

Le Monde

The Honors College Newsletter

Fall 2016

Light up Richmond

The James Center hosts Richmond's 32nd annual Grand Illumination

By SAILASYA GUNDLAPUDI

On a chilly evening on Friday, December 2nd, hundreds of people gathered in downtown Richmond for an event they'd been anticipating all year.

VCU's very own Peppas set the tone beforehand with jazzy renditions of Holiday classics (and occasionally some Adele). VCU students and Richmond natives milled about food trucks outside with hot chocolate in hand. As six o'clock drew

closer, parents hoisted their kids on their shoulders and the music dwindled down.

Then, after an animated countdown, hundreds of buildings, reindeer, and-of course- a four-story tall Christmas tree in the middle of the James Center shimmered to life.

Richmond's 32nd Annual Grand Illumination had begun.

The tradition has a rich history that started in 1984 and has continued this year



Pictures: Grand Illumination by Arlee Mae Liangco



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Grand Illumination, cont.

amid doubts after the sale of the James Center. As in every year, a choir (this time the Rock n' Roll chorus) sang carols after the lighting and local theatre groups performed classics like A Christmas Story. Food trucks sold everything from fried Oreos to Mac n' Cheese bites, and guests wandered into the Omni hotel to take pictures in front of holiday decorations and a ten-foot tall statue of The Nutcracker.

Under normal circumstances the densely packed streets would have led to some disagreements; but that day, a sense of carefree holiday cheer laced the air. For one evening, at least, people's troubles were

left at home.

However, this year's illumination has also been a touch bittersweet. Inside the Omni hotel was a red sleigh full of shiny new toys, manned by Richmond Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN). The sleigh is part of an effort to collect presents for children whose parents can't afford them. At the end of the drive, parents will be able to come in and do their Christmas "shopping", providing a sense of normalcy to otherwise struggling families. The drive is a reminder that the normally blissful Holiday season can be just another reminder of hard times to many.

Also bittersweet was the end to some of the smaller traditions that have sprung up over the years.

In past years, a tour guide from Canal Cruises would speak about Richmond history as the boats glided through dark waters, enrapturing both VCU students and Richmond natives alike. The ride was also the perfect place to see the city lights from afar. This year, however, the dock that normally hosts the free rides holiday canal rides was eerily empty.

The apparent end of this tradition is just one of many changes that Richmond is going through. MCV hospital recently changed its name to

VCU Health; the Landmark lives.

With all this change, it's comforting to have a yearly event that brings students, city natives, and families together for one luminous evening. Unlike other events, the tradition of the Grand Illumination is unlikely to end anytime soon (per a James Center representative). And, of course, other staple traditions like the Christmas parade and annual horse carriage ride through the city will continue to happen- just don't forget to tip the horses at the end!



Above: Horse Carriage Ride through Richmond. Photo courtesy from web.

An Ode to Hip-Hop

Honors College senior Jasmine Phaguda shares her thoughts on the controversial genre

By JASMINE PHAGUDA

Some days, I want to wrap music around me and let it engulf everything. When the right song is playing through my headphones, I feel unstoppable. Scientifically, music can reduce negative symptoms like anxiety and blood pressure while increasing personal happiness. The beats, production, and lyrical genius of hip-hop seem to rejuvenate my body just as much as food and water do. Without it, I would not exist because hip-hop has shaped my life in countless ways. Feeling the creativity and rhymes circulating through my veins, I would like to take this moment to sincerely thank hip-hop.

The haters like to attribute violence to hip-hop music, but they fail to understand that violence existed long before the creation of hip-hop. However, it is a symptom of cultural violence, not the cause of it. Hip-hop has functioned as a creative outlet to express personal triumphs and tribulations. Since its



All photos courtesy of the Internet



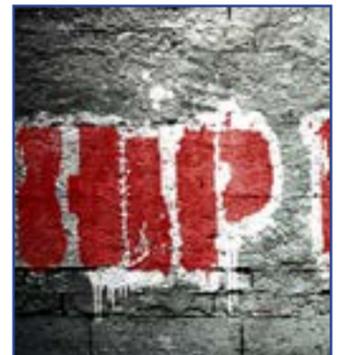
foundation in the early 1970s in the Bronx, hip-hop has had a profound influence on fashion, trends, popular culture, and media. Hip-hop culture is undeniably used by everyone to facilitate various aspects of their lives. Everyone participates in hip-hop culture: whether it be the music they workout to, the dance moves that they propagate, the captions to their pictures, the styles that they flaunt, or the sweet melody that is playing in their ears. The appeal of hip-hop is widely appreciated from anyone who has bobbed their head to the latest Rihanna song to anyone who can spit Tupac's lyrics at the drop of a hat. Trying to imagine a world without hip-hop is almost unfathomable.

