Massive Resistance

- In 1896, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities were legal. This ruling upheld the idea of separation of the races and enforced the Jim Crow laws.
Massive Resistance

- Under the Jim Crow laws, life in the south was strictly segregated. Theaters, schools, waiting rooms, restaurants, even water fountains were segregated.
After World War II, however, there was a desire for change. African Americans were no longer willing to accept the Jim Crow laws.
Massive Resistance

- President Truman issued an Executive Order integrating the Armed Forces in 1947. With his signature, the President, as Commander in Chief, ended segregation—only in the Armed Forces, but not in the rest of society! Life was still segregated throughout the south.
Massive Resistance

- Schools and other facilities were supposed to be “separate but equal”. They were separate, but rarely were they equal! African American schools often went without indoor plumbing and heating systems.
Massive Resistance

- In 1954, The United States Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education, that “Separate but equal was inherently unequal” and the Plessy decision of 1896 was overturned. Separate facilities were no longer legal.
Massive Resistance

- Senator Harry Byrd, Sr. of Virginia said the Brown decision “will bring implications and dangers of the greatest consequence.” He went on to announce that he would use all legal means to continue segregated schools in Virginia!
Massive Resistance

- Governor Stanley of Virginia appointed a commission to look at options for defying the Brown decision. Senator Byrd developed a Massive Resistance plan to slow or stop integration of Virginia Schools. The General Assembly in 1956 passed laws supporting Massive Resistance.
Massive Resistance

- Massive Resistance was Virginia’s policy to slow or prevent integration of the public schools in the state through every possible legal means. African Americans and many white Virginians opposed Massive Resistance and protested against it.
Massive Resistance

- In Virginia, students at Mooten High School in Farmville, Virginia had led the fight for better schools. Black schools in Prince Edward County were poorly built and many had no heat or indoor plumbing.
Massive Resistance

- In Charlottesville, African American students had petitioned to attend the all white schools. In 1956 the Federal Court ordered Charlottesville to integrate Venable and Lane High Schools.
Massive Resistance

- In 1956, the Virginia General Assembly defied the Federal Courts and adopted a resolution of “Interposition” which said the state could “interpose” between an unconstitutional Federal mandate and local authorities.
Massive Resistance

- In 1958, when President Eisenhower ordered Federal troops to enforce integration in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Virginia General Assembly authorized the Governor to close any school that was under the protection of Federal troops and reject state funding for any school that integrated.
Massive Resistance

- Moderates in the General Assembly like Armistead Boothe of Alexandria, argued that Massive Resistance was wrong and illegal, but the General Assembly would not listen.
Massive Resistance

- Instead of integrating the schools, the General Assembly refused to give state money to schools. Schools in some parts of the state, such as Charlottesville and Prince Edward County closed their doors, rather than integrate.
Massive Resistance

Parents, churches, and businesses began to create home schools for the children. Most schools in Virginia stayed open, and used local money to run the schools.
Massive Resistance

- Citizens around the state became concerned as some public schools remained closed. In 1959, after parent complaints and student petitions, Charlottesville and other jurisdictions re-opened the schools and integrated.
Massive Resistance

- Prince Edward County schools, however, remained closed until 1964 and then opened only after a court order. It was the only county in Virginia to remain closed. In 2003, the Virginia General Assembly issued a resolution apologizing to Prince Edward County students who lost five years of education.
Massive Resistance

- By 1964, Massive Resistance and Interposition were no longer a part of Virginia politics. It would take another ten years, however, to fully integrate schools in the state.
Massive Resistance

- Special thanks to The Ground Beneath Their Feet and the Library of Virginia and the University of Virginia for the images in this power point.