



**Urban League of
Hampton Roads, Inc.**

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

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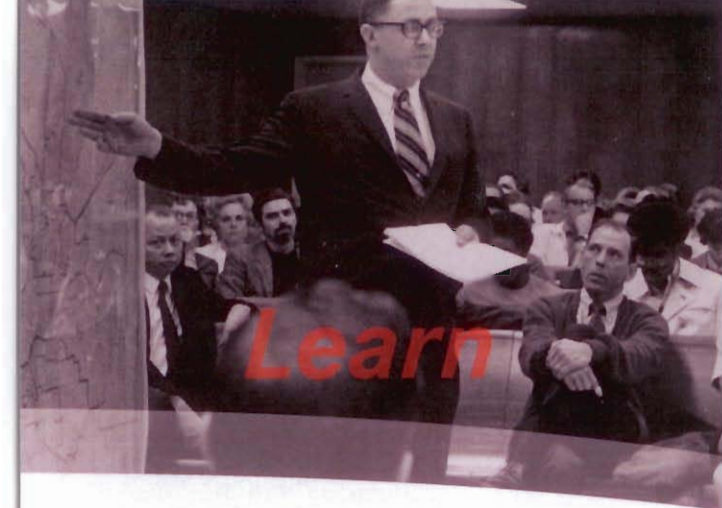


Here's one little girl who lived
through Massive Resistance.

**Tell YOUR story
to help us tell
HER story.**

School Desegregation:
Learn, Preserve, Empower





School Desegregation: Learn, Preserve, Empower

- Learn about the history of school desegregation
- Preserve this history by telling your story
- Empower Virginians to continue the quest for educational diversity

Historic Background Separate but Unequal

Virginia's public school system was segregated from its very beginning in 1870. Courts ruled that separate facilities for blacks and whites were legal as long as they were equal.

Segregated schools were rarely equal. Black students had poor buildings, textbooks, and facilities compared to white students. White teachers were paid, on average, three times as much as black teachers in 1915. NAACP lawyers began filing suits in federal court in the late 1930s for equal teacher pay and schools.

Lawsuits helped to improve all levels of schools for African Americans but education remained unequal.

Virginia leads the way to *Brown v. Board*

In 1951, African American students led by 16-year-old Barbara Johns walked out of Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville to protest the school's poor

condition. Students and NAACP attorneys Oliver Hill and Spottswood Robinson filed a lawsuit in federal court to demand integration, instead of equal schools. Their case became part of the landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS*. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1954, that "separate, but equal" in public education is unconstitutional.

Virginia Massively Resists

Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd called for "massive resistance" to the *Brown* decision. Virginia's legislature passed laws to prevent desegregation. When federal courts ordered nine schools in Warren County, Charlottesville and Norfolk to integrate in 1958, Governor J. Lindsay Almond ordered these schools closed.

- Five months later, the nine schools reopened after courts ruled that massive resistance laws were unconstitutional.
- In some districts white students all left the public schools rather than attend integrated schools.
- Prince Edward County closed its public schools for five years to avoid integration.

Making It Real

By 1968, the U.S. Supreme Court was dissatisfied with Virginia's slow compliance with federal desegregation

guidelines. The court ruled that districts must "ensure racial balance in schools."

Local school boards changed school boundaries, built new schools and used busing to create integrated schools. Every school district in Virginia experienced some level of change from segregated to integrated schools.

Lawsuits against busing began to chip away at this success and desegregation of schools began. By 1988, integration peaked in the U.S. Afterwards schools in many cities became more segregated, not less.

Despite some setbacks, school desegregation and diversity remain a top priority for the U.S. Department of Education. In 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that school integration remains a "compelling national interest."

The struggle for school desegregation is an important part of the American quest for justice and equality. The goal for the future is to ensure equal educational opportunities for everyone throughout the Commonwealth.