

Press Release  
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## **Richmond Area School Students Took Home Honors at Virginia History Day Massive History Contest Hosted by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture**

Richmond, VA — On Saturday, April 27, Virginia students from across the Commonwealth competed during Virginia History Day at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) for the chance to advance to the National History Day Contest at the University of Maryland, College Park, this June. In response to this year's theme, "Triumph and Tragedy in History," students as individuals or groups created historical research projects in the form of either a paper, documentary, performance, exhibit, or website. After months of research, preparation, and regional competitions, the results are now in.

Many Virginia students began their historical research last fall, selecting a topic related to the theme and gathering primary and secondary resources. While they could choose a topic from any time period or geographic region, many classroom teachers asked students to find one related to their coursework. Over 8,000 Virginia students in grades six through twelve participated in this year's History Day in their classrooms and some went on to compete in regional contests held at Emory & Henry College, Central Virginia Community College, Radford University, UVA Curry School of Education, Mount Vernon High School in Fairfax County, Virginia Wesleyan University, and John Tyler Community College. These district contests were judged by college professors, museum professionals, and other educators and provided students the chance to present their research to a new audience. First- and second-place winners at the district level advanced to compete at the state competition held at VMHC.

On [Virginia History Day](#), VMHC welcomed more than 700 students, teachers, and family members from every region of Virginia. With 169 projects submitted by 280 students, it was the largest state contest in years. More than seventy volunteer judges interviewed students about their research and historical interpretation. While the judges deliberated, contestants, teachers, and families explored the museum galleries with a scavenger hunt, created a mural mosaic, competed in a trivia contest, enjoyed lunch from food trucks, and viewed other students' projects. Virginia's Secretary of Education Atif Qarni gave a rousing keynote address at the awards ceremony, and VMHC President and CEO Jamie O. Bosket presented the awards. The Virginia History Day Cup award went to two schools that tied for the most History Day participation at the classroom level: Western Albemarle High School in Albemarle County and Blacksburg New School. To advance past the state level, students needed to place first or second in their project division and category (Senior Group Website, Junior Individual Exhibit, etc.). Every year, thirty-six projects make the cut.

Nine Richmond-area students created five History Day projects that will be advancing to the National History Day Contest in June. Students from Manchester Middle School in Chesterfield County created two of those projects. Tori Langford's Junior Research Paper on the assassination of Orlando Letelier received second place as did eighth-graders Rithika Bhagavatula and Jordyn Krajewski for their Junior Group Documentary, "Transforming Obstacles into Opportunities: The Triumph of Arthur Ashe." Ms. Bhagavatula and Ms. Krajewski also received the Changemakers in Virginia History Award (a \$100 prize), sponsored by the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution, for the junior project that best highlighted a Virginian who changed the course of history for the better. Their teachers, Christi Gibson and Julie Walton, host a History Day Club and embed the History Day as a performance assessment in their classrooms. Swift Creek Middle School in Chesterfield County has also embraced History Day projects as a form of performance assessment. Briana Cordon, Danica Francis, Emma Scholtz, and Vanessa Wigfall took second place with their Junior Group Exhibit on the Holocaust and included in their research an interview with a Holocaust survivor, a visit to the Virginia Holocaust Museum, and research at the Virginia War Memorial. Ally Lichtman, a sixth grader at George H. Moody Middle School in

Henrico County will head to Nationals with a second-place award for her Junior Individual Website, “The New Deal: A Triumph or a Tragedy in Finance?” Also advancing to the National Contest with a second-place finish is Perisa Ashar, a tenth-grader at Maggie Walker’s Governor’s School. Her research paper on the triumph and tragedy of India’s independence and partition received both a second-place award and the George C. Marshall Prize in Diplomacy (\$100 prize) presented by the George C. Marshall International Center for outstanding projects highlighting diplomacy in all its forms.

Eighth-graders at Henrico County’s Hungary Creek Middle School, Lily Cole, Rachel Stanton, and Kennedy Washington, received third place and the Mary Bicouvaris Award in Virginia History for their Junior Group Documentary on *Loving v. Virginia*. Amaiya Johnson, an 11th grader at Cosby High School in Chesterfield County, also received the Mary Bicouvaris Award in Virginia History for her Senior Individual Exhibit on the desegregation of Prince Edward County. Aidan Gibson and Sagar Murthy, ninth graders at Douglas S. Freeman High School in Henrico County, took third place for their Senior Group Performance, “The Water(gate) Leaked,” and were awarded the VMHC Award in Political History & Civics (a \$200 prize). Chris Nelms, a tenth-grader at The New Community School received a special award from the National Maritime Historical Society for his Senior Individual Documentary on the Siege of Tobruk during World War II. Natasha D’Cunha and Carly Phung, ninth graders at J. R. Tucker High School, took third place for their Senior Group Exhibit on theologian Martin Luther. Maya Lindsey, an 11th grader at Cosby High School in Chesterfield County, received third place for her Senior Individual Exhibit on the Chernobyl disaster, while Nikki Kumar, a ninth-grader at Maggie Walker Governor’s School, placed third with her Senior Individual Performance on the Bracero Program for Mexican workers in the mid-20th century.

We wish all sixty-three Virginia History Day student winners good luck as they head to Maryland, June 9 through 13, to compete against more than 3,000 students from around the world.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is owned and operated by the Virginia Historical Society — a private, non-profit organization established in 1831. The historical society is the oldest cultural organization in Virginia, and one of the oldest and most distinguished history organizations in the nation. For use in its state history museum and its renowned research library, the historical society cares for a collection of nearly nine million items representing the ever-evolving story of Virginia.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is located at 428 N Arthur Ashe Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the research library. For more information call 804.340.1800, visit [VirginiaHistory.org](http://VirginiaHistory.org), or connect on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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