

PRESENTATIONS OF LEARNING

FEATURING ART AND REFLECTIONS BY
BONNER SCHOLARS AND ENGAGED SENIORS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 5:30-7 P.M.

Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia



WELCOME

Presentations of Learning, when seniors share the impact of community engagement on their learning, growth, and development, are special moments for us in the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement. This year, each senior created an original work of art under the guidance of Richmond artist Austin “Auz” Miles. We hope you enjoy their work as much as we do.

If you are a community partner, thank you for mentoring our students. If you are a family member or care provider, thank you for your love for these amazing graduates. If you are part of the UR community, thank you for your ongoing support of our program.

The CCE Staff

PROGRAM

Welcome & Panel Discussions

5:30–6:30 p.m.

Clinical Healthcare & Well-Being

Alumni Facilitator: Sara Messervey

Luis Montano
Nehal Asif
Sampson Valdez
Sophia Rechkemer

Community Engagement & Advocacy

Alumni Facilitator: Benedict Roemer

Alexis Rogers
Alfie Price
Ángel-Xavier Elizondo
Carmen Ovalle
Neha Kalwala

Public Health & Sustainability

Alumni Facilitator: Dr. Kiara Lee

Craig Caudill
Lay'la Harmon
Salina Adhanom
Susannah Carter

Art Viewing & Reception

6:30–7 p.m.



Salina Adhanom

Reclaiming the Narrative

Acrylic on canvas

This piece was inspired by an essay I wrote for my academic Bonner requirement, Women's Reproductive Health. The paper explored structural inequalities, access to reproductive care, and the experiences of women whose voices are often excluded from dominant health narratives. I chose to use that essay as the physical background of the artwork to reflect how lived experiences and academic inquiry can intersect to create deeper meaning. At the center of the piece is a painted figure of a uterus, a biological organ and a symbol of autonomy, resilience, and struggle. The uterus represents not just the physical body, but also the generational ties that influence reproductive health. This symbolism speaks to the communities I primarily serve within the greater Richmond area. I have had the privilege of being mentored by some of the most committed women in Richmond, many of whom have dedicated their lives to health equity, education, and care. Their influence is embedded in this piece. By combining academic work with visual expression, I hope to honor the women who continue to fight for reproductive justice, both in Richmond and beyond. My stylistic choice to make the uterus the focal point and allow the words to surround and support it visually reinforces the idea that policy, lived experience, and storytelling must all work together to protect and empower women's health.