Hip-hop creates communities that unite over shared truths. The diversity

of the field and types of artists allow for everyone to find and identify with their most valued form of hip-hop. The resiliency of this genre also continues to shock people because many people expected it to fizzle out of favor quickly and quietly. Yet, it continues to grow as a culturally relevant media. Hip-hop's artists function as undercover poets with a good reflection of the community. They take ideas and spread them to the rest of the world.

I am continually inspired, educated, and motivated by hip-hop. It is not just music. It is an attitude and a lifestyle. While some may have a fictitious stereotype of what hip-hop is, I feel the utmost love and appreciation for this realm of music. I encourage people to educate themselves on the realness

that it actualizes and the truth that it reveals. Hip-hop has been there for me when nothing else could have been there for me. You may often catch me taking the long way home or putting on my headphones during any free moment just to revel in a few more seconds of my current favorite song. To all the creative geniuses who have contributed to hip-hop culture, thank you for giving me a genre that clearly cannot compare to anything else.



Dry Season

In the duststorm since,
we found no survivors
only splinters of bone—
pieces of angry skin
carried by the wind.

Our desert home will
surely perish in the coming rain.

And we will wash into the streaming rooftops,
into the flooded streets and condense into mud

The last time I thought of camellia blossoms,
I spent a day and night

in the shower, waiting
for the mountain of water
to melt my body
through the drain,
through the walls.



Photo: Pink Trumpet Vine in Bloom, courtesy of the Internet



Photo: Camellias in Bloom, courtesy of the Internet

Poetry by Manleen Kaur Bajaj

Art by Jordan Rockwell



Oh Heart

Oh Heart, why are you so sad?
When you have everything in the palm of
your hand.

You have a family, friends, shelter
and food

While even the unfortunate ones don't even
have as much as you.

Oh Heart, why do you cry?

Don't you know each and every moment is
passing you by?

You are worried and anxious about
tomorrow

Does the future hold happiness or even more
sorrow?

You regret your decisions about yesterday.
But your worries and regrets have slipped
today away.

Oh Heart, why are you so scared?

This life, this body and mind have already
been declared

To perish at a certain point

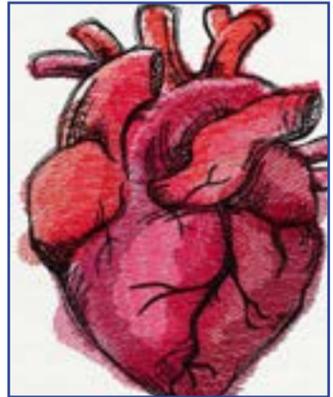
So don't wait until that last checkpoint,

To complete everything your heart
years,

Before that last ultimate spark burns.

Oh Heart, be thankful now

That you got this far anyhow.



Above: Pictures courtesy of the Internet

Poetry by Manleen Kaur Bajaj

Unfaithful

You're looking at him
 But he's not looking at you
 His eyes are dancing around the
 room
 Searching and seeking someone new.
 He's on the hunt for the next chase
 Now that he's won first place for this
 race
 By winning your heart and getting
 what he desired
 Leaving you behind like a burnt
 wood chip in the fire.
 You feel used, alone, broken and
 shattered.
 Feeling foolish for falling for his
 stupid flatter
 And of course those three words that
 made you fall even harder.
 You were so naive to believe you had
 found the one.
 Little did you know, your life had
 only just begun.



Art by Jordan Rockwell

Beauty.

Through the dirt, flowers grow and bloom.
 Those who go for the beautiful kinds inhale
 such dangerous fumes.
 The bees and hummingbirds hover around
 such beauty
 But temporary beauty cannot last.
 For the flower soon wilts when the seasons
 change and pass.
 Oh mind, remember beauty comes from
 within
 It is within the soul inside, not the outer skin.



Art by Jordan Rockwell

Symmetry

i struggle
 to dream the
 careful mountains forgot
 the art of sleep
 that sweet planet to
 balance, so naturally
 a blue rain melts
 the corrugated sheets of
 stolen cloud
 wind floods the knolls
 keep dancing, the music
 of my blood parades on
 toward the symmetry of the evening
 where oceans unbound,
 we travel further still
 to the jeweled past and
 the invention of light

tired, i drift away



Photo courtesy of the Internet

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