



Saturday, May 17, 2025 | 10:00 – 11:30 am
U.S. District Court, Western District of Virginia
Harrisonburg, Virginia

This ceremony marks the dedication of a new state historical marker commemorating the implementation of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in Virginia. The marker honors the courage of the Black student plaintiffs in Charlottesville and Warren County, the determination of their NAACP attorneys, and the integrity and constitutional fidelity of U.S. District Judge John Paul, Jr. Together, their actions helped break down the legal barriers of segregation and advance the promise of equal education for all.

PROGRAM

Opening Remarks and Introduction

Lindsay Brubaker, Esq.
Executive Counsel, Bridgewater College

Welcome

The Honorable Elizabeth K. Dillon
Chief Judge, U.S. District Court, Western District of Virginia

The Knocking Down Walls Project

Beau Dickenson, NBCT
Social Studies Supervisor, Rockingham County Public Schools
Owen Longacre, NBCT
Social Studies Teacher, Spotswood High School
Pria Dua and Elizabeth Kidd
Student Project Leads, Spotswood High School Alumnae

Musical Performance – “Reaching for the Moon and Sky”

Composed and Performed by Juan Andres Garcia
East Rockingham High School Alumnus

Remarks from Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Dr. Kenneth Rutherford
Professor of Political Science, James Madison University
Vice Chair, Virginia Board of Historic Resources

Reflections from Charlottesville

Alex-Zan

Plaintiff, Allen v. Charlottesville

Reflections from Warren County

Betty Kilby Fisher Baldwin

Lead Plaintiff, Kilby v. Warren County

Musical Performance – “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Performed by Devonte Garcia

Lyrics by James Weldon Johnson

Music by J. Rosamond Johnson

Keynote Address

The Honorable Anne Holton

Former Virginia Secretary of Education

Professor, George Mason University

Marker Unveiling

Announced by The Honorable John A. Paul

Unveiled by Pria Dua, Elizabeth Kidd,

Betty Kilby Fisher Baldwin, and Alex-Zan

Interfaith Benediction

The Rev. Dr. Edward Scott

Greater Allen AME Church, Staunton

Companion Exhibition Invitation

12:30 – 2:30 pm

Rocktown History, 382 High Street, Dayton, VA

Following the ceremony, please join us for the opening of a special student-led exhibition at Rocktown History:

Resilience Amid Resistance:

History Made by Students—History Told by Students

Presented by students of

Rockingham County Public Schools

This exhibition accompanies the *Resilience Amid Resistance* state historical marker unveiled outside the Federal Courthouse in Harrisonburg.

Together, the marker and exhibition honor the long struggle for school equality across Virginia.

As the 2025 edition of the Farmville Tour Guides Project, the exhibition project builds on a decade-long tradition of Rockingham County students leading place-based learning at the Moton Museum in Farmville, Virginia.

This year, they partnered with Rocktown History to bring that story home—bridging communities and connecting national, state, and local efforts for educational justice.

Historical Marker Text

Resilience Amid Resistance

In July 1956, two years after the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, federal judge John Paul of Harrisonburg issued the first school desegregation order in Virginia, ruling for the NAACP in a suit against Charlottesville City Public Schools. In September 1958, after two years of appeals in this case, Paul also sided with the NAACP in a suit against Warren County Public Schools. In response, Gov. J. Lindsay Almond closed the schools slated to admit the Black student plaintiffs in these two cases. This was the first use of the state's Massive Resistance laws to shutter public schools. The Virginia Supreme Court and a special federal court declared the closures unconstitutional in January 1959.

Acknowledgments

This dedication ceremony and student-led public history project would not have been possible without the generous support, collaboration, and encouragement of many individuals and institutions.

We extend our deepest gratitude to:

Rocktown History
The Moton Museum
The City of Harrisonburg
Rockingham County Public Schools
The Rockingham Educational Foundation, Inc. (REFI)
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
Douglas L. Guynn, Esq.
Karen Ewell and the Ewell Family
The Honorable Elizabeth K. Dillon
The Honorable Anne Holton
The Honorable John A. Paul
The plaintiffs of *Kilby v. Warren County*
The plaintiffs of *Allen v. Charlottesville*

Thank you for standing with us to preserve, honor, and elevate the stories of resilience, justice, and community.

“The legal system can force open doors, and sometimes even knock down walls, but it cannot build bridges. That job belongs to you and me.”

-The Honorable Thurgood Marshall