Nehal Asif

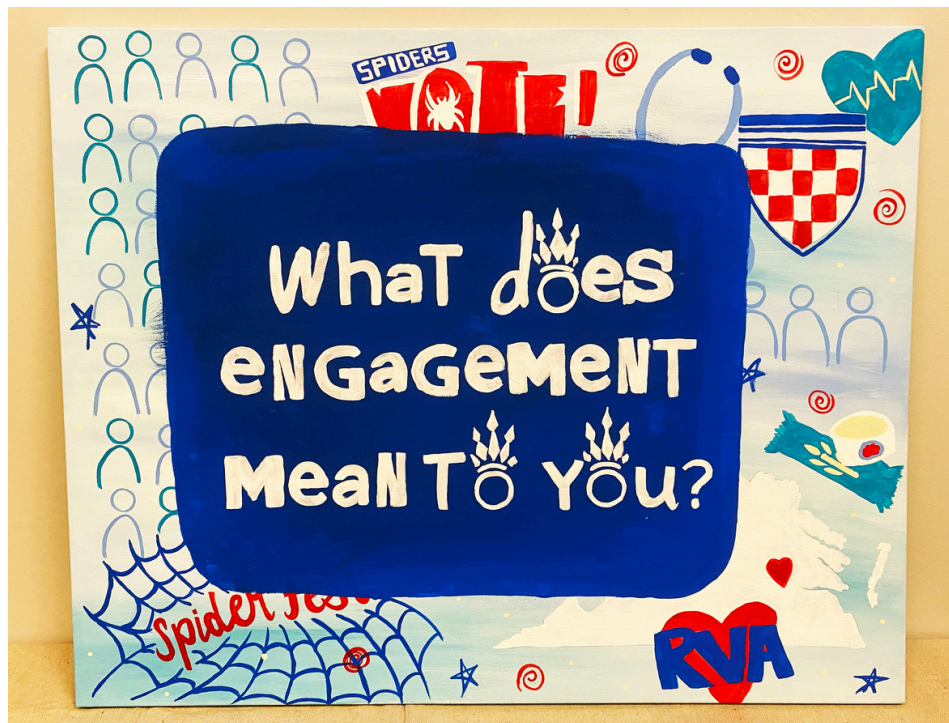
Court Vision

Watercolor and acrylic on canvas

This piece is inspired by my time as a Children and Youth Program Intern at SOAR365, where I worked with children with developmental disabilities. The scene captures an impactful and memorable moment on the basketball court, a space that became more than just a recreational setting — it became a classroom, a breakthrough, and a symbol of connection. The child at the center of this piece, one of my favorite students, had autism and struggled with basic arithmetic in a traditional classroom setting. However, his love for basketball revealed a different kind of intelligence. He could accurately calculate points from free throws, layups, and three-pointers in real time. Recognizing this strength, I used basketball scoring as a teaching tool to help him grasp addition, turning a challenge into a joyful, empowering learning moment.

The medium choices were intentional: watercolor was used for the court and the trees in the background to evoke a sense of softness, familiarity, and natural rhythm — reflecting the organic, often unexpected ways in which learning and connection can occur. In contrast, the figures of the students are painted in acrylic to give them weight and presence, emphasizing the human relationships at the heart of this experience. The vibrant, textured figures stand out against the more fluid background, drawing attention to the individuals and their stories.

Thematically, this work explores adaptive learning, patience, and the importance of seeing every child as capable, regardless of how their strengths may show up. It is also a visual reflection of inclusion — the blending of skill, creativity, and care to create moments of understanding. This piece is both a celebration of that student's progress and a reminder of how meaningful impact often comes from meeting people where they are.



Susannah Carter

Line of Questioning

Acrylic on canvas

As the CCE's Healthcare Program Associate, my work over the last two years has consisted of supporting students in their community engagement journey. I primarily spend my time advising students — 35 total, captured by the icons on the left side of the canvas — and learning more about their interest in healthcare and public health. I used multiple colors to represent the individuality of each person I advised, yet I kept the hues all within the same color scheme (blue) to represent their shared interest in serving their community through their giftings in healthcare. Three more individuals are depicted on the right side of the canvas, representing the peer advisor position I worked to create, hire, and support during my time as a PA. They also are illustrated in blue, depicting their shared interest in healthcare and public health. I included a number of UR-themed elements in the background of the piece, including the crest and UR events I helped to support as a Healthcare PA, such as SpidersVote and SpiderFest. A cup of applesauce and a cereal bar are positioned on the right side of the canvas, which represent the DIY Service Events I coordinated in support of the Richmond Behavioral Health Association. This event allowed students with transportation barriers to easily access on-campus service events and still give back to their local community even without leaving campus. The focal point of this piece is the blue box with the phrase, "What does engagement mean to you?" This is the question I posed to every student at the beginning of our advising session. The lettering comes from the various logos of the CCE's healthcare and public health community partners to reflect the organizations I partnered with during my work as a Healthcare PA. This question was one I asked students at our meetings, but in my final semester at UR, it is a question I have begun to ask myself. Engagement, to me, means full attentiveness to the needs of people around you, and for me, engagement has meant fully supporting students who are eager to serve those around them.



Craig Caudill

Greetings from Richmond, Virginia

Digital

This piece, “Greetings from Richmond, Virginia,” is a personal and artistic reflection on my time living, working, and learning in Richmond. Inspired by my experiences interning at the City of Richmond’s Office of Sustainability, conducting research on redlining and public health, and serving as a medical clinic intern at Health Brigade, each letter of “Richmond” carries meaning tied directly to these formative experiences.

The letter “H,” depicted as two brown buildings, represents public housing and anchors the piece thematically. This imagery draws from my research on the legacy of redlining and its continued impact on health disparities across Richmond’s neighborhoods. It reflects how structural inequities are quite literally built into the city’s landscape. Working at the Office of Sustainability further deepened my understanding of how climate resilience and urban policy intersect with racial and health equity — insights that shape this visual storytelling.

