighted the importance of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas students in the making of his decision at the ceremony last year.

"You made your voices heard, you fought until there was change," Scott said. "You helped change your state, you made a difference. You should be proud."

Shinedown shines at UMBC

BY J. RUBIN-THOMAS '20
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The UMBC campus just outside of Baltimore was buzzing as fans of Jacksonville rockers Shinedown queued outside the UMBC Event Center.

By 9:20 p.m., the sold-out crowd of 5,000 had filled in all the empty spaces in the arena. Suddenly, the lights went off. The sound built up to a crescendo and a voice called out, "Don't be afraid."

Then, chaos erupted: The curtain dropped with a loud pyrotechnic explosion to reveal the quartet onstage as they went into "Devil," the opening track of their latest album "Attention Attention." This also revealed the massive production that they had crammed into UMBC's relatively small space: multiple ramps that went around and above the raised drum kit, video screens in the shape of exclamation points that showed visuals and montages, as well as an arm extending into the audience, eventually reaching a smaller second stage.

More pyrotechnic blasts went off as vocalist Brent Smith went into the song's chorus, reminding the crowd that it was "about to get heavy!" They continued through the first part of their set, which lasted nine songs. After part one, all four members of the band went out to the second stage, drawing closer to the audience, providing a surprisingly intimate experience for six ballads and softer songs.

Eventually, they moved back to the main stage to play the last three songs of the set: 2015 hit "Cut The Cord," 2008's "Sound of Madness," and finally closing out with "Brilliant," the closing song off of "Attention Attention." The band threw guitar and bass picks, and took a final bow before leaving the stage, leaving the audience in awe.

The show had many highlights; the band members clearly had a good rapport, with vocalist Brent Smith throwing guitar picks at guitarist Zach Myers and stage banter often occurring between the band members.

There was also a fair share of audience participation with Brent Smith commanding everyone to jump during "Enemies" and everyone turning on their phone flashlights during "Second Chance." This was also the first sellout concert at the UMBC Event Center, which opened last February. The arena is relatively small, and it provided excellent views for everyone in the building—though the sound system leaves something to be desired.

Shinedown has been around since 2001 and has made their name as one of the largest rock acts of the 21st century. They show no signs of stopping soon, with more tours planned for the spring and the summer.

In other words, it's about to get heavy for them as well.
Class of ‘23 deeply affected by civil rights trip

BY REED RODDY-JOHNSON ‘23
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Painfully early (4:45 am) on a February morning, 30 eighth graders gathered in Reagan National Airport’s Terminal A, preparing to board a plane to Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport. When the plane landed and we walked out of the airport into the bright morning, we immediately encountered Mia Henry, the leader of Freedom Lifted, the organizer that ran the trip. She enthusiastically led us down the airport hallway lined with history. Far too tired to retain much information, we got our luggage, greeted the bus driver, Mr. Page, and headed toward the first site, Bethel Baptist Church.

Bethel Baptist Church served as headquarters for the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, led by Pastor Fred Shuttlesworth. White supremacists bombed Shuttlesworth’s parsonage on three separate occasions, although he and his family remained safe. Where the parsonage once stood is now a memorial with an outline of the house.

After this ride later, we arrived at Kelly Ingram Park where, to our surprise, we ran into Fred Armisen of “Saturday Night Live” fame. The park stands just outside of the 16th Street Baptist Church, where the infamous “Children’s Crusade” began before hundreds of kids as young as eight years old marched into the park with the intention of being arrested.

At the end of the day, the class finally took a moment to breathe before going to Z’s Soul Food for a delicious dinner then back to the hotel.

Day 2 was unseasonably warm and very sunny — a perfect day to walk across Edmund Pettus Bridge of Dr. King and Selma fame. Sam Walker, another civil rights advocate who worked on voter registration, talked to us about his experiences and then led the grade along the same route that Martin Luther King Jr. and his fellow freedom advocates took on Bloody Sunday, when Alabama State Police attacked civil rights marchers as they crossed the bridge.

It was oddly quiet, especially for a group of 14 year olds. It was extraordinary it was to stand on the same ground as so many people who fought for equal rights.

Rashed Al-Amiri ‘23 said he was especially excited: “[I loved] learning more about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”

“To stand in the places that he did, and to be where they were fighting for our equal rights was pretty cool,” said Robsan Teshome ‘23.

We then traveled across the loud, very busy freeway, arriving at the National Voting Rights Museum, created and curated entirely by the people of Selma. Next, we moved on to one of the most impactful parts of the entire trip: the Peace and Justice Initiative Memorial, more commonly known as the Lynching Memorial.

The memorial itself is harrowing and confusing, evoking the actions perpetrated by the worst of humanity. What appears to be one structure is a cluster of steel blocks hanging from the ceiling, with more visible in the distance. Every steel block represents a county and on the steel block was every recorded lynching in that county. There were hundreds—maybe even thousands of those blocks. Some of them had as many as 50 names.

Samantha Simmons ‘23 said she felt greatly impacted. “It was crazy knowing that all those people were killed,” she said. “Plus these are all the recorded ones. Who knows how many were actually lynched.”

“The Peace and Justice Memorial was my favorite part of the trip,” Cali Marcoux ‘23 said. “It was the type of place where you kind of experience it yourself. I think people tend to understand everything a bit more when they can see and feel things.”

Day 3 consisted of museums, a church, and another parsonage. We first went to the Rosa Parks Museum, which was very immersive with a three dimensional set of Parks’ standoff including the actual sidewalk she walked on.

We then split up into two groups, one of which went to Dr. King’s parsonage, and the other to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, where Dr. King preached. The moment we set foot inside, Al-Amiri was awestruck. “To be actually in the house that he lived in was so cool,” he said.

When the final day arrived, many of us were sad to be leaving. We spent quite a long time at the Equal Justice Initiative Museum, which, rather than focusing on lynching like the memorial, addressed mass incarceration. After the museum, we got on the bus and went to Vulcan Park which looks over the entire city of Birmingham. It was a bittersweet moment, as it was our last stop.

“We really got to know each other in Alabama,” Simmons said. “We couldn’t really escape one another and everyone did fun, eighth grade things, like jumping into the pool fully clothed. We all bonded as a grade,” Simmons said.

While there were many good parts of the trip, several students agreed that there was not enough free time.

“It was such a jam-packed itinerary that we didn’t have as much time to see [the sites],” said Marcoux.

Next year, another group of eighth graders will probably trek through Alabama on a similar bus.

“Given how successful it was,” Ginger Attarian said, “gave that Mia put together that amazing program with speakers and food options, I do hope we can do it exactly the same.”

Editor’s note: Reed Roddy-Johnson is both a Cagelinliner writer and an eighth grade participant in this trip.

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CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

they’re in. I tell them that we’re a DC school; our community goes beyond the District; we welcome folks from the DMV, but we’re located in DC,” Jones said.

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