

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission
Virginia General Assembly**

Special Subcommittee on the 50th Anniversary of Public School Closings in Virginia

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MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

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The Honorable Henry L. Marsh, III, Chairman, and the Honorable Rosalyn R. Dance, Vice Chairwoman, of the Special Subcommittee on the 50th Anniversary of Public School Closings in Virginia, today announced that, as a part of the statewide commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the closing of public schools (Massive Resistance) and the 55th anniversary of the historic 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Special Subcommittee will meet at the **Martin Luther King Performing Arts Center in Charlottesville High School, 1400 Melbourne Road, in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Tuesday, December 7, 2010, at 10:00 a.m.** A business meeting pertaining to matters before the Commission and its subcommittees—the Special Subcommittee, Expenditure and Review Subcommittee, and Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Subcommittee—will be held prior to a Town Hall at 1:30 p.m., to which the public is invited and citizens are encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion.

The Special Subcommittee was established by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission and the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Committee and is responsible for planning, developing, leading, and coordinating the statewide observance of these historic events. Other members of the Special Subcommittee include legislative and citizen members of the King Commission and the *Brown* Committee, and representatives of the legal, business and corporate communities, the state and federal court systems, professional education organizations, public and higher education officials, educators, relevant state agencies and local governing bodies, community organizations, recent *Brown* scholars, and localities in which public schools were closed to avoid desegregation.

In 1959, after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown*, Virginia embarked on a public policy of Massive Resistance in which public schools were closed in Charlottesville, Norfolk, Prince Edward County, and Warren County, depriving thousands of school children of an education. In Arlington, state public education funds were rescinded because public schools did not remain segregated. Although public schools were eventually re-opened in other areas of the Commonwealth, they remained closed in Prince Edward County for five years until the Supreme Court ordered the re-opening of the public schools in 1964. Despite the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown* that school segregation was unconstitutional, public schools in Virginia did not immediately begin to desegregate. In fact, all levels of government demonstrated intense resistance to compliance with the *Brown* decision and the Commonwealth exhausted every possible means to avoid desegregation. The resistance lasted 10 years. After the formal end of Virginia's Massive Resistance, desegregation cases continued to be heard in federal courts until 1984, and the last case was finally dismissed in 2001.

The Special Subcommittee's meeting and Town Hall are open to the public. However, persons desiring to address the Special Subcommittee are encouraged to register in advance with Mrs. Brenda H. Edwards, Division of Legislative Services, General Assembly Building, 2nd Floor, 910 Capitol Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, **no later than Monday, December 6, 2010, at 12:00 noon**, by email at bedwards@dls.virginia.gov or by phone (804) 786-3591. Persons who do not pre-register may do so on site. All speakers are requested to limit their remarks to three minutes. However, the Town Hall Moderator reserves the right to limit further the time allotted speakers to accommodate all who wish to participate in the discussion. Persons who would like to address the Special Subcommittee, *but who are unable to attend the Town Hall may send their comments by email (bedwards@dls.virginia.gov), fax (804-371-0169), or mail to Mrs. Edwards at Division of Legislative Services, General Assembly Building, 2nd Floor, 910 Capitol Street, Richmond, VA 23219.*

For further information, please contact Mrs. Brenda H. Edwards, Division of Legislative Services, at (804) 786-3591 or by email at bedwards@dls.virginia.gov.