

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission
and
Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee
Virginia General Assembly**

Special Subcommittee on the Commemoration of Public School Closings in Virginia

September 30, 2011

MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

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The Honorable Henry L. Marsh, III, Commission Chairman, and the Honorable Rosalyn R. Dance, Chairwoman of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Committee, today announced that the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission and its subcommittees, will meet at **Longwood University in Farmville on Monday, October 3, 2011, at 10:30 a.m., and that the Commission's Special Subcommittee on the Commemoration of Public School Closings in Virginia will host a Town Hall from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., at Prince Edward County High School in Farmville.**

A combined business meeting of the full Commission and its subcommittees—the Special Subcommittee, Expenditure and Review Subcommittee, and Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Subcommittee—will be held at 10:30 a.m. in the Nance Room of Dorrill Dining Hall, at Longwood University, 201 High Street, in Farmville. Following the business meeting, the Commission will conduct a site visit of historical sites related to school desegregation in Prince Edward County, before beginning the Town Hall. The Town Hall, to which the public is invited to participate, will be held from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Prince Edward County High School, at 35 Eagle Drive in Farmville. The Town Hall is designed to facilitate a public discussion concerning the history of Massive Resistance, its impact and legacy in Prince Edward County and the Commonwealth, and ways to promote reconciliation and a common vision for the future.

The Special Subcommittee on the Commemoration of Public School Closings in Virginia, established by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission and the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Committee, is responsible for the statewide observance of the decade-long era of Massive Resistance. Members of the Special Subcommittee include legislative and citizen members of the King Commission and the *Brown* Scholarship 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 1956, 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 the county's 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 Commission's meeting and the Special Subcommittee's Town Hall are open to the public. Persons desiring to speak at the Town Hall 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 Friday, September 30, 2011, at 5:00 p.m.**, 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 unable to attend the Town Hall may send their written comments to Mrs. Edwards at Division of Legislative Services, General Assembly Building, 2nd Floor, 910 Capitol Street, Richmond, VA 23219, or by email at bedwards@dls.virginia.gov.