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“For penetrating and historically insightful columns that guided Richmond, a former capital of the Confederacy, through the painful and complicated process of dismantling the city’s monuments to white supremacy.”

Pulitzer Prize judges’ comments

Williams wins Pulitzer



JAMES H. WALLACE/TIMES-DISPATCH

Veteran journalist Michael Paul Williams, 62, a longtime columnist for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, won the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in Commentary on Friday for his work in 2020. Here, Williams toasted his award with co-workers who came into the office to congratulate him. “In the midst of all this hardship of this past year, I have so much hope,” he said.

Columnist receives the highest honor for U.S. journalists



BY BILL LOHMANN
Richmond Times-Dispatch

After the Virginia Press Association’s annual awards were announced in April, I was stunned when I did not find Michael Paul Williams’ name among the winners. So, I sent him an email — we’ve mostly been working remotely for more than a year — and told him I was flabbergasted by his omission because I had been awed by his exceptional work during the extraordinary year that was 2020. “Just wanted to let you know I was surprised — no, stunned —

that you didn’t win,” I wrote. “Your columns last year reflected wisdom, fire and courage. I remember reading [them] and thinking, ‘This is how Pulitzers are won.’” Turns out, I was right for once. On Friday, Williams, 62, a long-time columnist for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Commentary for 2021. The Pulitzer board honored Williams for his “penetrating and historically insightful columns that led Richmond, a former capital of the Confederacy, through the painful and complicated process of dis-

mantling the city’s monuments to white supremacy.” The Pulitzer is the highest honor for U.S. journalists. The 105th class of Pulitzer Prize winners was announced via livestreaming video on Friday afternoon. The Times-Dispatch’s last Pulitzer winner was Virginius Dabney, who won in 1948 for editorial writing. Mark Holmberg, an RTD columnist, was a Pulitzer finalist in commentary in 2003. At The Richmond News Leader, an afternoon newspaper that merged with The Times-Dispatch in WILLIAMS, Page A6



A sampling of Williams’ work
Go to Richmond.com to read columns by RTD’s Michael Paul Williams that won him a Pulitzer Prize.

Richmond’s monuments survived the martyrdom, at the hand of white supremacists, of nine black churchgoers in Charleston, S.C., and Heather Heyer in Charlottesville. But the national revulsion and furor unleashed by the torture of Floyd while in the custody of Minneapolis police officers landed at the doorstep of Monument Avenue.
Williams: ‘The Lost Cause is dead! Let’s dismantle its legacy beyond the symbols
June 4, 2020

Richmond, and the nation, are in a long-overdue moment of self-assessment, and no less than our future depends on it. No good can come out of defining ourselves by four of the bloodiest years in the nation’s history and honoring, in our most prominent spaces, agents of treason and enslavement. Removal of this monument and others will mean nothing if we don’t expand our imagination about what we can and should be.
Williams: The fall of Stonewall Jackson is just a start. Let’s start building a city we can be proud of
July 1, 2020

We’re at a moment where folks are demanding that we take an honest look at these statues and their true legacy, at eye level. This is our moment of truth to create a legitimate cause out of a lost one. To do so, the prevailing mythology must come crashing down to earth. We can’t properly assess what’s been placed on a pedestal.
Williams: Richmond’s monuments to oppression need to be gone, but not forgotten
June 12, 2020