

# Richmond Times-Dispatch

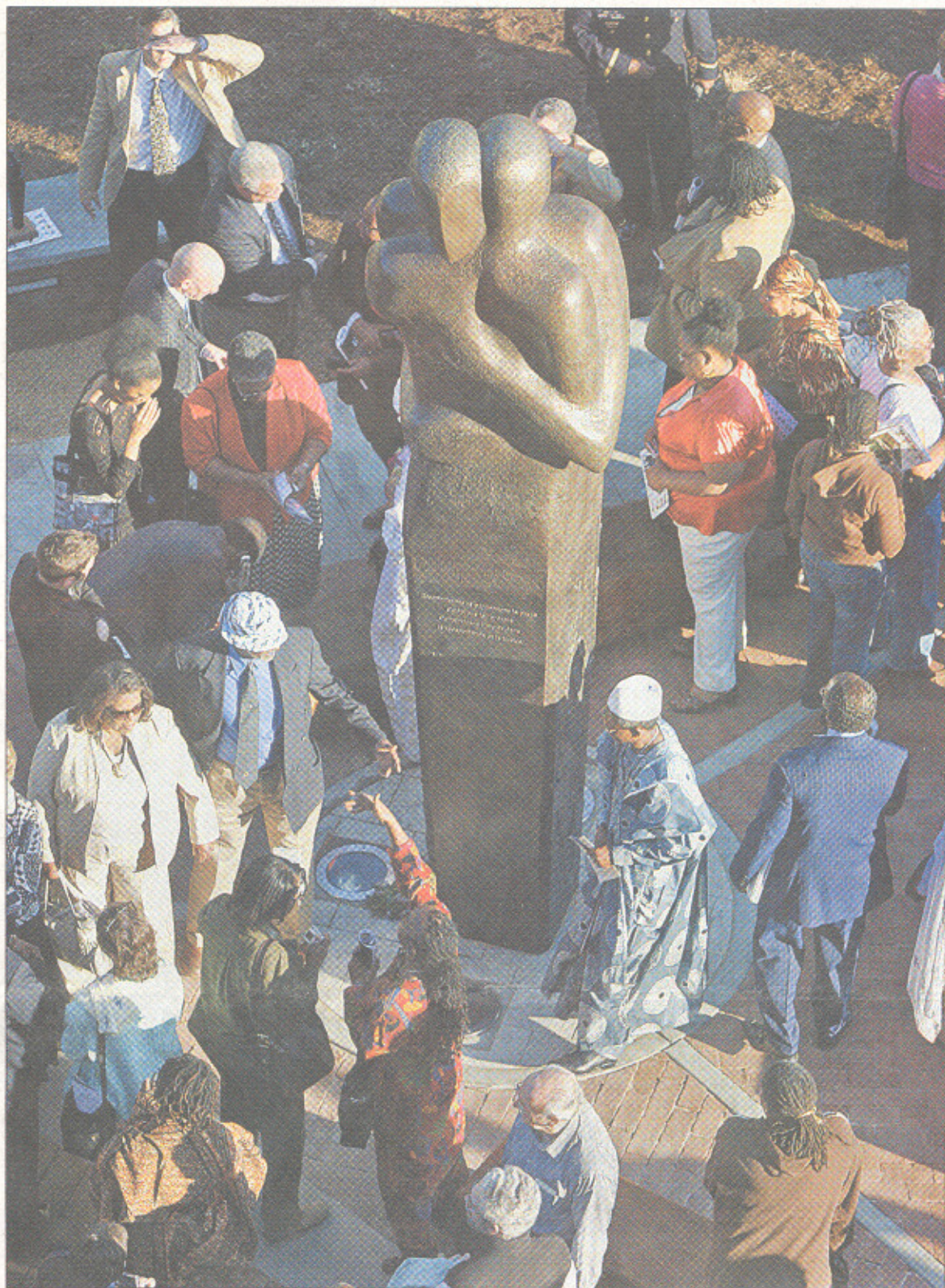
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

*VIRGINIA'S NEWS LEADER*  
A MEDIA GENERAL NEWSPAPER

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2007



# A monument to reconciliation



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH

**More than 300,000 slaves were sold from Richmond in the years leading up to the Civil War, speakers said.**



# 5,000-plus view unveiling of statue in Richmond, near former slave market

BY GARY ROBERTSON  
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

A throng estimated at more than 5,000 crowded into the intersection of 15th and East Main streets yesterday to try to forgive the horrors of slavery and those who perpetuated it.