The tree forming the “R” and the river-shaped “C” reference the natural environment I became more attuned to during my sustainability internship, where I explored how equitable access to green space is essential for community well-being. The rainbow in the “M” and the sun in the “O” evoke the warmth and inclusion I felt at Health Brigade, a clinic rooted in social justice that provides affirming care to Richmond’s most vulnerable populations. My time there profoundly influenced how I view health not just as medicine, but as advocacy.

This artwork functions as a stylized postcard, but also as a visual map of my lived connections to the city. The use of bright, hand-drawn forms reflects my personal and grassroots engagement with these spaces. It’s not just a greeting — it’s a reflection of learning, care, and a deepening awareness of how place, policy, and people intertwine.



Ángel-Xavier Elizondo

A Heart Goes Full Circle

Acrylic on canvas

This artwork captures the essence of my journey at the Sacred Heart Center in Richmond, where education, justice, and community converge at the heart of service. The central heart symbolizes not only the Center's name but the compassion driving our collective work with immigrant communities. Surrounding this heart are three distinct yet interconnected realms, each represented by a meaningful color. The green section embodies education, featuring a book with words in both English and Spanish — a visual representation of the ESL teaching that bridges worlds and opens doors to opportunity. In the blue section, the scales of justice balance "derechos" and "inclusión," reflecting the immigration legal assistance that empowers



Lay'la Harmon

Building Up

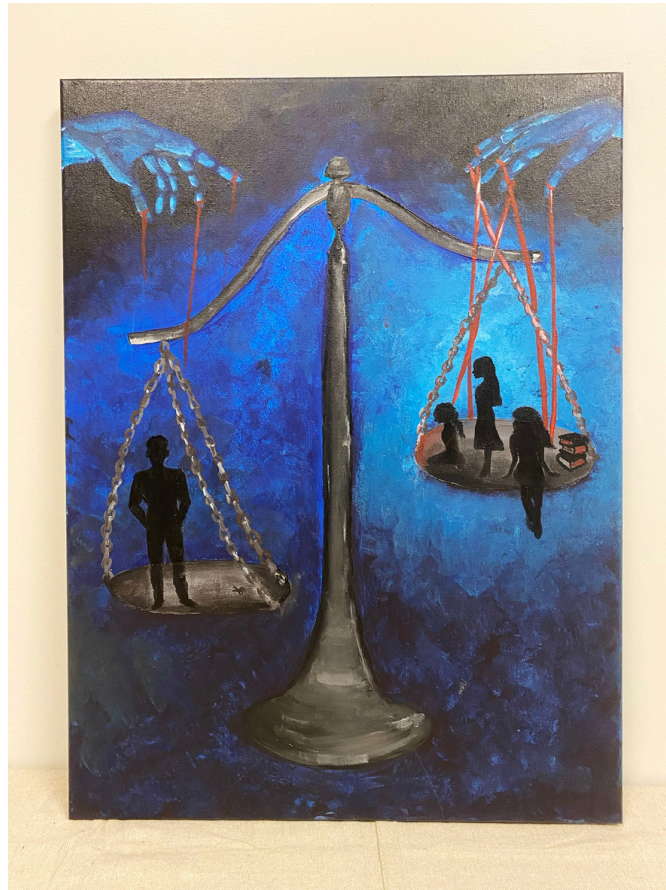
Watercolor, acrylic, and cardboard on canvas

"Building Up" is a layered reflection on the tension between urban development and community resilience. At its core, the piece presents a stylized cityscape: towering buildings rise above, symbolizing the imposing dominance of a city's epicenter, while a cluster of irregular, vibrant homes beneath them speaks to the strength, diversity, and vibrancy of local neighborhoods. The intentionally uneven forms with each home differing in size, shape, and hue mirror the organic, often imperfect beauty of real communities, especially those forged through adversity.

Cardboard, a humble and often discarded material, serves here as a poignant metaphor for resourcefulness and sustainability. Its presence in the piece nods to the long-standing reality of "making do," a practice familiar to under-resourced communities across generations. A striking acrylic-painted highway slices through the composition, offering a stark contrast to the softness of the watercolor and physically representing the deep divisions, both literal and systemic, that separate the city's wealth from its working-class roots.