They also gathered to remember and honor those who had lived and died in slavery's grip.

A years-long effort on three conti-

nents culminated in the unveiling of the Richmond Slavery Reconciliation Statue — depicting two people melded in an embrace — not far from Richmond's former slave market in Shockoe Bottom.

**ONLINE**  
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The reconciliation project emerged from apologies for slavery issued by officials in Liverpool, England, and Benin in West Africa.

The 15-foot, half-ton bronze sculpture, created by Stephen Broadbent, was unveiled after nearly two hours of speeches, prayers, hymns and personal

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**"Acknowledge and forgive the past, embrace the present, shape a future of reconciliation and justice."**

Inscription on the Richmond Slavery Reconciliation Statue

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## Statue

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stories.

Richmond City Council Vice President Delores L. McQuinn, a central figure in coordinating the international project, gave a personal testimony about her willingness to forgive those who had enslaved her ancestors.

She said her great-grandfather and other family members had been enslaved in a neighboring county. And when her grandfather went to the descendants of the slaveowner in an effort to obtain records of the family, the records he needed were burned in front of his eyes.

McQuinn said the story of the hateful act rankled in her father's heart all his life, and it had rankled in hers, until she became involved in the reconciliation process.

"I forgive ... I forgive," McQuinn shouted emotionally from the stage.

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine said the state of Virginia could not escape its responsibility for slavery.

"We promoted it, protected it, defended it and fought to preserve slavery," Kaine said at the ceremony.

The governor said it was only right that the legislature apologize for the state's role in slavery. Last month, the General Assembly expressed "profound regret for the involuntary servitude of Africans and the exploitation of Native Americans."

The Rev. John W. Kinney, dean of the school of theology at Virginia Union University, offered a passionate blend of stories, observations and preaching.

Kinney used his experience with a hip replacement, the result of an old athletic injury, to draw a parallel with the day's theme of



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH

**Rhonda M. Smith (left) responds to remarks by the Rev. John W. Kinney, dean of the school of theology at Virginia Union University, during the ceremony at 15th and East Main streets.**

reconciliation.

He said his surgeon told him that hip replacement surgery carried a degree of risk. But if successful, it would reduce his pain and give him a higher quality of life.

Kinney said racial reconciliation carries risk as well. But it also offers the prospect of eliminating the pain of long-past and current generations, and of opening the way to better lives for all those who embrace it.

Though he was on the program, Richmond Mayor L. Douglas Wilder couldn't make the ceremony, which also included U.S. Rep. Robert C. Scott, D-3rd. Wilder had a previous engagement, said the city's acting chief administrative officer, Harry E. Black, who took Wilder's place at the event to extend a welcome from the city.

A city spokesman said later that Wilder was in Washington at a fundraiser for his proposed National Slavery Museum. The spokesman said the mayor had at-

tended a luncheon for dignitaries earlier in the day.

Reconciliation sculptures, paid for by a variety of donors and organizations, also have been erected in Liverpool and Benin.

Liverpool prospered from the ships that carried slaves, and Benin prospered as the point where slaves were sold in exchange for tobacco and other goods for shipment around the world, but especially to North America.

Richmond was once one of America's busiest slave centers. Several speakers said that more than 300,000 slaves were sold from Richmond in the years leading up to the Civil War.

As a bright sun began to fade after the sculpture's unveiling shortly before 6 p.m., officials and crowd members clustered around it.

Cameras flashed like fireflies.

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