This work draws inspiration from Ghanaian artist El Anatsui, whose transformative use of recycled materials left a lasting impression on me during my semester abroad. While studying in South Africa, I encountered renditions of El Anatsui's works that depicted the stunning topography of Cape Town, often juxtaposed with the profound socio-economic hardship faced by many of its residents. That contrast—beauty intertwined with struggle—deeply informed this piece.

"Building Up" is a love letter to Richmond, Virginia, my home for the past four years, and a tribute to its neighborhoods that have weathered a legacy of disruption and neglect but still holds a beautiful culture of community.



Neha Kalwala

Titled Justice

Acrylic on canvas

This piece was inspired by research into gender biases and disparities woven into the fabric of daily life — often subtle, but deeply embedded. These inequities rarely announce themselves, yet, their influence is undeniable: they shape how individuals are perceived, whose voices are heard, and whose contributions are valued. What appears balanced on the surface often tilts under closer scrutiny.

The painting features a scale with a single man on one side and a group of women on the other. Despite their numbers, the scale is tipped in favor of the man, illustrating the disproportionate weight often given to male voices and presence. It serves as a visual metaphor for the systemic inequality that persists even when seemingly illogical or unfair. The deep blues and purples in the background evoke a sense of heaviness and introspection, while a faint halo of lighter blue surrounds the women, symbolizing resilience, collective strength, and the quiet hope for change.

This piece is not just a critique but an invitation to bring attention to what often goes unseen — to spark reflection and conversation about the structures and assumptions that continue to shape our daily lives. It is an invitation to look more closely, to question what is taken for granted, and to imagine a world where the scales are not just visible, but fair. Through this work, I hope to create space for introspection and dialogue, and to honor the resilience of those who continue to challenge injustice every day.



Luis Montano

A Patient's Journey

Acrylic on canvas

This piece, *A Patient's Journey*, is a symbolic representation of the emotional and systemic complexities I've witnessed while working at Crossover Health Ministries as a Bonner Scholar. Using acrylic on canvas, I wanted to capture the duality of emotions I experience daily: the heaviness of sadness when patients are caught in cycles of illness due to systemic barriers, and the joy and hope that come when we are able to offer support, resources, or simply human connection.

The canvas transitions from dark, muted tones to lighter, warmer hues, symbolizing the shift from despair to healing. On the left side, I use deep blues, purples, and blacks to represent the emotional weight of patients who arrive at the clinic carrying invisible burdens: poverty, fear, and limited access to care. As the colors transition across the canvas, they gradually warm to golds and soft oranges, signifying moments of care, clarity, and dignity restored.

Throughout the painting, a stethoscope passes by each patient. This image reflects my role as an interpreter, scribe, and support figure: someone who helps patients navigate language, access, and the uncertainty of their situations throughout their entire process. The three figures spanning the canvas symbolize the many patients I've interacted with, whose stories remain with me, often coming to us in darker moments of their life but eventually leaving better than when they came in.

I also incorporated words and quotes to tie together the emotional theme and personal growth I've experienced. The medium of acrylic allowed for blending, layering, and depth, techniques that mirror the complexities of both the patients' journeys and my own.



Carmen Ovalle

There is telepathy between hearts

Acrylic on canvas

This piece highlights the symbolic richness of the pomegranate, a fruit long associated with abundance, death and rebirth, prosperity, and beauty. These themes resonate deeply with my experience supporting clients at the International Rescue Committee. To me, the pomegranate embodies the emotional depth and layered complexity of working with individuals navigating difficult and intensive cases. The blue border is overlaid with Mayan-inspired patterns, honoring my ancestral roots in Guatemala. Each design holds its own meaning, representing the strength, resilience, and stories of the people I have worked with in Brazil, Richmond, and Trenton. "There is telepathy between hearts," is an Afghan proverb that speaks to the deep, unspoken connections we share as human beings, transcending language and cultural barriers, an experience I was able to live through my service with Bonner.



Alfie Price

We Like Nice Things Too

Digital collage (typography, digital photography, graphic elements)

We Like Nice Things Too is a response to the layered injustices surrounding public housing and the perception of worth in historically marginalized communities. The phrase itself was inspired by a resident's quiet but powerful comment during a site visit to an underfunded housing project: "We like nice things too." That moment lingered, a testament to both dignity and frustration. The text stands as a reclamation of value, asserting not just a desire, but a right, to live in safety and care.

The stylized "WE" incorporates the American flag, reflecting both national identity and the irony of the "American Dream" being denied to many. Chains on either side evoke the history and persistence of systemic oppression. Yet, they are slightly broken — symbolizing cracks in the system and a continued demand for justice and liberation.

The inclusion of a photograph of the broken window, taken by me on the day of my visit, grounds the piece in lived experience. It is a quiet but telling detail that speaks to years of neglect.

Stylistically, the piece is intentionally stark. The dark background and minimal color palette focus attention on the message. The digital medium allows the layering of text, symbolism, and image to converge into a singular demand for recognition and investment — not just in spaces, but in people.



Sophia Rechkemer

Positive Growth, Strong Foundation

Acrylic on canvas

My artwork encompasses symbolism in regards to how a tree relates to strength, growth, and resilience. As an intern at Girls on the Run, I was inspired by the young girls I would coach. Roots were used to explore how important people, experiences, and lessons learned establish a strong foundation to grow strong and flourish in our communities. Through my part in coaching, I had the opportunity to pass on important lessons of connection, star power, positive self talk, and balance, just to name a few. The branches represent the different directions we can go, and all the various places our experiences will take us. In these new experiences, we take with us what we learned in our roots and use those experiences in how we communicate, act, and do certain things. With a strong foundation, beautiful, positive growth can occur. These young girls are the changemakers for the future. They have inspired me, and will continue to inspire others. Use of gold paint was used to explore the beauty of this growth and how special it is. It also represents achievement, and the success that will transpire from lessons learned, such as in Girls on the Run.



Alexis Rogers

R & R

Oil on canvas

This piece reflects a journey of reconciliation of self identity and recognition of community throughout the course of my four years in Richmond. During a period of extreme isolation, it was the strength and support of my community, as well as working alongside changemakers who are dedicated to making this country live up to its founding principles, that empowered me to see myself as someone who is worthy, proud, and able to make an impact.

The vibrant colors and textures reflect the spirit of Richmond, a city with an incredibly complex history and home to artists and activists who seek to reconcile with it. As the figure gently caresses the pan-African flag, hands work around her to bring together the spirit of the city, the flag, and subsequently her own self-identity. Overall, this piece pays homage to the community that raised the artists throughout the past four years, that brought her towards light and self-actualization, and that will continue to do so for years to come.



Sampson Valdez

Stories Matter: The untold histories of patients

Acrylic on Canvas

During my four years at Bonner, I have collaborated with several health organizations, including Crossover Healthcare Ministries, the Parkinson's Association, and VCU Health. Working at these sites provided me with valuable insights into healthcare in America, particularly the challenges faced by patients. At each site, I was fortunate to hear stories from patients about their past struggles with health and wellness and how they are now on a better path thanks to the care my sites have provided through resources such as medications, medical tests, and community support. Additionally, my primary role as a scribe allows me to document these patient stories.

Given this context, I chose a clipboard as the central focus to represent my role as a scribe. On the clipboard is a note detailing a patient's medical history, which I wrote in Spanish because my position involved working closely with the Latino community of Richmond. I also included a note about the stories I have heard from some patients, featuring small quotes and experiences they shared before coming to my sites. Below this, I added the treatment of love, care, and community — three pillars that my sites have provided to these patients. Furthermore, I added some neurons on the sides to symbolize the specialties I ascribed for: neurology and psychiatry. The background colors reflect common hues found in Latino artwork as well as colors I remember from my visits to my grandparents in San Diego. Additionally, there are notepads with drawings of EKGs, pills, notes of encouragement, and other medical-related items to create the impression that the clipboard is displayed on a wall in a clinic.

Overall, I wanted to make my painting represent the untold stories of the patients my sites see as an important part of medicine. Most of the time in healthcare, people are seen as numbers and nothing else. They are represented as blood pressure, weight, A1 values, and iron levels. However, this is not how we should practice healthcare, instead, we should always remember the human aspect and the impact our treatments can have on patients. I dedicate this painting to all the patients I have scribed for or worked with, as their stories matter.



Bonner Center for Civic Engagement